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Flight Lieutenant Shivangi Singh, India's first woman pilot to fly the Rafale, on the IAF tableau at the R-Day parade. *Praveen Khanna*

Rafale pilot to contingent commanders: Women officers steal the R-Day show

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

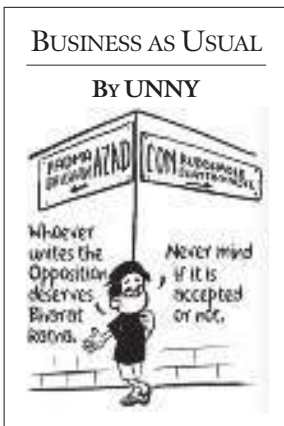
THE ENTRY of women into the armed forces has been a slow process, one that has even required judicial intervention. But at the Republic Day parade on Rajpath Wednesday, women officers, still few in numbers, stole the show.

While several women officers led marching contingents, one of the highlights of the parade was the presence of the first

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Rajpath during the Republic Day parade. *Praveen Khanna*

REPORTS, PAGES 8, 11



At meet led by Shah, BJP reaches out to Jats, sends feeler to Jayant

Balyan: If issues with state, Centre here

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

LED BY Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the BJP Wednesday reached out to Jat leaders ahead of the first phase of the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, saying the Centre was always there for them even if they had "issues" with the state government.

The Jats form a substantial

Home Minister Amit Shah at the meeting with Jat leaders on Wednesday. *Express*

share of the population in the seats which go to polls on February 10, and the closed-door

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Russia-China warmth makes Delhi walk the tightrope on Ukraine

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

ON JANUARY 19, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman called up Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and they discussed "Russia's concerning military build-up on Ukraine's borders". However, Delhi is yet to issue an official statement on the matter, choosing to closely monitor the developments as of now.

Officials here said that with key strategic partners on both sides, any hasty moves may shrink the already tight diplomatic space Delhi has. So while there is concern

about Russia's "muscle-flexing" and external intervention in national matters, New Delhi does not want to jeopardise its equation with Moscow.

Almost 60 per cent of India's military supplies are Russian-manufactured, a significant factor when Indian and Chinese troops continue to be in a stand-off on the eastern border.

At the same time, the US and Europe, which are pushing back against Russia over Ukraine, are both important partners from India's strategic calculus. Many US platforms have been used for reconnaissance and surveillance along the India-China border. Winter clothing for 50,000

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

DECISION 2022



MAJITHIA TO TAKE ON SIDHU IN AMRITSAR

CONGRESS ADRIFT IN U.P., LEADERS HEAD FOR THE EXIT

PAGE 9

Padma Shri at 93, kalari ace says will teach 'as long as I am alive'

SANDIP G
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

REPUBLIC DAY began like all other mornings for Sankaranarayana Menon, the 93-year-old kalaripayattu exponent who has been conferred the Padma Shri for his contributions to martial arts. As has been the routine for as long as he could remember, he woke up at 5 am, bathed in the family pond, offered prayers at the courtyard



Sankaranarayana Menon

temple and stepped onto the kalari (arena) in Kerala's Chavakkad where his students

waited for him, ready for three hours of gruelling training of body and mind.

There was a brief round of applause for his achievement, announced by the Government on Tuesday night, but no excess celebration. "I am obviously glad that the Government has recognised me. But it's not the end. I will continue teaching students as long as I am alive. It's my duty," he says, in a soft but clear voice.

These days, his body can't

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

DU college sets up cow centre: 'Not just research, will give milk, curd to students'

PAGE 1
ANCHORSUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

IT'S KNOWN as one of Delhi University's premier institutions, ranked 14 for colleges under the Government's National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). But this year, Hansraj College's bio has a unique addition that has already sparked a buzz — a cow protection and research centre.

Called Swami Dayanand Saraswati Gau-Samwardhan evam Anusandhan Kendra, the centre has been started with one

The centre at Hansraj College has started with one cow. *Express*

cow and, according to principal Dr Rama, will be expanded "if the research that is done proves to be useful and beneficial".

According to the principal, the centre will not just do "research on various aspects of the cow". It will also provide "pure

milk and ghee" for the students, and for the monthly "havan" (prayer ritual) conducted on the campus, she said.

"Ours is a DAV Trust college, and its base is the Arya Samaj. In line with that tradition, we hold a havan on the first day of every month, which may be attended by all teaching and non-teaching staff and students. During that (havan), we felicitate all the people who have their birthdays that month. For this, every month, we need to go to the market to buy the things that we need to offer to the flame, such as pure ghee. We can be self-sufficient now in this," she said.

Currently, the cow centre is an enclosure located by the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

NON TECHNICAL POPULAR CATEGORIES POSTS

Protests in UP, Bihar; Railways suspends recruitment exams

Sets up panel to hold talks with protesters

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

AMID VIOLENT protests for the third day in Bihar, where four empty coaches of a stationary train were set on fire in Gaya, and intelligence inputs that protesters were being mobilised via social media in other states too, the Ministry of Railways on Wednesday decided to put its recruitment drives on hold.

Reaching out to protesters, the Railways announced a high-level committee, headed by Deepak Peter Gabriel, principal executive director of industrial relations in the ministry, to engage with them. However, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw emphasised that the ministry's "employment notification has legal sanctity". "So for those who have grievances, we will have to find a solution and deal with the matter with sensitivity," he said.

The climbdown came a day after the national transporter warned that job aspirants found involved in vandalism and "unlawful activities" while protesting "will be liable for police action as well as lifetime debarment from obtaining Railway job".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

A coach torched by aspirants at Gaya junction, Wednesday. *PTI*

Bihar protests enter 3rd day, UP suspends 6 cops for student crackdown

Over 29% applicants from UP, Bihar

ASAD REHMAN & SANTOSH SINGH
LUCKNOW, PATNA, JANUARY 26

OF THE 1.25 crore applications received for the Railways' Non Technical Popular Categories (NTPC) posts, about 15 lakh were from Bihar and 21.89 lakh from Uttar Pradesh, the two states which have seen protests, according to sources.

And of the 7 lakh shortlisted "applications", the two Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs) from Uttar Pradesh (Prayagraj and Gorakhpur) account for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Common test a key issue

PROTESTERS SAY the system of one screening test across five pay grades is designed to favour those with higher qualification. For instance, a graduate cannot be stopped from appearing for an exam where the minimum qualification is 10+2. Candidates have also criticised the marking system.

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FROM PAGE ONE

UP suspends

1,06,579; Bihar's two RRBs (Patna and Muzaffarpur) for 27,373; and Rajasthan RRB (Ajmer) for 35,481. In Bihar, where protests entered the third day on Wednesday,a group of protesters said they expected at least 1 lakh to qualify from the state, which accounts for 1,368 vacancies.

Protesters torched four empty coaches of a stationary train in Gaya and blocked rail traffic between Gaya and Jehanabad. Protests were also held in Patna, Bhagalpur and Sasaram.

While no fresh protests were reported in poll-bound UP, six police personnel were suspended a day after a crackdown on a group of students who allegedly tried to stop a train in Prayagraj on Tuesday. A case has also been lodged against three named and 1,000 unidentified protesters for rioting and stone-throwing.

Following the protest in Prayagraj, purported video clips of policemen entering the rooms of students by breaking down their doors, and beating them up were circulated on social media. Targeting the BJP government, both the Congress and SP tweeted about the alleged police action.

Prayagraj SSP Ajay Kumar said the suspended police personnel would face departmental action for "using unnecessary force". They have been identified as Inspector Rakesh Bharti, Sub-Inspectors Shailendra Yadav and Kapil Kumar Chahal, and Constables Mohammad Arif, Ache Lal, Devesh Kumar

On January 25, around 1,000 rioters gathered at the railway station. Police had received information that the railway track would be blocked, and a train engine set on fire... The students were made to leave the place... Some rioters among the students threw stones at police. After that, they went and hid in the lodges. The police team went to look for them and rounded up several of them. Two prime suspects, identified as Pradeep Yadav and Mukesh Yadav, were arrested," the SSP said.

"You may have seen a video where some police officials are using unnecessary force. They have been identified, suspended and will face strict action. On the other hand, the rioters who mingled with the students have been booked under 13 serious charges. Three have been named while around 1,000 are unidentified. Two have been arrested and are facing action. Another accused who spread rumours on social media and incited students has been identified as Rajendra Sachan, he will be arrested soon," he said.

"It has come to light that Rajendra Sachan is associated with and funded by some outfits or parties. He played the main role," he said, adding that investigations were underway to find out "which party and who was funding them".

The Indian Express spoke to

some students who attended the protest. "There was a protest call... Around 1,000 protesters gathered, and a decision was taken to stop the train. When we moved ahead, police lathicharged us, and some protesters threw stones at policemen. There was tension, and the students dispersed. Then, police entered around 10-12 lodges and beat up students," said Satyam Kushwaha, an MA student.

"They entered our rooms after breaking the doors. Innocent students were beaten up and abused," said another student who did not want to be named.

When asked about the police action, UP ADG (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar said: "It was excessive and we have taken action. Policemen have been suspended... There was no need for policemen to enter lodges and beat up students."

Facing Opposition attack, the BJP went into damage control mode with Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya saying the incident was "unfortunate". "The guilty policemen will face action. We appeal to students to be patient. The Opposition should not indulge in politics over this. Those people who hid among students and indulged in rioting will face action after an investigation. Every student is our family," he tweeted.

Meanwhile, students have called a protest at Lucknow University on Thursday against the police action in Prayagraj.

In Bihar, where protests continued for the third day, a group of students gathered at the Gaya railway station on Wednesday morning and reportedly threw stones at policemen when asked to move away. They torched an empty coach of a stationary train. Two hours later, three more coaches of the same train were set on fire.

"Nobody was injured. We are trying to identify the troublemakers. We have deployed additional forces at the railway station and some other vital points. We are also trying to counsel students through media," said Gaya SSP Aditya Kumar.

On Tuesday, an empty coach of a train was torched at Ara railway station. Another group of students blocked movement of trains between Patna and Gaya via Jehanabad for nearly five hours. Similar protests were reported from Patna, Bhagalpur and Sasaram.

"We have identified some coaching institutions which provoked students to protest. We are also keeping a watch on some other coaching centres," said Patna District Magistrate Chandrashekhar Singh.

"We have booked six coaching centres. We have arrested eight persons (including some officials of coaching centres) in this regard," said Patna Senior Superintendent of Police, Manavjit Singh Dhillon.

Protests in UP, Bihar; Railways suspends recruitment exams

Sources said the decision was taken in view of the worsening law and order situation in Bihar. "The situation was just going out of our hands and spilling over to other parts of India. They were mobilising through Telegram, WhatsApp and other social media," said a senior Railway official.

The immediate concern, according to sources, was the protest in Prayagraj on Tuesday, with the political dispensation fearing that the discontent would spread in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh. A bulk of the job aspirants are reported to be from Uttar Pradesh, followed by Bihar and Rajasthan.

The current recruitment drive for Non Technical Popular Categories (NTPC), for 35,281 vacant posts in various categories ranging from junior clerk, train assistant, guard, time-keeper to station master earlier this month, is at the centre of the ongoing protests.

The Railways had said that the number of qualifying candidates shortlisted for the next round would be 20 times the number of vacant posts. So, while over 7 lakh "applications"

were shortlisted, the actual number of candidates is around 3.84 lakh, as the same person may have been shortlisted for more than one post.

Of the 7 lakh shortlisted "applications", the two Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs) from Uttar Pradesh (Prayagraj and Gorakhpur) account for 1,06,579; Bihar's two RRBs (Patna and Muzaffarpur) for 27,373; and Rajasthan RRB (Ajmer) for 35,481.

Vaishnav's statement means that the 3.84 lakh candidates who qualified for the second round of the NTPC recruitment drive will remain qualified. A total of 1.25 crore candidates had appeared for the exam. The protesters are reported to be mainly candidates who could not qualify.

Addressing a press conference, Vaishnav said, "I urge the candidates to put forth their grievances formally. Our intention is to resolve this issue quickly. A committee has been formed and it will examine representations by the candidates." He also urged protesters not to destroy public property.

With 1.25 crore candidates

applying for these jobs, the Railways held a common test, called Computer Based Test-1 (CBT-1), between April-July 2020. The results were declared on January 14 this year. The second round of exams (CBT-2), as per "graded difficulty" wherein every level will have a separate exam, was scheduled to start from February 15.

Around 11,000 of these vacancies require 10+2 (Class 12 pass) as the minimum qualification. The rest are higher-pay posts that require graduation as the minimum qualification. The posts are spread across five pay grades—from level 2 to level 6.

The protesters are claiming that those with higher qualifications will get a shot at jobs meant for those with lower qualifications and spoil their chances. Sources said there is a possibility that some of the grievances, like the cut-offs being too high, may be looked into.

Individual Railway Recruitment Boards will reach out and create groups that include protesting candidates and those who qualified. "We will hear them out and also explain to them," said an official.

The ministry has also decided to suspend its Level 1 (Group D) recruitment drive as a pre-emptive measure. The ministry had decided to hold a two-stage exam, but had not mentioned this in its original notification, triggering protests.

Meanwhile, citing "inputs", the Railway Protection Force (RPF) has alerted some railway divisions that the Congress is supporting the agitation. In a letter to all four divisions of the West Bengal-based Eastern Railway on Tuesday, the zonal chief security commissioner said the party's National Students' Union of India had extended support to the "Rail Roko" by protesters on January 26.

"Inputs further indicate that activists from Indian National Congress may also support the movement," said the letter.

A top official of Eastern Railway said the RPF regularly issues such alerts, based on intelligence inputs from various agencies. He said there were fears that the agitation may spread to West Bengal.

The Congress spokesperson could not be reached for comment.

EXPRESS AUDIO

What RPN Singh's exit means for the Congress

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Today on the 3 Things podcast, we talk about whether Singh's exit will affect Congress' campaign in UP, and how the BJP is expected to benefit from it.

'Golden Arrows' Squadron in Ambala, stood on the deck of the IAF tableau as it rolled past the saluting base.

She was the second woman fighter pilot to participate in the Republic Day parade – the first was Flight Lieutenant Bhawana Kanth who was on the IAF tableau last year.

From Varanasi, Singh joined the IAF in 2017 and belongs to its second batch of women fighter pilots. Initially commissioned to fly the MiG-21 Bison, Singh went through conversion training to fly the Rafale.

The Navy marching contingent was led by Lieutenant Commander Aanchal Sharma and also included Sub Lieutenant Avanthika Duraiswamy. Lieutenant Preeti and her colleague Lt Mayank Bhagour led the Indian Navy tableau.

Lieutenant Manisha Bohra led the Army Ordnance Corps contingent while the IAF contingent too had a woman officer -- Flight Lieutenant Impanashree KY.

Women from the Border Security Force's Seema Bhawani motorcycle team displayed their skills, performing acrobatics and carrying a placard bearing the message of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao.

In the marching contingent of the Sashastra Seema Bal, the two Assistant Commandants were women officers.

The parade saw the largest fly-past with 75 aircraft from all three services to mark 75 years of India's Independence. For the first time, viewers were given a glimpse of what the pilots of the aircraft see – the pilot's view and cockpit's view were telecast.

A total of 24 tableaux were part of the parade including from the armed forces and the DRDO.

The Navy tableau was the first to come down Rajpath and had two main themes – one was a depiction of the 1946 naval uprising, and the other showcased "atmanirbharta" of the Navy, with a model of the country's first indigenous aircraft carrier which will be commissioned later this year and named INS Vikrant.

The IAF tableau, titled 'Indian Air Force, Transforming for the Future' had models of the MiG-21, Gnat – aircraft which played key roles in the victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war -- Light Combat Helicopter, Rafale and the Aslesha radar.

The DRDO showcased its major platforms titled 'Suite of Indigenous Developed Sensors, Weapons and Electronic Warfare Systems for LCA Tejas' and 'Air Independent Propulsion System' being developed for Navy submarines.

Padma Shri

take the rigours of demonstrating the intricate steps ("adavu") on a daily basis. So he restricts himself to reciting instructions in a metrical, singsong slang, almost like folk poetry, passed onto him by his forefathers.

Yet, Menon says he can still perform most steps "without breaking a bone or pulling a muscle". The movements are no longer muscle memory, but memory itself. "I have been practising those moves since I was seven, so it has become a part of me, like my mind. I feel I need to finetune some of the steps," he says.

In the best traditions of kalaripayattu, Menon has a taut and supple frame. Says his son Krishnadas: "We don't look to build big muscles like pehlevans, but rather compact muscles that give us flexibility and make reflexes stronger. My father had a perfect kalaripayattu physique and, in his prime, was known for his dexterous moves."

Times were different when Menon took baby steps in kalaripayattu in Tirur, now in Malappuram district. His family had commanders in the army of Vettathu Raja, a local chieftain. He was trained to fight, and not teach the combat art form. Those days, kalaripayattu practitioners were prosperous and powerful – even when fighting between the princely states reduced under British rule, they still flourished under royal patronage.

But the disintegration of princely states and the subsequent abolishing of royalty jeop-

ardised their livelihood. Soon, modern martial art forms such as karate and kung-fu started becoming popular in the state, and kalaripayattu lost its reach and resonance. There was romance in the art, but it did not keep the fire burning in the kitchen.

Menon and his family never gave up, though. "My father never thought of quitting. Neither did he dilute his teaching nor make it expensive. Whatever the student could afford, is his guiding principle," says Krishnadas, who also heads the Kerala Kalaripayattu Association and is the go-to consultant for martial arts, an ever-green genre in the Malayalam film industry.

Upon the invitation of a patron, Menon shifted his base to Chavakkad in Thrissur district in 1957. Today, his school -- Vallabhatta Kalari, which follows the Kadathanadan tradition, with emphasis on footwork and body movements rather than armed combat -- has 137 students. The centre has also expanded with 17 branches outside the country, including in Brussels and Amsterdam, and twice as many in Kerala. There is interest from Punjab and Haryana, as well.

Krishnadas says the upturn of fortunes began with the tourism boom in the state. "In the mid-1980s, a man came from Belgium I guess, and after years of training under father, went home and opened a centre of his own. And then, more people began to come. As a tradition, we permit only those who have trained under us to open branches anywhere in the world," he says.

Menon's sons are seasoned pros themselves, which allowed him to take a break from teaching. But Unni Gurukkal, as Menon is fondly called, insists on teaching himself those who knock on the doors of his kalari. "It's not in our tradition to send them back. Those who come for knowledge shall get knowledge," he says.

The ancient martial art form has gone global, lost some of its feudal symbolism and association with bloodshed, and is now recognised as a sport in the country. And the Padma Shri is a recognition of this upward curve. But for Menon, award or not, all mornings will continue to begin in the same way they have for decades.

DU college

college gate for the men's hostel. But there's more to come. The principal says the college is working on a gobar gas plant, which can be supported by the centre. "Apart from this, we can do research on various aspects of the cow. Another idea is that when the hostel opens, there can be pure milk and pure curd for the students," she said.

Delhi University officials are not sure if similar initiatives exist in other DU colleges. "I was not even aware of this particular project. It must be an initiative taken at the college's level," said Registrar Vikas Gupta.

But then, not everyone on campus is onboard.

The Hansraj College unit of the CPI(M)'s Students' Federation of India (SFI) has alleged that the cow centre has been set up on land earmarked for a women's hostel – the college currently has only a men's hostel.

"SFI Hansraj unconditionally condemn and protest the construction of a GauShala...at the very site which was reserved for a women's hostel whose construction has been on hold for many years now... We find it disgusting that our college administration prioritises the 'protection and promotion' of cows instead of struggling female students whose interests are being sidelined for such an absurd decision," read a statement issued by the Students' Federation of India.

Dr Rama, the principal, denies the SFI charge.

"In the first place, that area is too small for our plan for a hostel, which will accommodate at least 100 students. That site is not reserved for the hostel. We are going through many formalities to construct the hostel and are re-working the college's masterplan, which will need to be approved by the municipal corporation," she said.

DEFENCE ESTATES OFFICE, AGRA CIRCLE, AGRA CANTT.

NOTICE INVITING E-AUCTION


E-auction for the disposal of scrap material (old disused material) at DEO Agra Circle

Online Bids (E-Auction) are invited on behalf of Defence Estates Officer, Agra Circle from the eligible Individuals/Agencies/Organization/Firms etc. for Awarding the Contract for the disposal of scrap material (old disused material) at DEO Agra Circle. Term of contract is for ten days the date of issue of work order. Manual bids/ offers will not be accepted. The interested contractors/firms may visit the website <https://eauction.gov.in/eauction/>. No conditional bids will be accepted. The Defence Estates Officer Agra Circle reserves the right to cancel or withdraw the auction without any notice and the Defence Estates Officer Agra Circle decision in this regard will be final. Terms/Conditions, eligibility criteria and connected details can be seen in the website - <https://eauction.gov.in/eauction/>. Clarification needed, if any may be enquired/clarified from the office on any working day through telephone 0562-2225457.

Sl. No.	Activity	Date	Time in IST
i)	Date of Publication	27.01.2022	At 10:00 HRS
ii)	Start Date and Time for downloading of auction documents	27.01.2022	At 10:00 HRS
iii)	Submission Start date and time	27.01.2022	At 10:00 HRS
iv)	Submission End date and time	16.02.2022	At 13:00 HRS
v)	Payment/Approval Start Date and time	16.02.2022	At 14:00 HRS
vi)	Payment/Approval End Date and time	17.02.2022	At 17:00 HRS
vii)	Auction Start Date	18.02.2022	At 10:00 HRS
viii)	Auction End Date	18.02.2022	At 17:00 HRS

The bidder may download the "Tender Document" and other terms and conditions as available on the website of <https://eauction.gov.in/eauction/>.

-sd-
Defence Estates Officer
Agra Circle, Agra Cantt.



NMDC Limited
(A GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ENTERPRISE)
'Khanji Bhavan', 10-3-311/A, Castle Hills,
Masab Tank, Hyderabad - 500 028
CIN: L13100TG1958GOI001674

CONTRACTS DEPARTMENT

Tender Enquiry No: HO/Contracts/MNSP/OCMSSE/TOC/103C Dated: 27/01/2022

NMDC Limited, A 'MAHARATNA' Public Sector Company under Ministry of Steel, Govt. of India, invites online bids for "Setting up of Online Continuous Monitoring System for Effluents (Package No. 1030)" of 3.0 MTPA Integrated Steel Plant at Nagarjun near Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh State on divisible turnkey basis including 03 Years Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Services from experienced, reputed and competent domestic bidders.

The detailed NIT and Bid documents can be viewed and /or downloaded from NMDC website <http://www.nmcdco.co.in>, Central Public Procurement portal <http://www.eprocure.gov.in/epubli/sh/app> and MSTC portal <http://www.mstccommerce.co.in> from 27/01/2022 to 17/02/2022.

For Accessing the Bid document from NMDC website, the bidder has to register as "New User" In Bid section at NMDC's website link <http://www.nmdc.co.in/nmcdtender/default.aspx>

For accessing the Bid documents from Central Procurement Portal www.eprocure.gov.in, the Tenderer has to click on "Latest active Tenders".

For accessing the bid document from MSTC, bidders to visit website link http://www.mstccommerce.co.in/eprocurement/mncc/buyer_login.jsp and search **Tender No. NMDC/HO/71/21-22/ET/342**. Bidders are requested to register as "New Vendor" for downloading the tender document. For further help refer to 'vendor guide' given in MSTC website.

The bidders are requested to submit their bids through online mode and details of submission of bid through online are given in NIT.

The Bidders on regular basis are required to visit the NMDC's website / CPP Portal/MSTC website for corrigendum, if any, at a future date.

For further clarification, CGM/Contracts, NMDC Limited Hyderabad can be contacted through Fax No. +91-040-23534746, Tel No. +91-040-23532800, email: steelcontracts@nmdc.co.in
C G M (Contracts)

Government of Karnataka

KARNATAKA SECONDARY EDUCATION EXAMINATION BOARD


6TH Cross, Malleshwaram, Bengaluru-03 Ph: 23349434 Fax: 23347670
No: B3/P.M.S.O.&L.06/2021-22 Date: 24.01.2022

e-TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Director, Examinations, Karnataka Secondary Education Examination Board, hereby invites tenders from eligible bidders for the "Supply of pre-printed S.S.L.C. marks cards along with over printing of Variable data, and Lamination of the same pertaining to 2022 S.S.L.C. Examinations" as per K.T.P.P. Act 1999 and K.T.P.P. Rules, 2000 through e-procurement portal only. Tender document may be downloaded from Board website www.sslc.karnataka.gov.in or e-procurement website www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in

Tender commences on 27.01.2022, Tender pre-bid meeting on 31.01.2022 at 12.00 pm in the office of the Director, Exams, last date for submission 11.02.2022 at 4-00 PM, opening of technical bid on 15.02.2022 at 4.00 Pm, opening of commercial bid tentatively on 18.02.2022 at 4.00 PM, approximate value of tender is Rs. 59,64,000/- (Excluding GST), tender EMD is Rs. 1,19,300/-. Further details can be obtained from the Board during office hours.

Sd/- Director, Exams



Classifieds
The art of finding a better way

I, Sanjay Kumar S/o Sh. Dullar Sah R/o-VPO-MAHNAR, DISTT.-Vaishali (Bihar)-844506, have declare, that in my son Rohit Kumar CBSE Certificate my name mention-as Sanjay Sah instead of Sanjay Kumar. In future consider my correct name as Sanjay Kumar for all purposes. 0040600487-1

"IMPORTANT"

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CORONA ISN'T OVER REMEMBER TO FOLLOW ALL COVID PRECAUTIONS



Wear a mask properly

Wear your mask before stepping out of the house.



Wash your hands frequently

Wash your hands regularly with soap or use sanitizer for atleast 20 seconds.



Practice social distancing

Avoid going to crowded places, and remember to maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet.

"According to experts, Omicron spreads very rapidly, but there is no need to panic. Continue to wear your mask and remember to follow all covid norms."

- Arvind Kejriwal



75

YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

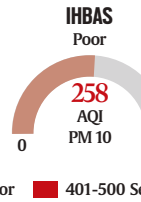
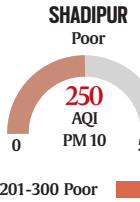
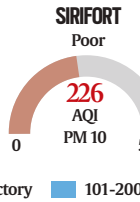
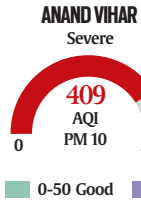
LOCATIONS HOISTING

THE TRICOLOUR

To celebrate the 75th year of independence, the tricolour will be hoisted at 75 locations

- The locations where the tricolour will be hoisted -

1.	Delhi Govt. Officers Flat, Haiderpur
2.	Govt. Co-ed Sr. Secondary School, Saraswati Vihar
3.	Keshav Mahavidyalaya, Pitampura
4.	Sarvodaya Co-ed Sr. Secondary School, ZP Block, Pitampura
5.	Timarpur Crossing, BD Estate
6.	GTB Police Chowki, Kingsway Camp
7.	Model Town Metro Station
8.	Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya, Kakrola Rd
9.	Integrated Institute of Technologoy, Dwarka
10.	Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, B-3 Jwalaheri, Paschim Vihar
11.	Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya, Rohini
12.	Sarvodaya Sr. Secondary School, Sector-7, Rohini
13.	Shaheed Sukhdev College of Business Studies, Rohini
14.	Sundar Vihar, Near Radison Hotel, Paschim Vihar
15.	Pitampura Outer Ring Road, near Madhuban Chowk
16.	Indra Gandhi Hospital, Dwarka
17.	Dabri Mod, Ambedkar Chowk
18.	Palam Dabri Marg, Dabri
19.	Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Madipur, Rohini Sec 9
20.	Senior Secondary School, A-6 Block, Paschim Vihar
21.	Vikaspuri, Near Flyover Pillar no. 10
22.	Dwarka Court
23.	B Block, Ramesh Nagar
24.	Block C, Naraina, Beside Naraina Flyover, Ring Rd
25.	Mahatma Gandhi Marg, Near BRO Headquarter, Ring Road
26.	Roop Nagar Chowk
27.	Ambedkar park, Jahangirpuri
28.	Mall Road, Gol Chakkar, Near Azadpur Metro Station
29.	Rajghat
30.	IP Estate, Near Indian Oil Petrol Pump
31.	Near Monestry Market, Civil Lines
32.	Shantivan
33.	Sarvoday Kanya Vidyalaya, East Vinod Nagar, Mayur Vihar
34.	Mayur Vihar Ph 2 near Canara Bank
35.	Opposite Akshardham Mandir, Near Yamuna Bank
36.	School of Excellence, Khichripur, Mayur Vihar
37.	Indra Gandhi Stadium, ITO
38.	Signature Bridge
39.	Ring Road, Swasthya Vihar, Laxmi Nagar
40.	Apsara Border
41.	Parmanand Special Surgery Hospital, Yamuna Bazaar
42.	Vidhan Sabha
43.	Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Tuglakabad
44.	Senior Secondary School, Badarpur
45.	Senior Secondary School, Mohan Co-operative Industrial Estate, Badarpur
46.	GBSS, Madanpur Khadar
47.	Kalkaji Mandir, Kalkaji
48.	Dhaura Kuan Enclave 2, Delhi Cantt
49.	Mahatama Gandhi Marg, Dhaura Kuan
50.	Nelson Mandela marg
51.	PWD Park, Sheikh Sarai
52.	AIIMS Round About
53.	Rao Tularam Marg Corner, Outer Ring Road
54.	DSOI, Dhaura Kuan
55.	Girls Sr. Secondary School, Ambica Vihar, Paschim Vihar
56.	Sarvoday Kanya Vidyalaya, Jwalapuri, Paschim Vihar
57.	Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya, Nikhil Vihar, Nangloi
58.	Sr. Secondary School, JJ Colony, Nangloi
59.	Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Adhyapak Nagar, Ranhola
60.	Mukandpur Gol Chakkar (Ring Road)
61.	Wazirpur Industrial Area, Prem Bari Road
62.	Prem Bari Pul Intersection, Ashok Vihar
63.	Rajiv Gandhi Stadium
64.	Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Nangloi Sultanpuri, Road
65.	Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Nilothi Extn, Nangloi
66.	Pillar no 102 Dhaura Kuan
67.	Ghumenhera Bus Stand, Jhuljhuli
68.	Darulla Border
69.	Hasan Pur, Najafgarh
70.	Khaira Village, Devtawala Mandir
71.	Pandwalan Kalan, Najafgarh, Dwarka
72.	Najafgarh Dauralla Rd, Kharkhari Nagar
73.	Dhansa Bus Stand, Najafgarh
74.	Mitraun Village, Najafgarh
75.	Jharoda Border, Najafgarh Bahadurgarh Road



S K Y W A T C H
FORECAST: Jan 27
Mainly clear sky. Cold day conditions at isolated places. Shallow fog in the morning.
MAX: 17 | **MIN: 6**
5.4 °C below normal | 2.9 °C below normal

SCENES FROM RAJPATH

The Republic marches on

Freedom struggle to sporting spirit, state tableaux focus on past and present, with eye on future

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

A TOTAL of 24 tableaux were part of the Republic Day parade, including a dozen from states and union territories, nine from departments of the Union Government, and three from the Armed Forces and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Meghalaya was the first state to present its tableau, showing the importance of women-led cooperative societies and self-help groups, with bamboo and cane handicrafts, as it celebrated its 50th year of statehood.

Karnataka, too, highlighted traditional handicrafts, calling it itself the “cradle of traditional handicrafts”, and showcasing 16 artefacts like inlay carving, lacquerware toys and bronze statues, possessing the geographical indication (GI) tag.

Gujarat, like many others, highlighted the freedom movement, but through the role of the tribal population. It showcased the incident of the military killing around 1,200 people in March 1922 as Bhil tribes from Paal and Dadhvav villages gathered to protest against the land revenue system, under the leadership of Motilal Tejawat.

Punjab also brought out the state's “immense contribution” during the freedom movement, with Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru leading from the front.

While Goa showed symbols of its heritage, Haryana had a tableau with many sportsmen from the state on a “victory chariot”, carrying the national flag. The idea was to highlight that though it occupies only 1.3 per cent of the country's landmass, and 2.09 per cent of the population, sportsmen from the state have brought maximum medals for the country in various international sporting events, including the Olympics.

Uttarakhand sought to focus on the development in the state, highlighting the increasing connectivity between various religious sites, while Jammu and Kashmir showed the rapid pace of development in the UT, with the new IIT, IIM, AIIMS and an airport that are coming up there.

Arunachal Pradesh depicted the four Anglo-Abor Wars between 1858 and 1912, during which the indigenous tribal people of the state, particularly the Adis from Siang area, fought against the colonial expansion of the British. Chhattisgarh portrayed the state's Godhan Nyay Yojana, for better use of rural resources, while Uttar Pradesh's tableau showcased the One District One Product scheme of the government, for the micro, small and medium enterprise industries, and also the development of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham in Varanasi, which is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Lok Sabha constituency.

Maharashtra showed the rich biodiversity of the state, with 15 animals and 22 plants as part of the tableau, including large models of Blue Mormon Butterfly, and more.

From the Central government, the Education and Skill Development ministries highlighted the National Education Policy; the Civil Aviation Ministry showed the UDAN scheme; Department of Posts showed Indian post at 75 years of Indian Independence; Home Affairs highlighted the valour and sacrifice of the CRPF; Central Public Works Department under Housing and Development Ministry focused on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose; Department of Justice highlighted the Lok Adalat and inclusive legal system; Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation showcased the Har Ghar Nal under Jal Jeevan Mission; and the Culture Ministry highlighted 150 years of Aurobindo Ghosh.



Socially distant event sees 6,000 in attendance

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

A FLYPAST with 75 aircraft, women officers performing stunts on bikes and a tableau with technology illustrating the ‘metaverse’ were among highlights at Rajpath as thousands watched the Republic Day parade.

Only 6,000 people were allowed and seats were placed a few metres apart to maintain social distancing.

Security agencies remained on high alert as intel was received about the possibility of terror attacks. And with the virus threat looming, testing booths, vaccination checking points and thermal screening centres were set up at all entries and exits.

Making an entry back into the parade was the motorcycle stunt show, cancelled last year in view of the surge in Covid cases. This year, women from the Border Security Force took the lead.

The audience cheered as the Seema Bhawani motorcycle team performed, especially when an officer held a magazine with the cover ‘Women Power’ on it.

The ceremony started with Prime Minister Narendra Modi paying homage to martyrs at the National War Memorial.

The parade included contingents of the Army, police teams and National Cadet Corps. A total of 24 tableaux participated.

In a first, a Lok Adalat tableau

by the Ministry of Law and Justice was presented. Named ‘Ek Mutthi Aasman’, it showed the legal system helping different sections of society.

The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship presented a tableau with the theme ‘Vedas to Metaverse’. While the front part of the tableau showed gurus and Vedas, the other portion had LED screens and digital books showing videos of innovation in the field with robotics, augmented reality and metaverse.

The ceremony was held at the revamped Central Vista ground. The red sandstone walkways, bridges, bigger lawn space, cleaner parks and bigger parking spaces are the new additions. However, some portion of the land is still not paved and work is yet to be completed.

Spectators said they wanted to bring their children but couldn't because they weren't vaccinated. Uday Narain Ojha (65), a resident of Delhi Cantt, visited with his wife, daughter and son-in-law.

“I loved the Indian Air Force parade and tableaux. We wish children were allowed here because the performance by dance groups and bikers shouldn't be missed. This was my first time. The Rafale aircraft were especially amazing,” he said.

Kulwant Kaur, a government school principal, and her daughter Gul, said the Meghalaya tableau was their favourite.



In the Republic Day parade, 75 special aircraft were displayed. *Praveen Khanna*

DCP wins 11th President's Medal for Gallantry

New Delhi: From heading a team in the Batla House encounter to busting the terror group of Indian Mujahideen, Delhi Police's Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav Tuesday received the 11th President's Medal for Gallantry for arresting two persons who had links with banned terror group Babbar Khalsa International. He has the highest number of President's medals for Gallantry in any force in the country.

The latest medal was bagged by the officer for an operation that was carried out in September 2020. Yadav took to Twitter and wrote, “With the blessings of Balaji, I am happy to share that I have been awarded

my 11 President's Gallantry Medal on the occasion of Republic Day 2022.”

According to the Delhi Police, a total of 23 Delhi Police personnel have been conferred Police Medals for their services — three President's Police Medal (PPM) for Distinguished Service, three Police Medal for Gallantry (PMG) and 17 for Police Medal for Meritorious Service — on the occasion of Republic Day, 2022.

Special Commissioners David Lalrinsanga, Shalini Singh, and sub-inspector (SI) Ramesh Singh have been awarded the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service. ACP Jasbir Singh and SI Ravi Tushir have been awarded Police Medal for Gallantry. **ENS**



The tableaux included a dozen from states and UTs, nine from departments of the Union Government, and three from the Armed Forces and Defence Research and Development Organisation. *Praveen Khanna*

AFTER SEEING 13 REPUBLIC DAY PARADES

Dark horse retires after parade amid a grand farewell

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

AS REPUBLIC Day celebrations came to an end at Delhi's Rajpath, one of the President's Bodyguards (PBG) was the centre of attention. The guard was none other than an elite dark-bay coloured horse named Virat, who retired soon after the parade.

President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh bid farewell to the horse, who has attended 13 Republic

Day parades, and has been at the top of the PBG team, considered the most senior regiment of the Indian Army. Guests cheered from the stands as top dignitaries met Virat and the Prime Minister patted him. On Army Day, January 15, Virat was awarded the Chief of Army Staff commendation for showcasing exceptional service and abilities for decades.

According to the Ministry of Defence officials, Virat is the first horse to receive a COAS commendation. Commandant Colonel Anup Tiwari accepted the commendation. Virat has



worked with several presidents through his career, and is known for its patience and agility. “It has been the most trusted steed over the years and was actively involved in Republic Day and Beating Retreat parades. Despite his old age, it performs very well and is quick. We call him a charger,” said an official. Virat is

President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh bid Virat farewell. *Praveen Khanna*

a Hanoverian horse, a breed that originates from Germany and is used mainly for competitive sports events. It was inducted into the PBG in 2003.

On Wednesday, Virat and 200 other horses first escorted the President to Rajpath and later back to Rashtrapati Bhavan with other troops, bodyguards and vehicles. Officials said the ceremonial escort is led by horses that have to be a minimum of 15.5 hands height. The horses are bred by Remount Veterinary Corps and looked after by 44 Military Veterinary hospital.

9 DECISION 2022

UTTAR PRADESH • UTTARAKHAND • PUNJAB • GOA • MANIPUR



I HEREBY DECLARE



SANGEETA TYAGI
Congress candidate Sahibabad
(Ghaziabad)

TOTAL ASSETS
₹3,52,09,018

CRIMINAL CASES:
PROFESSION:
EDUCATION:

MOVABLE ASSETS

₹42,09,018

Self: ₹35,95,643

Husband (deceased):

₹6,13,375

IMMOVABLE ASSETS

Self: ₹3,10,00,000

Self: ₹5,69,119

Husband: Nil

LOANS

NIL

SALARIED EMPLOYEE

B.Ed (1990)

HASHTAG POLITICS



• What's on the Badals' plate?

SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal posted a picture with his wife and former Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal 'relishing chana-kulcha' at an eatery in Amritsar. He tweeted, "Relished chana-kulcha with @HarsimratBadal_ at Bhairi Kulwant Singh Kulcheyan wale near Harmandir Sahib on Virasti Marg in Amritsar. This food joint is famous for its exotic taste. Culinary diversity is the pride of Punjab."

366 LIKES, 109 RETWEETS IN 9 HOURS



• Rahul's virtual rally in Punjab

In a series of tweets, the Congress (@INCpunjab) announced senior leader Rahul Gandhi will hold a virtual rally in Punjab on January 27.

One of the tweets read, "Congress party is committed to provide quality education to pave the path for a better future of Punjab. Our youngsters are our future and only good education will make them self-sufficient and independent to achieve new heights."

138K LIKES, 68 RETWEETS IN 9 HOURS

• Amit Palekar dares Goa CM

AAP leader Amit Palekar claimed that 'Goenkars are receiving high water bills.' In a short video posted on @AAPGoa, he said, "@DrPramodPSawant has blatantly lied to Goenkars about providing free water. I dare @BJP4Goa & Sawant to come out and justify these inflated bills."

186 LIKES, 99 RETWEETS IN 6 HOURS

The Cong story in UP: Party adrift, leaders head for exit

Of the party's seven MLAs in the state Assembly, all but two have defected

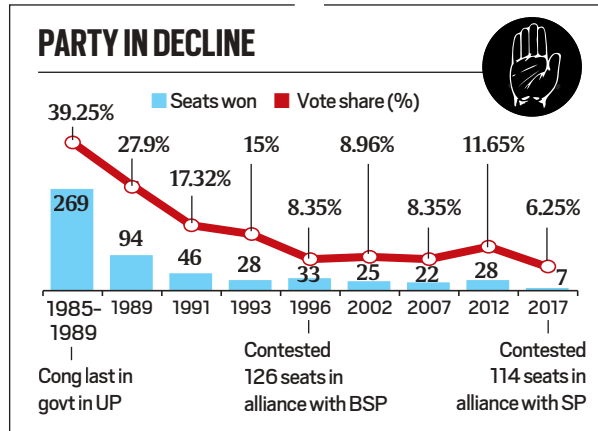
MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 26

TUESDAY'S EXIT of RPN Singh, and that of others before him, is symptomatic of a larger problem within the Congress. For a party desperately trying to stay in the fight, these exits are probably a sign that many of these leaders realised that the Congress's prospects in the state, at least in the near future, are bleak.

Of the party's seven MLAs, all but two — state president Ajay Kumar Lallu (Taimukhi Raj MLA) and Congress Legislature Party leader Aradhna Mishra — have left the party.

Since the start of this year, at least 10 prominent faces have quit the Congress, many of whom held significant responsibilities in the party. Singh, for instance, was on the party's list of star campaigners and was AICC in-charge of Jharkhand. Many of the others who quit, like Supriya Aron and Haider Ali Khan, had even been given party tickets to contest. But that wasn't enough to hold them back, neither was Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's attempt to portray herself as the party's face.

Among the first to leave ahead of this polls was Imran Masood, the Congress's young and most prominent Muslim face in western UP. Despite his meteoric rise within the party — he was made UP vice-president



and AICC secretary — Masood left to join the Samajwadi Party.

Masood, who once won as an Independent candidate from Saharanpur, first came into the spotlight in 2014 for his alleged hate speech against Narendra Modi, who was then the BJP's PM candidate. While the SP hasn't fielded him this election, Masood — who has tasted several electoral failures in the Congress despite getting over 1 lakh votes each time — believes the party will not be able to give him or his supporters the much-needed push.

"I do not deny that I was given a lot of respect in the Congress but the party lacks the push in terms of votes in UP," Masood told *The Indian Express*, saying he believed the SP would be able to fight the BJP better.

After Masood, the party saw the exit of former Bareilly mayor

Supriya Aron, who was given a Congress ticket from Bareilly Cantonment. Her husband Praveen Singh Aron, a former Congress MP, also left with her to join the SP. Congress leaders in Bareilly say Supriya felt that she stands a better chance at victory as SP candidate than as Congress candidate. Also, having waited long for the Congress's revival, party leaders feel their personal politics will be finished if they go on to lose another poll.

The party got another setback when Haider Ali Khan, a youth leader from Rampur whom the party fielded from Suar Assembly seat, switched to the Apna Dal (S), a BJP ally. Khan's father, a former MLA, is contesting as the Congress candidate from Rampur seat against Azam Khan.

The Congress also saw exits by Lalitesh Pati Tripathi, 37, former

MLA and great grandson of former UP CM Kamalapati Tripathi, who decided to join the Trinamool Congress; and Aditi Singh, the party's sitting MLA from Rae Bareilly who has now vowed to win the seat for the BJP. Two sitting MLAs from Saharanpur — Nareish Saini, who joined BJP, and Masood Akhtar, who joined Samajwadi Party — and Rae Bareilly MLA Rakesh Singh were also among those who left the party.

The party's declining vote share in successive elections is another sign of how tough a revival would be. In 2017, the Congress's 6.25% vote share, when it won just seven seats, was an all-time low, almost half the 2012 vote share of 11.65% (the party won 28 seats). The party had contested the poll in alliance with SP, which too saw a drop in vote share — from almost 29 in 2012 to 22.23% in 2017.

Many within Congress blame its fall on its alliance with the SP. The 2017 election, when the Congress fought on only 144 seats, brought many of its leaders close to the SP leadership but saw the party ceding its own vote bank.

Though, Priyanka has decided to take command and some of her campaigns have been noticed, party leaders admit it's a tall climb. "As of now, only someone who is self motivated can continue in the party. *Koi puchne wala nahi hai, koi connect karne wala nahi hai* (There is no one to ask, no connect)," said a senior Congress leader.

THE BIG FIGHT



Majithia at a press conference in Chandigarh, Wednesday, PTI

Majithia to take on Sidhu in Amritsar

To also contest from Majitha; Cong govt has targeted him, battle now in people's court, says Sukhbir Badal

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR
AMRITSAR, JANUARY 26

SHIROMANI AKALI Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday announced that senior Akali leader Bikram Singh Majithia would take on Punjab Pradesh Congress (PCC) president Navjot Singh Sidhu in Amritsar East, besides contesting from Majitha constituency. Sidhu is the sitting MLA from Amritsar East, while Majithia is the sitting MLA in Majitha.

Badal also announced that his father, former CM and party patron Parkash Singh Badal, would contest the Assembly election from Lambi, from where he is the sitting MLA. At 94, the senior Badal is likely to be among the oldest candidates this election.

While announcing Majithia's candidature from Amritsar East, Badal said, "Navjot Sidhu's arrogance will be his undoing. He has been harping on about his support among the masses. Now his support will be tested with *'Majha da sher'* taking him on in his home constituency. He should get ready to fight the brave SAD workers. We will break his arrogance by ensuring he loses his security deposit."

Badal said, "We have called Sidhu's bluff. We know he has not done anything in his constituency for the last five years. He did not do anything in his constituency even as local bodies' minister (in the Amarinder Cabinet). Now the people of his constituency will hold him to account."

In the 2017 elections, Sidhu had defeated the BJP's Rakesh Kumar Honey by over 40,000 votes. His wife Navjot Kaur Sidhu had won the same seat on a BJP

ticket in 2012.

Accusing the Congress government of targeting his brother-in-law Majithia and registering a "false case" against him, Badal said, "Majithia is known to fight for the people. This was not to the liking of the Congress government. They have registered a false case against a Gursikh who is known to do *'nitnem'* (reciting of Sikh religious text) for two and a half hours every day. Our workers also realised that the best way to seek justice for Majithia was in the people's court and it is they who prevailed upon the party to make him the candidate from Amritsar East."

Weeks ahead of the elections in Punjab, Majithia was booked in a drugs case under sections of the NDPS Act.

The SAD president used the occasion to induct three-time Congress MLA Ranjit Singh Chajalwadi and his son Satinder Singh into the party. Badal also announced that Satinder would contest from Jandiala.

Sidhu had sought a Congress ticket for Satinder from Baba Bakala, but the party gave the ticket to sitting MLA Santokh Singh Bhalaur.

Meanwhile, former Union minister and Majithia's sister Harsimrat Kaur Badal said in Amritsar, "Today, I prayed at Sachkhand Sri Harmandir Sahib that if my brother Bikram (Singh Majithia) is involved in any way in the spread of the drug menace, may Guru Sahib inflict the most horrible punishment on each and every member of our family. But if it's not true, those who told brazen lies on this issue as well as on the painful subject of sacrilege of the Shri Guru Granth Sahib may also be made to face the same fate."

Newest Jakhar on the block: A corporate honcho-turned farmer

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, JAN 25

Neighbouring the Badal family citadel of Lambi is Abohar, a town on the Punjab-Rajasthan border that has for long been associated with another political family of Punjab — the Jakhars, arguably the only Hindu Jat political dynasty in the state.

The biggest of them all was the late Balram Jakhar, who first contested from here in 1972, and

went on to become the longest serving Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Union agriculture minister during the Narasimha Rao government. His youngest son Sunil Jakhar, a senior leader of the ruling Congress in the state, was former PPCC president, Gurdaspur MP, and three-time MLA. Earlier, the senior Jakhar's eldest son Sajjan was agriculture minister in the Beant Singh government.

But this election, there's a new Jakhar on the block: Sandeep Jakhar, son of Sunil Jakhar's elder brother, the late Surinder Jakhar,



Sandeep Jakhar

chairman of IFFCO. A corporate honcho-turned-farmer, Sandeep is fighting his debut election from

Abohar as the Congress candidate. Sunil Jakhar, who is helming the campaign panel of the party, has decided not to contest this time.

An alumnus of Mayo College, Ajmer, Sandeep studied for two years in Switzerland before graduating from Miami and working as head of Country Club in Florida. Abohar was then a speck on his horizon. But that changed after he became a father. "Having grown up in large families, my wife, who is Japanese, and I wanted the same for our daughter."

That was 12 years ago.

Sandeep then returned to growing kinnons on his ancestral land in Punjab, a state he calls "the most secular in India".

"My grandfather (Balram Jakhar) was a visionary. Abohar used to be an infertile belt with sand dunes, but he transformed it by building the 42-km-long Abohar canal that brings water from the Sirhind feeder," says Sandeep, adding he counts the work he did to reconstruct the canal as among his biggest achievements. Today, Abohar accounts for 60 per cent of kinnons

grown in the country.

As a farmer, Sandeep says he has been giving diversification a push by encouraging farmers in Abohar to grow chillies and tomatoes that are processed at the Punjab Agro plant in Alamgarh. "The plant that used to run only a few days a year during the Akali rule now functions 200 days a year and its chilli paste is imported to the Middle East, a market that Abohar farmers have captured from Mexico," he says.

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PARTIES & RIVALS

As BJP looks to break 'jinx', Cong makes presence felt with 'youngest candidate'

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NOIDA, JANUARY 26

DURING HIS recent visit to Gautam Buddha Nagar as part of the BJP's election campaign, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the party would beat the "Noida jinx" and come back to power.

Hitting out at the Opposition, he said he had visited Noida several times during his tenure, unlike his predecessors who avoided the district because they were worried more about "their life and position" than the lives of people of Noida.

He was referring to a superstition in political circles that had kept past CMs Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav from visiting the seat for fear of losing power.

Hailed as a VIP seat and a BJP bastion since 2012, Noida is one of the three Assembly constituencies, besides Dadri and Jewar, that make up the Gautam Buddha Nagar Lok Sabha seat.

The BJP's Pankaj Singh, son of



Pankaj campaigns in Noida.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and vice-president of the party's state unit, is the sitting MLA from Noida, having won the previous election with a margin of more than 1 lakh votes against the SP's Sunil Chaudhary. Chaudhary is the SP candidate this election too. Though Pankaj sailed through in 2017, this time, there is a semblance of a fight.

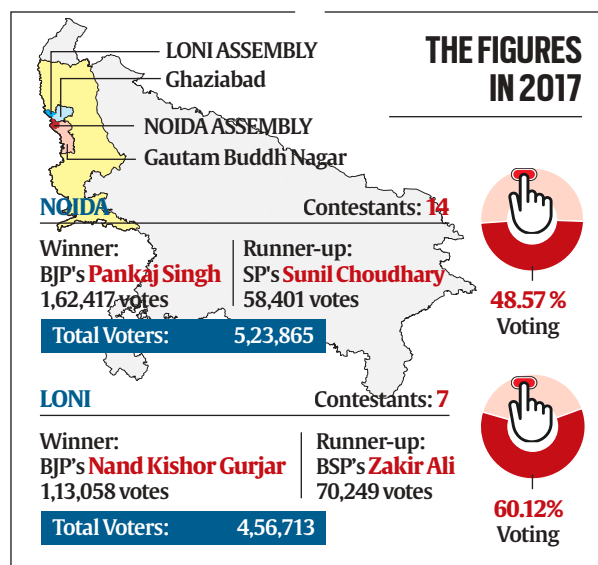
The Congress, which has fielded Pankhuri Pathak, has entered the fray through some ag-

gressive local campaigning. At 29, Pathak is one of the youngest candidates in the fray.

A Delhi resident, Pankhuri got into student politics while in Delhi University, joining the Samajwadi Chatra Sabha, the Samajwadi Party's youth wing. She went on to become the state spokesperson for the SP, but quit three years ago following differences with the party, and joined the Congress.

Her husband, Anil Yadav, a Noida SP leader, also left the party, protesting against allegedly misogynistic comments against Pankhuri. He too, joined the Congress.

With nearly 70% urban and 30% rural votes, one of the most prominent election issues here is related to homebuyers, ranging from delayed possession of flats to problems faced by housing societies. In fact, the president of the Noida Extension Flat Owners' Main Association (NEFOMA), Annu Khan, filed his candidature from Dadri as an Independent candidate.



A recent CAG report — which highlighted several lapses on the part of the Noida Authority, which allegedly aided the housing crisis and led to defaulting by builders, is a talking point among many Noida residents.

"I have been part of several AOA and RWA protests. I have taken up their causes at several levels. Whether it's a problem of law and order or the issue of security guards in the buildings, I closely monitor the issues. The fact is that in this election, people will vote for a leader from among their own," Pathak said during a door-to-door campaign

in Harola on Monday.

Residents acknowledge that while the BJP remains a dominating presence here, the visibility of the Congress has gone up when compared to previous elections. "Earlier, it was a given that the BJP would win from the area, but now it seems that there is a contender," said Harinder Bhati, a resident of the Nayabans area, adding, "The vote for the ruling party is primarily for Yogi Adityanath. The local representative is merely a face and honestly, has not visited a lot. The BJP could have done more in terms of local development."

With unlike poll narratives Loni stares at a cliffhanger

SHIVNARAYAN RAJPUROHIT
LONI, JANUARY 26

"BY 1 lakh votes." This prediction by BJP MLA Nand Kishor Gurjar for his victory margin in the coming elections in Loni is ambitious. He knows that two debutantes, a friend-turned-foe dairy owner and a "muscleman", are both snapping at his heels and may even run past him.

Yet, Gurjar seems confident. "This time, it will double to 1 lakh. For sure," the firebrand MLA says at his Ganauli farmhouse. A few members of the Azgar Sena, a cow vigilante group Gurjar founded in 1998, nod in agreement.

In the 2017 polls, Gurjar had bagged 1,13,058 votes, followed by BSP candidate Zakir Ali's 70,249. RLD's Madan Bhaiya had got 42,518 votes. The SP and the RLD had fought separately then.

For the February 10 polls, Gurjar again sees his rival-in-chief in BSP candidate Akil. However, Bhaiya, the SP-RLD combine's "muscleman", and Independent candidate Ranjita Dhama are no



Not an easy fight for MLA Nand Kishor Gurjar.

pushovers either. Having quit the BJP after it refused her a ticket, Dhama now threatens to disturb the SP-RLD's and the BJP's poll arithmetic.

While Akil is banking on "voters' anger against lack of progress in five years", Bhaiya, a four-time MLA out of power for 10 years now, waxes lyrical about restoring communal harmony. Dhama has been seeking votes in return for her civic works. And for Gurjar, cow protection and a ban on meat shops are as important as the development needed to attain 'Ramrajya'. Known for his incendiary speeches, the Loni MLA was last week served a notice by the Election Commission.

On his way to the party office

at Loni Tiraha, Gurjar stops to offer prayers at the temples of Hanuman and Lord Shiva at the Loni main market. "Do you feel safe now?" he asks a woman shopkeeper. Several shopkeepers praise a 'better' law and order. "This time, I have decided to bet on the BJP," says Baghirath, 83, a traditional BSP voter.

A few kilometres away in Lalbaugh, Bhaiya's aides reveal they have no scruples in him being called a muscleman "because he is a positive one". "He has never bothered us," says Gulshan, who thinks the RLD leader could help her secure her widow pension.

At Naipura, Ranjita from the Jat community has caught the voters' attention. "For five years, nobody could build roads here. Only Dhama completed it recently," says Deepak Sain, who favoured the BJP in 2017.

With several voters in Loni still weighing their options — whether to choose development over community or party over candidate — poll predictions could be a mug's game. But what seems indisputable is a possible cliffhanger.

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PICKED FOR PRAISE

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday chose J&K police for praise among all police forces of the country that received gallantry medals this year. He tweeted, "J&K Police has been the spearhead of India's fight against terrorism. It is a matter of immense pride to the entire nation, that the @JmuKmrPolice has won the largest share, 115, of the gallantry awards today on Republic Day. This reflects their valour and commitment." He also paid special tribute to ASI Babu Ram who died fighting militants in Srinagar and was conferred Ashok Chakra posthumously.

AIR VETERAN

THE FLYPAST featuring 75 aircraft from the three armed forces – the largest ever – was one of the highlights of this Republic Day celebrations. Among the aircraft, there was one that holds special significance for the IAF. The Dakota aircraft, part of some of the formations of the flypast, was the kind that the IAF had used to transport troops of 1st Sikh Regiment to Srinagar in October 1947 during the Kashmir conflict. They were phased out in 1988. But in 2011, Parliamentarian Rajeev Chandrasekhar, now a Union minister, had bought this Dakota from scrap in the UK as his father, an IAF officer, used to fly the Dakota. The old aircraft was restored to flying condition and Chandrasekhar gifted it to the IAF in 2018. It was then inducted into the force's vintage fleet as Dakota VP-905, also known as Parashurama. It made its first appearance on Republic Day last year.

WAITING LIST

WITH THE BJP top leadership busy with Uttar Pradesh and other poll-bound states, one state unit that is eagerly waiting for its attention is that of Karnataka. The repeated setbacks – first the controversy over the bitcoin scam and then setbacks in byelections – have made the factions in the state unit active and Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai is under pressure to carry out a Cabinet reshuffle. Although the state leaders are keen to visit Delhi to meet the national leaders, they have been discouraged and asked to wait till the elections are over. General secretary Arun Singh, meanwhile, is trying to get reports from the ground and has been frequently visiting the state. Party sources said the state leaders would now have to wait till March-April for the Cabinet reshuffle.

After hijab row, Karnataka to make college uniform rule

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE BENGALURU, JANUARY 26

DAYS AFTER a controversy erupted at a pre-University (PU) college in Karnataka's Udupi district for banning hijabs inside classrooms, the state Education Department Tuesday said it will constitute a committee to formulate guidelines on uniforms at PU colleges across the state.

A letter issued by Padmini SN, under-secretary of the Education Department (Pre-University Education), said, "Presently, there is no uniform prescribed by the department to follow and it has been left on the colleges. But after the incident in Udupi district where students demanded to be allowed to attend college in clothes of their choice (hijab), the state government has decided to analyse the court orders in this issue and a committee will be formed."

Seven Muslim students, who were denied entry to the classes by the college authorities for wearing headscarves, have spent

nearly a month outside the college. Amid a controversy, the college shut its operations last week after six students and a lecturer tested positive for Covid-19. The college is expected to open Thursday.

The letter said that the students of the college, who are presently protesting, had agreed to follow the uniform rules set by the college but now they have created a new "confusion which is not good for academics". The letter also asked the colleges to maintain status-quo till the government formulates new guidelines.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Education Minister B C Nagesh said they will bring uniformity among students.

He said, "What if tomorrow someone comes to the college in shorts saying it is hot? We cannot allow it. The colleges had set their own rules and it was being followed...Even in Udupi district, students did not have any problem for all these days but suddenly they came up with the issue. We will address it."

Baghel: First 2 daughters of labourers to get financial aid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA JAGDALPUR, JANUARY 26

CHHATTISGARH Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Wednesday said a new scheme will be launched to promote empowerment of girls under which the first two daughters of labourers will be given financial assistance for their education and employment.

The state government will also implement a five-day week working system for its employees in a bid to increase their work efficiency and productivity. The contribution of the state government under the employees' Contributory Pension Scheme will be increased from 10 per cent to 14 per cent, an official release quoted the CM as saying.

Baghel was speaking at a func-

tion held at the Lalbagh Parade ground in Jagdalpur after unfurling the national flag to mark the 73rd Republic Day. Jagdalpur is the headquarter of the Bastar district, located over 300 km away from the state capital Raipur.

"Mukhyamantri Nani Sashaktikaran Sahayata Yojana (Chief Minister Girl Empowerment Assistance Scheme) will be launched in the state to support the daughters of labourer families in education, employment, self-employment and marriage," the release quoted Baghel as saying. Under the new scheme, a sum of Rs 20,000 will be deposited in the bank account of each of the first two daughters of labourers registered with the 'Chhattisgarh Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board', the release said.

Harish Rawat gets new seat as Cong shuffles its Uttarakhand candidates

AVANEESH MISHRA DEHRADUN, JANUARY 26

MAKING SEVERAL changes in its previous two lists of candidates announced for the Uttarakhand Assembly elections, the Congress on Wednesday night released a third list, naming Harish Rawat, who is leading the party campaign in the state, from Lalkuwa constituency instead of the previously announced Ramnagar seat.

The change in seat is significant since Harish Rawat's friend-turned-foe Ranjit Rawat had staked claims for Ramnagar and had been vocal against the party's decision to pick the former chief minister over him when the second list was announced recently.

According to the third list, Ranjit will contest from Salt, from where he lost in 2012. Harish Rawat has replaced Sandhya Dalakoti in Lalkuwa.

From Ramnagar, the Congress has now fielded Mahendra Pal Singh, who had earlier been given Kaladhungi. Mahesh Sharma will contest from Kaladhungi. Among other changes is Gaurav



Harish Rawat

Chaudhary, who will contest from Doiwala in place of Mohit Uniyal.

Congress state media in-charge Rajeev Maheshwari told *The Indian Express* that the decision to change candidates was taken based on proper assessment. "Harish Rawat has very good chances in Lalkuan. He was comfortable in Ramnagar but Lalkuan is a better seat for him. Ranjit Rawat, who wanted Ramnagar, has been given Salt, a seat he has contested in the past," he said.

With five changes and five new names announced, the Congress has finalised 69 candidates for polls to the 70-member assembly. A decision on the candidate from Tehri seat is yet to be made.

Cong releases third list, new names for 2 seats where former nominees quit

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, JANUARY 26

AHEAD OF the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, the Congress party on Wednesday released the third list of 89 candidate, including new candidates on the seats where party candidates had resigned after announcement of their names.

The party named Mohd Aslam Ansari as its new candidate on Bareilly Cantonment Assembly seat, after Supriya Aaron left the party to join Samajwadi Party (SP), and announced Ram Rakshapal Singh from Suar Assembly seat of Rampur from where young candidate Haider Ali Khan had left the party to join BJP ally, Apna Dal. The party which had, earlier, promised to give away 40 per cent of the tickets to women candidates has ensured it by giving 37 women candidates in its third list. In the first list of 127 candidates, 50 were women, while out of 41 candidates in the second list, 16 were women. Party leaders also said that the average age of candidates in the third list is 43 years of age.

Keeping the caste and community equations in consideration, out of 89 names announced in the latest list, the party has given 21 tickets to Muslim candidates, 27 to general candidates out of which while 13 are Brahmin candidates, 1 is a Bhumihar, 1 Kayastha, 1 Vaishya and 11 Rajputs. Twenty-three of the 89 tickets have been given to Other Backward Castes candidates, which includes 7 Kurnmis, 3 Yadavs, 2 each to representatives of Lodhi Rajput, Nishad, Saini, while one each to Jat, Kamboj, Kushwaha, Lodhi, Pal, Prajapati and Shakya. Meanwhile, 18 tickets have been given to Scheduled Castes (SC) candidates, which include 9 Jatavs, two each Dobhi and Kori, while three tickets to Pasi community leaders, while one each to Shankwar and Valmiki.

PM to host first India-Central Asia meet today

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will host the first India-Central Asia Summit in a virtual format on Thursday.

The summit will see the participation of the five presidents – Kazakhstan's Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Uzbekistan's Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Eмомali Rahmon of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan's Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and Sadyr Japarov of Kyrgyz Republic.

This will be the first engagement of its kind between India and the Central Asian countries at the level of leaders, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had said.



FORCES OF CONVERGENCE

Taking a step closer to integration of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, and to test operational preparedness, the Western Naval Command conducted a joint maritime exercise along several elements from the other two forces and the Coast Guard over a period of 20 days. The exercise – Paschim Lehar (Western Wave) – concluded on Tuesday. The Navy stated Wednesday that the "joint maritime exercise", held off the West Coast, was conducted "under the aegis of" Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh, the Western Navy Commander. Photo: PTI

Several injured as SAD, Cong workers clash in Punjab

RAAKHI JAGGA LUDHIANA, JANUARY 26

SEVERAL PEOPLE sustained injuries as workers of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and Congress got into a clash during a TV debate organised by a local channel at Rampura Phul stadium in Punjab's Bathinda district on Wednesday.

Confirming the clash, Bikramjeet Singh, SHO, Rampura Phul, said, "We have got complaints from both sides and are investigating the matter."

Workers of each party blamed the other for instigating the clash – while Congress alleged that SAD members came in huge numbers for the programme and got aggressive, SAD local leaders said Congress workers attacked them first.

Congress MLA Gurpreet Singh Kangar has been renominated from Rampura Phul. His

BJP ticket for Khanduri's daughter but seat changed

AVANEESH MISHRA DEHRADUN, JANUARY 26

ENDING DAYS of speculation on whether she will get a party ticket to contest the upcoming Uttarakhand Assembly elections, the BJP on Wednesday announced the name of Ritu Bhushan Khanduri, daughter of former Chief Minister B C Khanduri, as one of the nine candidates in its second list.

However, she has been fielded from Kotdwara constituency and not from Yamkeshwar, which she won in the previous election. She has been pitted against Congress candidate Surendra Singh Negi.

According to sources in the BJP, Ritu wanted to continue from Yamkeshwar but the party decided to place its bets on Renu Bisht to contest against Congress's Shailendra Singh Rawat for the seat. Sources said the decision was based on a pre-poll internal sur-

vey, which was not favourable.

In 2017, riding the Narendra Modi wave, Ritu had defeated Renu, who was then an Independent candidate, by a margin of 8,982 votes. Congress candidate Shailendra Rawat was a close third.

After the first list of 59 candidates were announced, amid speculation that she may not get a ticket this time, Ritu had said, "I belong to a family in which we do not ask many questions. There must have been some good enough reason for not giving me the ticket (for Yamkeshwar)."

In the previous election, former state Cabinet minister Harak Singh Rawat, who recently joined the Congress along with his daughter-in-law Anukriti Gusan after the BJP expelled him, had won from Kotdwara.

With Wednesday's announcement, the BJP has so far named 68 candidates for elections to the 70-member Assembly.

PADMA BHUSHAN

Jairam swipe at Azad widens rift in Congress

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

THE BJP government's decision to confer Padma Bhushan on veteran Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad has once again brought to the fore the divide in the grand old party. While the party officially did not comment, many of the Group of 23 leaders, who had earlier sought changes in the party, came out congratulating Azad.

Congress chief whip in Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh's swipe at Azad, a former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, has angered the group of leaders who had written to party president Sonia Gandhi demanding sweeping changes in the party structure.

In fact, senior Congress leader and former Union minister Ashwani Kumar hit out at Ramesh, who while praising CPI(M) veteran Buddhadeb Bhattacharya's rejection of the Padma Bhushan, tweeted on Tuesday: "Right thing to do. He wants to be Azad not Ghulam."

"Congress Rajya Sabha Whip's criticism of Ghulam Nabi Azad for receiving the Padma award is nothing less than a shameful innuendo intended to rob both the award and its recipient of the deserved dignity. Such a mindset does not do justice to the dignitarian ethos of the Congress," Kumar said. He said the award is a "national honour irrespective of which party gives to which leader". Kumar is not a signatory to the letter which was written to Sonia Gandhi in 2020.

Senior leader and Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal took potshots at the party. "Ghulam Nabi Azad conferred Padma Bhushan. Congratulations bhaji. Ironical that the Congress doesn't need his services when the nation recognises his contributions to public life," he tweeted. He did not wish to elaborate.



Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee

earthed," Jago Bangla said, while the TMC leaders reiterated their old argument that the Left and BJP are actually aligned in the state against the TMC.

The CPM, which rushed to contain the situation after the Padma announcement became public, pointed to the statement released by Bhattacharjee: "I know nothing about this award. No one has told me anything about it. If they have decided to offer Padma Bhushan to me, I refuse to accept it."

In a statement released after this, CPM state secretary Suryakanta Misra had said: "Buddhadeb Bhattacharya has

EXPLAINED Party's loud silence

THE CONGRESS's silence on the honour given to Ghulam Nabi Azad and also on Jairam Ramesh's dig at him only reveal the extent of divisions and mistrust among the party's top brass. While tensions simmer, both the sides are keenly watching the upcoming Assembly elections in the five states, where the party has big stakes. A poor performance would exacerbate the internal tussle and deepen the crisis ahead of the party's organisational elections to pick a new president later this year.

The Congress's silence and Ramesh's swipe has not gone down well with the G 23 leaders. "Jairam's tweet was very distasteful. He just wants to be in the news by abusing a colleague... It is not a BJP or RSS honour. The Congress should have shown grace and welcomed it and congratulated Azad. We have lost all the grace now," a senior leader said.

It was not just Congress leaders who disapproved of Ramesh's tweet. Shiv Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi tweeted: "Calling someone Azad for declining a national honour and Ghulam for accepting it... shows how shallow one's thought is towards a national honour. This isn't the first nor the last time that opposition leaders will be acknowledged for their work, please maintain that spirit and dignity."

The other signatories of the letter congratulated Azad on Twitter. Manish Tewari and Anand Sharma said it was a "well deserved recognition".

asked me to request everybody, including government officials, not to call/visit him in this matter. All official contacts may kindly be made at his residential/CPMWB State Committee address by postal correspondence considering his health condition."

A senior CPM leader told *The Indian Express* it wasn't the first time Communist leaders had refused State awards. "E M S Namboodiripad had refused a Padma award proposal in 1992... It is against our ethics. A Communist never does politics or fights for the working class for any award or recognition."

But the leader admitted the fact that the offer came from the Modi government was particularly galling. "We are fighting against the Modi government and BJP relentlessly. We are the only party fighting against communalism from day one. We have never compromised with communalism. So, there was no question of accepting the award, especially when one of the awardees is Kalyan Singh."

Kerala: CPI protests move to dilute Lokayukta powers

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

CPI, the second largest partner in the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala, Wednesday came out against the Ordinance to amend the Kerala Lokayukta Act in a bid to clip the wings of the anti-corruption ombudsman.

Last week, the state cabinet had recommended the Governor to issue the Ordinance to amend the Kerala Lokayukta Act, 1999. The amendment is aimed at giving powers to the government to "either accept or reject the verdict of the Lokayukta, after giving

an opportunity of being heard".

A day after, the decision triggered wide-spread protest and the Opposition Congress petitioned Governor Anif Mohammed Khan to abstain from giving assent to the ordinance. CPI state secretary Kanam Rajendran said no political consultation was held in the LDF on the move to bring in an ordinance for the amendment.

Rajendran said, "People are not convinced about the urgency behind the ordinance. The government could have introduced a Bill for the proposed amendment in the Assembly session, slated for next month. Everyone would have got an opportunity to air their opinion," he said.

EXPRESS NETWORK

PLA RESPONDED POSITIVELY: UNION MINISTER

Rijiju: Bad weather delaying Arunachal youth's return

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26



Union minister Kiren Rijiju

UNION MINISTER Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday said China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has responded positively to handing over Miram Taron, the Arunachal Pradesh teenager who went missing from his village on January 18, and that his return was delayed due to bad weather conditions.

"Hotline exchanged on Republic Day by Indian Army with Chinese PLA. PLA responded positively indicating handing over of our national and suggested a place of release. They are likely to intimate date and time soon. Delay attributed to bad weather conditions on their side," tweeted Rijiju, who is

an MP from Arunachal Pradesh. On Tuesday, the minister had tweeted that Taron, "aged 19 years", from Jido village in Upper Siang district, had gone missing on Jan 18 at Shiyung Lain Bishing area. "Some people reported that Chinese PLA had taken him into their custody. Since the individual was missing from an area close to LAC (Line of Actual Control), Indian Army immediately approached Chinese side on January 19 asking for assistance in tracing and return of the individual, in case he had strayed into the Chinese territory or PLA has taken him in their cus-

today," Rijiju tweeted.

He said the "Chinese side had assured that they would search for the individual and return him as per established protocol".

On January 20, the minister said, China intimated "that they had found a boy on their side and requested for further details to establish the identity", after which his details and identity were shared. "I appeal everyone to be cautious in making statements which are not based on facts because the safety and safe return of our young Arunachal Pradesh youth is the priority," he had tweeted.

Last week, Rijiju's party colleague Tapir Gao, the MP from Arunachal East, had accused the PLA of abducting Taron from the Indian side of the border.

We just want him back safely: family

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, JANUARY 26

FOLLOWING INDICATIONS on Wednesday that China has responded positively to handing over Miram Taron, the teenager's family in Arunachal Pradesh's Zido village is overjoyed. His father said they do not mind the delay due to the weather as long as he returns home safe.

"We don't want anything else but our son back. We want him back at the earliest. But if it takes a bit more time for weather, so be it. We just want him back safe, unhurt,"



Miram Taron

Miram's father Opang Taron, a farmer, told *The Indian Express*.

Miram's mother Kutjit Taron, 43, fell sick recently with blood pressure issues, worrying about her son, who went missing eight days ago. She is better now and is waiting for her son to return, Opang said.

Opang lives with his wife, brothers and five sons, including Miram, in the small village in Upper Siang district, not far from China. The village is a

short distance away from a forest, where Miram, Opang's third-eldest son, went to hunt and collect herbs on January 18. He did not return.

According to Miram's friend Johny Yaiying, who had accompanied him to the forest, Chinese troops had taken the teenager while he managed to escape and report the incident to the Indian authorities. Opang's family later filed a complaint with the nearby Tuting police station.

Opang said the Indian Army and local authorities had sought identification marks and other details to confirm Miram upon arrival.

Mumbai records 4.3% TPR, cases may fall further

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JANUARY 26

WITH THE plateauing of the Covid-19 pandemic curve in the third wave, the test positivity rate (TPR) — the number of positive cases detected when compared to the total tests conducted — in Mumbai dropped to 4.3% on Wednesday. This is a sharp fall from 28.9% TPR reported 19 days ago.

On January 7, out of the 72,442 tests conducted, 20,971 tested positive. But after hitting its pandemic peak around January 10, the daily cases gradually started coming down.

On January 11, out of the 62,097 tests conducted, 11,647 were detected with Covid-19 with 18.7% TPR. A week later, on January 18, the daily cases surged marginally with 6,149 cases with 47,700 tests, counting 12.8% TPR.

Seven days later, Wednesday, it plunged to 4.3% with 1,858 positive cases, out of the 42,315 tests conducted in Mumbai.

"We expect the daily caseload will plunge further. Next week, it may go below 1,000 daily cases. But the public need to be careful and put their guards up as the pandemic is not over yet," said Suresh Kakani, additional commissioner, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation.

However, the state's TPR is

Call on opening tourist places next week

Aurangabad: Maharashtra Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray on Wednesday said the Chief Minister will review the Covid-19 situation next week and take decision about reopening tourist places and monuments in the state. "Covid infection figures in Aurangabad have not yet come down much. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will review the situation next week and decide about opening the monuments and tourist places," he told reporters after holding a meeting of tourism department officials here. Aurangabad district is home to the Ajanta and Ellora cave monuments. **PTI**

hovering around 20%. On Wednesday, the state recorded 35,756 cases out of 1,83,026 tests conducted with a TPR of 19.53%. On Tuesday, out of the 1,72,498 tests conducted, 33,914 tested positive with TPR of 19.6%.

A day after reporting 86 Covid-19 deaths, on Wednesday, it dropped slightly to 79.

AFTER REGULAR MARKET APPROVAL

Covishield, Covaxin doses likely to be capped at Rs 275

PAYAL BANERJEE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

THE PRICE of Covishield and Covaxin, Covid-19 vaccines that are expected to soon get regular market approval from India's drug regulator, is likely to be capped at Rs 275 per dose plus an additional service charge of Rs 150, sources said.

According to sources, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has been directed to start working towards capping the price to make the vaccines affordable.

Presently, Covaxin is priced at Rs 1,200 per dose while Covishield costs Rs 780 in private facilities. The prices include Rs 150 service charge. Both vaccines are only authorised for emer-

gency use in the country.

A subject expert committee on Covid-19 of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation on January 19 recommended granting regular market approval to Covid vaccines Covishield and Covaxin for use in the adult population subject to certain conditions.

Prakash Kumar Singh, director (government and regulatory affairs) at Serum Institute of India, had submitted an application to the Drugs Controller General of India on Oct 25 seeking regular market approval for Covishield.

A couple of weeks ago, V Krishna Mohan, director at Bharat Biotech, submitted information on the chemistry, manufacturing and controls, along with the pre-clinical and clinical data while seeking regular market authorisation for Covaxin. **PTI**

India at UN: 26/11 perpetrators continue to enjoy Pak patronage

YOSHITA SINGH
UNITED NATIONS, JANUARY 26

PERPETRATORS OF the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks continue to enjoy Pakistan's patronage, India has told the United Nations Security Council, saying that most terrorist attacks around the world have their origin, in some form or the other, in that country.

India strongly hit back at Pakistan after Islamabad's envoy to the UN, Munir Akram, raked up the issue of Jammu and Kashmir during an UNSC Open Debate on "Protection of civilians in armed conflict: Wars in cities — protection of civilians in urban settings" on Tuesday.

"Member-states are well aware that Pakistan has an established history of harbouring, aiding and actively supporting terrorists. This is a country which has been globally recognised as a sponsor of terrorism and holds the ignoble record of hosting the largest number of terrorists proscribed by the UN Security Council," counsellor in India's Permanent Mission to the UN, R Madhu Sudan, said.

"So much so that most terrorist attacks around the world today have their origin, in some form or the other, in Pakistan," he said. **PTI**

Dr Anurag Agrawal to be guest at online Explained session

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, JANUARY 26



Is Omicron the last major variant, or could there be more? Is it possible to predict how the virus will mutate in the future? Can we do anything to prevent future waves? Most importantly, is it really the endgame? These, and many such, questions are uppermost on the minds of everyone as India negotiates its third wave of Covid-19.

There are few people in the country who understand these questions better than Dr Anurag Agrawal, director of Delhi-based Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, a CSIR research laboratory, who will be the guest at the online Explained session of *The Indian Express* on Thursday evening. As head of an institution that is currently involved in generating the scientific information required to prepare response measures for the pandemic, Dr Agrawal is one of the key voices in the government's decision-making apparatus. He also engages directly with the people through informative and educative posts on social media on the pandemic.

However, this is hardly the dominant view in the scientific community. Moreover, this pandemic has thrown up multiple surprises, and defied most predictions.

Are we therefore in an endless loop, or is there any hope in sight?

FIR filed against Google's Pichai

Mumbai: An FIR has been registered against Google CEO Sundar Pichai and five others based on a complaint by director-producer Suneel Darshan regarding alleged copyright infringement. The FIR was registered following a court order.

Darshan claimed that though he did not give anyone the rights

to his 2017 movie, *Ek Haseena Thi Ek Deewana Tha*, the same has been uploaded to Google-owned YouTube. He added that several people were earning money from uploading the film.

He added that he had raised the issue with YouTube for many years but had not received any response from it. **ENS**

PM SECURITY BREACH

Majithia seeks NIA probe into leaked audio, Punjab ex-DGP denies allegations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 26

AKALI DAL leader Bikram Singh Majithia on Wednesday sought an NIA probe into the security breach during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Punjab visit earlier this month in light of what he alleged was a "meeting" between former Punjab DGP Siddharth Chattopadhyaya and Sarabjit Singh, a proclaimed offender.

Majithia alleged this has come to the light in the leaked audio tapes, in which Chattopadhyaya is purportedly told by Sarabjit to affect recoveries of RDX, explosives and weapons and thereby "open eyes of [Prime Minister] Modi in four to five days".

Majithia's remarks come a day after Punjab and Haryana High Court stayed his arrest for three days, giving him time to move the Supreme Court and challenge his bail dismissal in a drugs case.

Denying the allegations, Chattopadhyaya told *The Indian Express*: "Who has produced these tapes? What is the source and authenticity of these tapes? I have not heard any tapes. There was no such meeting at my residence. This is all nonsense; false."

Among unsung heroes in Padma list: paraplegic social worker, man behind EVM-VVPAT tech

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

A PARAPLEGIC who has dedicated her life to help the differently abled, a 102-year-old Gandhian still engaged in spreading the Mahatma's ideas, a pediatrician who quit a cushy job in the US to provide affordable healthcare in Gujarat, a physician from Maharashtra who dedicated his life to treating the poor of scorpion and snake bites, a Gujarati ghazal singer who sponsored education of the underprivileged as he could not study himself and the man behind India's EVM and VVPAT technology.

They are some of the unsung heroes who have been conferred the Padma Shri this year by the government for contribution to society or preserving dying art forms. A look at some of them:

K V RABIYA, 55



A social worker from Malappuram in Kerala, Rabiya is paralysed from neck below. Her citation calls her a "brave-heart who overcame unending personal tragedies, to serve others". In spite of being afflicted with polio at 12, being di-

agnosed with cancer, apart from being paralysed, Rabiya has relentlessly worked for the betterment of the differently abled, her citations says. She started six schools for children with special needs and trained and empowered more than 250 women through a small-scale manufacturing unit. "In over three decades of tireless efforts, she has inspired many and raised awareness on social issues like de-addiction, dowry and superstitions," her citation says.

SHAKUNTALA CHOUDHARY, 102



The Gandhian and freedom fighter from Kamrup in Gujarat has been "silently promoting the value of service for the last seven decades". Inspired by ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave, Choudhary founded Gram Seva Kendras across North-East "which made sustainable efforts in the field of social work" and worked for "villagers, especially women and children, through Stree Shakti Jagaran movement even during adverse times", her citation says.

DILIP SHAHANI, 71

Engineer, academician and tech-



India. He was conferred Padma Shri for "playing role in India's electronic voting machine technology platform". He is currently Emeritus Professor at IIT Delhi. "One of the finest Electronics Expert, Shahani has contributed towards designing and development of India's EVM and VVPAT technology platforms," his citation says.

KHALIL DHANTEJVI, 86



Famous for popularising Gujarati ghazals for more than half a century, Dhantevi started his career as a journalist. Bestowed with titles Sarangi, Sadagi, Sopan and Saugaat for his literary work as Gujarati-Urdu poet, he has authored more than eight poetry books and nine novels apart from directing 20 films in Gujarati. "Due to financial difficulties he was not able to attend school after Class 4, so he vowed to sponsor the education of underprivileged children," his citation says.

HIMMATRAO BAWASKAR, 71



The general physician from Mahad in Maharashtra is widely known for his treatment for scorpion poisoning and snake bites. "Coming from a humble background, he started treating the poor for scorpion sting and snake bites in rural areas despite lack of resources. He discovered use of Prazosin in treatment which led the mortality rate to drop from 40% to less than 1%," his citation says.

LOUREMBAM BINO DEVI, 77



Veteran Applique artist from Manipur who revived the art of Leeba motifs. Coming from a humble rural background, she has single-handedly kept alive the fast-fading art of ornamental needlework for five decades. "Her motifs represent the culture of Meitei community. Preserving the art by passing the knowledge to students which she herself has learnt from her mother-in-law," her citation says.

V L NGHAKA, 91



A key figure in setting up Mizoram Hindi Prachar Sabha in 1954 for the promotion of Hindi language, Nghaka has propagated Hindi language and education in Mizoram for more than six decades. "He built a cultural bridge between Hindi and Mizo language by drafting a Hindi-Mizo dictionary. As an interpreter, he was instrumental in bringing the government and Mizo people closer," his citation says.

GAMIT RAMILABEN RAYSINGBHAI, 52



A tribal social worker from Tapi in Gujarat, Raysingbhai has been conferred the award for contribution in education, healthcare and sanitation. "Coming from a very humble background in Tapi, Raysingbhai worked at grass-roots level to maximise effect. Her dedicated effort led to nine villages becoming open-defecation free. She created 300-plus sanitary units and held awareness events on open defecation and sickle cell in tribal belts," the

citation says.

GIRDHARI RAM GHONJU, 72



Ghonju has worked towards promotion of Nagpuri culture for more than five decades. A Nagpuri litterateur and educationist from Ranchi, he has been working for uplift of regional language and culture of Jharkhand. "He has authored over 25 books and plays, especially on saving local heritage and identity of Nagpuria culture. He has spread awareness on rights of tribals and forests dwellers," his citation says.

LATA DESAI, 75

A pediatrician who along with her husband Dr Anil Desai quit her job in the US to provide affordable healthcare in rural Gujarat, she has dedicated five decades for tribal uplift through her initiative SEWA Rural, providing treatment to more than 24 lakh patients in 1,000 villages. "Empowered youth by establishing vocational training centers which have benefited thousands till date," her citation says.

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HONOURABLE RIVALS

It will be regrettable — but not a surprise — if NDA’s attempt to reach across the aisle ends up as just yesterday’s headline

THIS YEAR’S PADMA honours are not an unmixed bag. Covid vaccine makers who have helped the nation step up to an unprecedented health emergency and saved countless lives awkwardly rub shoulders with a former BJP chief minister who presided over an indelible stain on constitutional democracy in India, the demolition of Babri Masjid. But the day after, the BJP-led government’s list of 128 seems to be touching off ripples, most of all, for the award to Congress veteran Ghulam Nabi Azad and CPM senior Buddhadeb Bhattacharya — the former has accepted it even as his party appears divided on the matter, while the latter declined within hours of the announcement, in keeping with his party line on state awards. This is not the first time, of course, that a government’s awards list includes names from the Opposition. The Narasimha Rao government, for example, honoured Morarji Desai with Bharat Ratna and Atal Bihari Vajpayee with Padma Vibhushan. The Narendra Modi government itself has earlier honoured Pranab Mukherjee with Bharat Ratna and Sharad Pawar with Padma Vibhushan. And yet, such is the growing political polarisation today that the awards to Azad and Bhattacharya stand out. For the same reason, they are also welcome.

Of course, the Modi government’s reasons for this outreach may be more than a little tactical. In honouring Azad, for instance, the ruling party at the Centre may be acknowledging not just the J&K leader’s undoubted political eminence but also his growing and visible estrangement from his own party — the PM’s emotional tribute to Azad when he retired from the Rajya Sabha last year may have been a prelude. By seeking to award Bhattacharya, it may also be showing down the TMC. Or, rubbing it in to the CPM that the Communist to be applauded is the one who tried to chart his own course and was sent out into the cold. And yet, in a political climate where it often seems that the BJP, seven years in power, is contesting elections 24X7, locked in a fight to the finish with the Congress and the Left, the gesture is still heartening. Such is the BJP’s unrelenting aggression, even when it is winning, that even a bare acknowledgement of the political opponent seems a welcome departure from the hardening hostilities. During elections, but also in peace time in between polls, the party is perpetually othering its opposition and calling it names, with its government using the law and the agencies at its command to intimidate or target those who dissent and disagree. In this context, in their best version, the awards to Azad and Bhattacharya mark a moment.

As another crucial round of elections draws closer, the battle lines are sharpening once again. As they face off, all parties would do well to remember that the democracy game is bigger than its players, who must play with humility and abide by its rules and its courtesies. To expect the BJP to abandon its not-so-secret fantasy of an “Opposition-mukt” nation may itself be a fantasy. But reaching out across the aisle is what enriches a democracy and it will be regrettable if the NDA’s attempt to do so, in the Padma honours list, ends up being just yesterday’s headline.

EXODUS & OPENING

Exit of ‘gen-next’ leaders from Congress underlines that Rahul Gandhi’s plans for the party need rethinking and renewal

EVER IF THOSE leaving a sinking ship do not cover themselves in glory, for those at the ship’s helm, this should provide cold comfort — after all, the ship is still sinking. In the backdrop of the approaching Uttar Pradesh election, RPN Singh’s exit from the Congress may have limited impact: His sphere of influence is said to be confined to Padrauna and Kushi Nagar Lok Sabha constituency. Yet the former Congress MP, minister and AICC secretary’s decision sends out a larger signal — that Rahul Gandhi’s plans for the Grand Old Party’s transition from an organisation dominated by the old guard to one that has a younger and more vigorous face, may be coming to nought. Singh is the third prominent leader — after Jitin Prasada and Jyotiraditya Scindia — of Rahul Gandhi’s “chosen” team, the party’s so-called “gen-next” leadership, to cross over to the BJP.

Singh, Scindia and Prasada are not politicians who have come up through the ranks. Each belongs to a political family with roots in the Congress. Each was given responsibilities in both the party and in Congress-led governments. That these leaders, who presumably had the ear of the party high command, have chosen to leave the Congress can be taken as a sign that they see little hope in the foreseeable future for the party’s revival and the advancement of their own political careers through it. For the Congress as a whole and Rahul Gandhi in particular, their exits could mark the beginning of a further depletion of the party’s second-rung leadership — more exits and the consequent sense of despondence and demoralisation among its members and supporters. Or, if the Congress can summon the agility and the will, this could also be a moment to begin a course correction and to nurture young leaders who have a greater presence at the grassroots, and a deeper commitment to the party.

Rahul Gandhi, as far back as 2008, tried — with limited success — to democratise the Congress by picking up young leaders for the Youth Congress who did not belong to the entitled elite. But that initiative slowed and floundered, as all Congress plans and projects do, in the absence of the leadership taking full ownership of them, or doing a sustained follow-up. Unless the Congress begins to provide opportunities to leaders to make their way up from the bottom — and the spaces for them to be heard within the party — its seemingly interminable slide is likely to go on.

THE EVER AFTERS

China’s new finale for ‘Fight Club’ opens up tantalising possibilities. Other films could also do with a different ending

ALL IT FILM editing with Chinese characteristics. It seems that the authorities in China have cut the original ending of the David Fincher film *Fight Club* and replaced it with one that they like better. The 1999 film ended with the protagonist killing his imaginary alter ego and watching as multiple buildings that contain credit card records explode, thus setting the stage for a new era of “financial equilibrium”. In the version that is now streaming in China, however, the final scene is replaced with a screen saying that the police found out about Project Mayhem just in time, managed to arrest the plotters and prevent the explosives from going off. A fictional revolution is thus averted and peace and stability preserved, even if over two decades late and at the cost of a film’s artistic integrity.

The “new” ending may have upset film fans but, look again, and it could even be an opportunity. It’s no secret that many otherwise enjoyable films have been a let down because of disappointing or baffling finales. So why not do it the Chinese way and simply change the endings? To begin with, by doing away with those that are “open to interpretation”. Did that top stop spinning at the end of *Inception*? Does Saajan find Ila in *The Lunchbox*? What is the deal with that monolith in *2001: A Space Odyssey*?

And how about tacking on completely new endings? Rose could make room for Jack on that door for a happy ending to *Titanic* and Charulata could be shown giving the boot to boring ol’ Bhupati and going off with Amal in the Satyajit Ray classic. And, in keeping with the tone of the new *Fight Club* ending, Charles Foster Kane buys ‘Rosebud’ for an exorbitant amount at an auction and dies a happy, wealthy, not-at-all-lonely man. The end.



MANISH SABHARWAL AND RAJEEV MANTRI

IN THE 1950S, first-time parliamentarian Atal Bihari Vajpayee asked about the Ashok hotel, then being constructed in Delhi: Why was the government building a five-star hotel and not a hospital? The standard socialist ideological response of inadequate private capacity was inapplicable; Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata had set up Mumbai’s magnificent Taj Mahal hotel in 1903. Prime Minister Nehru replied that hospitals would be built from the profits earned by the luxury hotel. But Vajpayee’s substantive question was about strategy, the trade-offs that reconcile unlimited aspirations with limited resources. Air India’s sale is important for three reasons — priorities, resources, mindset — and is a template for the Indian state to do more by doing less.

First, priorities. If corporate strategy is the art of creating unfair legal advantages, no government can run hotels, automotive or steel companies competitively. Public commercial enterprises have unfair disadvantages in human resources. Air India had 12 trade unions, employees per plane were double global standards, and employee cost was an abnormal 20 per cent of revenues. Also, if commercial activity by the state generated prosperity, then Pakistan or North Korea would be thriving economies. The state’s core job — security, primary healthcare and education, research funding, justice delivery, etc — suffered after Independence because scarce public resources were diverted to doing things that the private sector could do better. Air India’s sale represents a welcome shift in policy.

Second, resources. In 1953, the Hungarian economist Janos Kornai warned that state sector firms indulge in “investment hunger” and don’t fear losses because they know they will be bailed out. Around the same time, Air India cost the government only Rs 2.5 crore to buy, but it has incinerated Rs 1.1 lakh crore since 2009 (this could fund 15 years of school mid-day meals or be used to set up 660 medical colleges). Kornai termed this excessive money appetite as “soft” budget constraints. The Supreme Court agreed when it described Air India’s 2007 purchase of 111 planes for Rs 67,000 crore as “unnecessary”. Air India’s nationalisation cost about Rs 20 crore in losses

Air India’s homecoming provides a template for prioritising government resources

per day and its monopoly caused a 25-year delay in India becoming the third-largest civil aviation market.

The government’s creativity and persistence in divesting Air India must be replicated with most of the remaining 360-plus central PSUs. In parallel, with state government finances also ravaged by the pandemic, states privatising over 1,500 poorly run state PSUs could ease fiscal woes. Federalism is also about being responsible with public funds provided by taxpayers and devolved by the Union government.

And third, the mindset. The 1970s government’s belief in its omnipotence is captured by the PMO bureaucrat PN Haksar’s response to an application for private scooter capacity expansion — reject it and set up Scooters India (another misadventure). The command, control and conquer mindset of the 1955 Avadi resolution — century-old second-hand ideas of a dead German guy — ignored our folk wisdom of *jahaan raja vyapaari, vahaan praja bhikaari*. Who is responsible for Air India’s capital bonfire? Politicians, bureaucrats, managers, or workers? Unfortunately, public sector governance mirrors Agatha Christie’s *Murder On The Orient Express* — if everybody did something, then nobody can be held accountable. Counterintuitively, many individuals involved in the Air India disaster went on to greater career heights because of performance feedback mechanisms that value visibility, perception, and silence over tangible outcomes. The “fatal conceit” represented by Air India’s seven-decade tragedy suggests we need better role balancing between the three pillars of team India — private, public, and nonprofits. Or what poet Brij Narayan Chakbast called *anasir mein zahur-e-tarteeb* (orderliness among elements).

No civil servant running Air India could deliver the “tone from the top” that JRD Tata did. An employee recalls “JRD would walk the aircraft, checking furnishings for stains, toilets for cleanliness, curtains for fraying, and windows for dust”. A note from JRD admonished “the tea served on board from Geneva is, without exaggeration, indistinguishable in colour from coffee. I don’t know

GREEN PUSH TOO FAR

Europe is realising how transition to renewable energy can jeopardise food security



AMIT BHANDARI

EUROPE’S PUSH FOR renewable energy at the cost of conventional fuel may end up causing a global food crisis. Since August 2021, Western Europe has faced a problem with renewable energy — the wind doesn’t always blow when needed and the sun doesn’t always shine. Countries such as UK, Spain and Germany are relying more on natural gas to make up the electricity shortfall, causing a crisis that will be felt worldwide.

What happens when renewable energy doesn’t deliver the goods, and rich economies scramble to buy gas to make up the shortfall? The world is discovering now. Commodity markets across the world operate on a balance of demand and supply — even seemingly “small” changes in either side of a few percentage points can push the prices up or down sharply. Europe’s sudden appetite for natural gas has pushed up the prices of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), the form in which gas gets traded globally. The LNG price published by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (Australia is one of the leading global LNG exporters) is at US \$30/mmbtu in January 2022 as against a long-term average of \$7-8/mmbtu. Higher gas prices have pushed up energy bills for households and are expected to impact household spending and consumption as well.

The sudden dependence on natural gas during winter has also made European coun-

tries wary of upsetting Russia amidst the Ukraine conflict. Some European observers are blaming Russia for the high gas prices and for using its gas supplies as geopolitical leverage — the actual cause of the problem is underinvestment by European governments in reliable energy sources.

Natural gas is used to produce urea — if gas prices go up, fertiliser also becomes expensive. Urea prices are about three times the level of where they were a year ago. Expensive fertiliser means more expensive food — that will hurt the world’s poor disproportionately. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) food price index is already at a 10-year high. Some poor and middle-income countries are already starting to face problems of fertiliser availability — there are reports from several Indian states as well. The impact of expensive fertiliser will be felt some months down the line as expensive fertiliser and reduced harvests push up food prices. India is relatively less affected as the share of natural gas in the country’s energy mix is low but will still face problems due to high food prices. The food inflation will come at a time when the ongoing pandemic has disproportionately hurt lower income groups worldwide.

In 2007-08, when oil prices were high, there was a push to use “biofuels” led by the US and Europe. Land was diverted to cultivate crops that could be converted to

ethanol, leaving less for food crops. The effects of the 2008 food price crisis were felt around the world, especially by the poor. High price of food was one of the proximate causes of political unrest in the Arab world in 2011 — Libya and Syria continue to feel its aftereffects.

A blind push to demonise and shut down traditional sources of energy and move to less reliable “clean” energy can have second and third order effects. Europe is rich enough to be able to buy its way out of self-created problems, leaving others to deal with the consequences.

The crisis also holds lessons for India, which has ambitious plans for using renewable technologies but doesn’t have the financial cushion available to the European nations. Cheap and reliable energy sources should not be abandoned until the alternatives have been stringently stress tested. India will be especially hard hit if oil prices spike as it imports close to 1.4 billion barrels of oil annually. However, fresh investment in developing new oil and gas reserves has been slowing down globally, in part due to climate action — and crude oil price is at a multi-year high.

The writer is senior fellow for energy, investment and connectivity studies, Gateway House, and the author of India and the Changing Geopolitics of Oil

JANUARY 27, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

RANGA’S PLEA

RANGA WHOSE EXECUTION is set for January 31 has filed another petition in the Supreme Court requesting it to review its latest decision. He has also sent another petition to the president seeking to do some hard work in the jail and requesting him to delink his case from that of Billa, the other accused in the gruesome Chopra murder case. In his fifth attempt to get a reduced sentence, Ranga has drawn attention to the role press played in the legal battle in this case. In November, Chief Justice YV Chandrachud at a special sitting in his house admitted Ranga’s petition. There was a barrage of articles in the press criticising the move.

PADMA AWARDS

ATM PRAKASH, EMINENT surgeon of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, has been conferred the Padma Bhushan. Another recipient of the Padma Bhushan from the AIIMS is J S Bajaj. Ajit Ram Verma, director of the National Physical Laboratory, has also been given the award. Cricketer Syed Kirmani and world badminton champion Prakash Padukone have been conferred the Padma Shri. Honoured for putting men and women in newspaper pictures is Virendra Prabhakar of *The Hindustan Times*, who has been conferred the Padma Shri.

ASSAM STRIKE

WHILE AGITATION LEADERS are going ahead with their plan to impose a 12 hour curfew on Republic Day, the new Congress (I) administration is making necessary preparations to meet its first major challenge. Saying that no government can tolerate the imposition of a curfew by a non-constitutional authority and that too on Republic Day, Chief Minister Keshab Chandra Gogoi appealed to the agitators to take back their decision.

There was no edition of this paper on January 27, 1982 on account of Republic Day. The above are edited excerpts of the paper on January 26, 1982

Plan, prepare, prevent

Why this is my chant on the day after another Republic Day amid a pandemic



KAVERY NAMBISAN

TWO YEARS AGO, on January 31, I was at a party to celebrate the 60th birthday of my sister-in-law. My brother and their two daughters had pulled out all the stops to make it a memorable event. We chattered late into the evening over food and drink, until someone mentioned the “Chinese virus” that was rapidly infecting people, and killing many. It was quickly postulated that China, while actually trying to destroy us, Indians, had inadvertently infected their own people. Ha-ha.

Two years ago, on Republic Day, the Brazilian president Bolsonaro was the guest of honour at a ceremony of pomp and grandeur: five women motorcyclists and their team wowed the crowds; there were many other acts of glory, as there always are, on Republic Day.

A month later, I was sitting in my clinic wearing my facial fig leaf, soaking my hands in an alcohol-based sanitiser and sermonising to my perplexed patients about the danger of the new virus. I cancelled holidays and neighbourly home-visits; except for a few defiant forays outward, I limited myself to home and clinic. Two years on, I am still wearing the fig leaf and following precautionary measures while praying hard that this third wave too will end. I do not need to dwell upon the course of events in the two intervening years, except to emphasise the absolute need to record every detail of those years, for posterity. So that we, and generations after us, can look again at the scourge and the devastation, applaud triumphs, accept failures and rethink the future. Forgive me then, for turning back the pages while looking and planning ahead.

Two years on, we are still hurting. Children are confused and depressed with the monotony of online classes, doctors and nurses are physically and mentally exhausted, the poorer sections of our society are struggling with joblessness and severe privation, the wealthy are bored and listless, celebrities cannot believe that their antics on screen are not at all a priority; and the VVIPs of the country are disappointed that they have to put off their jet-setting for mega events and world conferences which come to nought.

As with every crisis, there are lessons here for everyone. Let us consider what they might be — for us as citizens; for the medical profession; for the government.

Does every citizen carry a responsibility? You bet. During the first phase of the pandemic, we made many mistakes — some small, others gargantuan. We did not properly heed the fundamental measures that we were repeatedly told to follow. Even leaders roamed mask-free. Had we all followed the basic precautionary steps diligently, it is certain that more than half the 4,00,000 plus deaths in our country could have been avoided. The basic preventive measures of masking, distancing and hygiene are still the most effective measures in fighting the virus.

Medical professionals worked away, trying hard to cope with the strange situation in which, for some terrible months, only Covid-affected patients dared to go to hospitals, for the risk of going to hospital seemed greater than not going. The number of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals who lost their lives in the process is difficult to come to terms with.



CR Sasikumar

The government did what it is good at — posturing. Enough has been said about this, the hasty knee-jerk reactions, the confusing signals and the catastrophe that followed. Sadly, those affected the most were those without adequate resources. We had to witness worthless spectacles like lighting lamps, beating thalis, showering flowers, playing music — Nero-like, as lives burned away for lack of the most essential commodity, oxygen.

After my retirement as a surgeon some years ago, I work in an independent clinic in my small rural town. Most of my work now boils down to general practice which I have learnt to enjoy. With no advice or guidelines coming my way, I took the only option — educating myself about the new killer. Online medical information helped me understand the pathology and course of the disease; discussions with colleagues helped me set up my own protocol while using the guidelines issued by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences as a reference point. I found that a timely antibiotic, anti-histamines, Ivermectin, immunity boosting vitamins and minerals and at times other anti-inflammatory drugs like colchicine and diethylcarbamazine were immensely useful in treating mild to moderately severe cases. It was indeed possible to prevent a serious outcome in all but a few patients who required hospital care.

It is urgent and imperative that the medical community comes together to plan an ef-

During the first phase of the pandemic, we made many mistakes — some small, others gargantuan. We did not properly heed the fundamental measures that we were repeatedly told to follow. Even leaders roamed mask-free. Had we all followed the basic precautionary steps diligently, it is certain that more than half the 4,00,000 plus deaths in our country could have been avoided.

fective strategy to cope with future crises such as this. What it means is that we need hospitals/wards/medical personnel who can be at the fore with immediate effect. For this, the government must take the necessary steps after conferring with medical experts. We have to stress the absolute necessity for such critical medical management at short notice. This is the time for us to come together, so our voice is heard.

For every citizen of India like you and me, this is a good day to reflect: “Reflection” involves “looking at oneself” in the mirror with an unflinching gaze. Like what you see? Well, then. Be who you are and carry on. It is aptly termed “streaming along”. Go unquestioningly with the flow and society will lull you into it. But if you can look in the mirror and ask yourself a few bold questions, you might find answers.

India is at a critical juncture: A small percentage of us live in comfort and ease while the rest struggle to live in modest dignity and several millions strive to satisfy their basic needs of food and shelter. Moreover, climate change will soon dictate its own terms, we cannot afford to be unprepared. My own, hopeful Republic Day chant for avoiding future catastrophes is: Plan. Prepare. Prevent.

The writer is a surgeon and author of, most recently, A Luxury Called Health (Speaking Tiger)



ALANKRITA SHRIVASTAVA

I HARBOUR too much anger, too much pain. It threatens to swallow me up any day now. I can see that this is not the India of my childhood. I feel helpless. There is too much hatred. Everything has changed. Nothing has changed. This is, perhaps, who we were as a people. Just waiting for an opportunity to vent this hatred.

But then I think of both my grandfathers — one a freedom fighter, the other an active participant in the building of Nehruvian India. I think of my maternal grandmother, who still bears the pain of Partition in her heart, the invisible scars that have still not healed. She was not yet a teenager in 1947 when her family had to abandon their home and life and start over as refugees in India. Later, she was unable to finish medical school and perhaps had to bury the dreams she nurtured for herself. But she was a woman who never gave up. She always had hope. She worked when few women were allowed to, she travelled alone when few women dared, she made a life for herself and her family. She was the wind beneath my grandfather’s wings. At almost 90, she is still the driving force in our lives. She had the audacity to educate my mother at an elite boarding school and send her off to IIM Ahmedabad to study management when the family could scarcely

In stories we trust

Even in the darkest hours, the tales we tell light our way

afford it. “You must be fully educated before you marry,” was her credo.

I think of my mother, who grew up as India was coming into its own. She didn’t have to carry the burden of Partition, but it was always a presence. I don’t know whether, when my parents were young, life in India seemed full of hope and possibilities. But when I was still in school, the economy opened up and there was hope and excitement and a buzz about what the future holds. The sound of the destruction that happened in the name of faith was loud and jarring, but it was lost in the cacophony of excitement about what we could buy and watch and who we could dare to be. I never imagined that that sound would become the sound of our collective future.

My mother’s life threw up a series of challenges. She had to fight many battles. She has a quiet resilience that has seen us through the darkest of nights. She has worked all her life and shown us how to live with courage and grace. And she, like my grandmother, has nurtured hope. My mother was brave enough to let me do my thing — move to Bombay and become a filmmaker — no questions asked, no fears projected. I was able to follow my dream because I know she always has my back. My

mother never wondered why I couldn’t follow a more tried and tested path. She just said, feel free to do your thing.

Just like me, there are so many women out there, following their dreams because their grandmothers helped their mothers run, and their mothers, in turn, helped them fly. So maybe there is a little bit of hope, filtering in and being passed on through the generations.

Sometimes I think of my grandfather languishing in jail for fighting our colonisers and I wonder what he would say about India today. Then I think that too much has been sacrificed for our freedom, that Mahatma Gandhi’s life is in every Indian’s genes, and that maybe we will turn to kindness and love and tolerance and this too shall pass. And maybe we will become better people. But, perhaps, we will never be the same again. We have been changed forever.

If there is one thing I wish for, for myself and my fellow citizens, it is hope. Hope for true equality. Hope for a real, felt freedom. A world and a time when everyone, regardless of religion, caste, class, gender, sexual preference, region will have equal rights and equal opportunities.

Sometimes I’m scared because I feel that the hope inside me is dying. And all I can see

is the abyss. But we are storytellers. Artists. Chroniclers of our time. And if we lose hope, what hope is there for society?

It is for us to decide whether we want to be court painters or we want to paint our pictures through the eyes of the common people — those on the margins, living in the shadows and often forgotten, and those relegated to the background, those who are crushed and crying silent tears.

It is for us to tell the tale, as we see it. It is for us to provide mirrors, offer dreams, challenge the status quo with our stories and do what little we can to nurture humanity. It is for us to remind people that there is another way of seeing, another way of being. To remind the world that defiance is an option and that conforming is not the only way. It is for us to remind people that kindness, grace and compassion are possibilities, even in the darkest of times.

And when we try to tell our stories, a little piece of hope comes alive in our hearts. For a little while, we feel that the tentacles of patriarchy, be it in the form of censorship, vicious trolls, systemic obstacles, don’t matter. There is just the storyteller and her story. And that little flicker of hope.

The writer is a screenwriter and film director

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The risks are high and rising. But an attack on Ukraine is not inevitable.” — THE GUARDIAN

Monk of the moment

Thich Nhat Hanh’s wisdom provides solace amid tyranny of the clock and calculations of productivity



AVIJIT PATHAK

“When we look at a chair, we see the wood, but we fail to observe the tree, the forest, the carpenter, or our own mind. When we meditate on it, we can see the entire universe in all its inter-woven and interdependent relations in the chair.”

— Thich Nhat Hanh

AMI CAPABLE of invoking Thich Nhat Hanh — the Buddhist monk, who died on January 22, and whose engaged religiosity sought to illumine our consciousness, and inspire us to live with mindfulness and the art of deep listening? I ask this question because I often fear that the age we live in — technocapitalism with its unlimited greed, militant nationalism with its inherent brute instincts — has made me incapable of living with love, peace and meditative calmness. I never visited Plum Village in France — the illuminating space that used to attract many modernists so that they could heal their wounded selves through his lessons of wisdom. However, over the years, Thich Nhat Hanh’s books became my intimate companions. Neither Rene Descartes nor Karl Marx, neither Sigmund Freud nor Jean Paul Sartre could deprive me of the joy of his books. I forgot the “methodology” of social sciences, and I began to sing with him:

Breathing in, I know I am alive. Breathing out, I smile at life. Just sitting there and enjoying our in-breath and out-breath is already happiness. We are alive, and that is worthy of celebration.

This celebration does by no means indicate that we remain indifferent to the world — the violent world with hunger, malnutrition, war and terrorism. It would not be wrong to say that the monk who felt and experienced the violence of the Vietnam War gave us the lessons of engaged Buddhism — the quest for ending violence and moving towards a compassionate world. He was truly an apostle of peace. Was it, therefore, surprising that he always pleaded for mindful and compassionate listening? We must understand that most of us — mighty nation-states, or we with our inflated egos — have lost this art of communion and empathy. However, we should not forget that “the intention of deep listening and loving speech is to restore communication”; and once communication is restored “everything is possible, including peace and reconciliation”. Amid suicide bombers and carpet bombing, he could remind us that the foreign policy of the US is often characterised by the “lack of deep listening”. No wonder, he could say: “If I were given the opportunity to be face to face with Osama bin Laden, I would try to understand all the suffering that had led him to violence.” After all, peace is impossible without the redemp-

tive power of love and communication. We cannot negate this truth simply because our army generals, foreign policy experts, security strategists and politicians do not understand it.

Thich Nhat Hanh was a great teacher. With the rhythmic flow of his enchanting words and art of using metaphor, he could make us understand the meaning of living with the realisation of “interbeing”. Nothing is discrete and insulated; everything is connected. For instance, the chair on which I am sitting is made of all “non-chair elements”; in a way, “the chair has no boundaries, no beginning, and no end”. With the realisation of the “interdependent nature of all things”, we could possibly overcome the violence implicit in our alienated, disenchanted and fragmented existence. Even though I live in a world that normalises violence, and separates one from others, I allow myself to be possessed by his prophetic wisdom. “If someday I have to kill a caterpillar”, I too might feel, “something of ourselves dies with the caterpillar”.

It is true that the discourse of scientism and secularism has not succeeded in eliminating religion from the world. At the same time, we also know the discontents of the politics of religion — the way even today the non-reflexive priests of organised religions perpetuate all sorts of obnoxious practices; or the way, the gross emotions are often used by the alliance of spiritually impoverished fundamentalists and militant nationalists. Furthermore, in the age of instantaneity and consumption, we are also aware of the proliferation of all sorts of “self-help books”. From life coaches to new-age gurus, the neoliberal industry is continually selling instant capsules of “enlightenment”. However, this critical consciousness, for me, is not cynicism. Even in a desert, the flower, I believe, still blooms; and Thich Nhat Hanh was like this flower. With him, I too could echo with Walt Whitman, and sing: “I am large, I contain multitudes”; and I could also understand why even physicist David Bohm could say that “science must start from the wholeness of the implicate order to be able to see the real nature of each phenomenon”.

As I write this piece, I begin to contemplate on the title of one of his books, *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment*. We know that we miss the moment. While the trauma of the past haunts us, the worry of the future causes stress. When we do not live “here and now”, or when we miss this very moment, how can it be wonderful? But Thich Nhat Hanh reminded us of the “miracle of mindfulness”. Amid the tyranny of the clock time and calculation of “productivity”, my restless soul is healed by his wisdom: “Don’t drink your tea like someone who gulps down a cup of coffee during a work break. Drink your tea slowly and reverently, as if it is the axis on which the whole earth revolves — slowly, evenly, without rushing toward the future.”

Yes, the monk has only changed his form: From a flowing river to floating monsoon clouds.

The writer taught sociology at JNU

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REPUBLIC & DIGNITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘What’s at stake’ (IE, Jan 26). The guiding principles of our Republic, the Union of India, is enshrined in the preamble of our Constitution that we gave ourselves to on January 26, 1950. These are justice, liberty, equality, fraternity. Any claim of nation’s progress would have to be in consonance with the aforesaid principles. The two contrasting examples one from Rajasthan and another from Uttar Pradesh are representative of the role of the State and its apparatus. If Shriram Meghwal, flanked by policemen in khaki, became the first Dalit groom to ride a mare in Chadi village of Rajasthan’s Bundi district on Monday, and is an example of Dalit assertion, then the report from Madhya Pradesh where a Dalit home was attacked because the groom dared to ride a horse signify continuing upper-caste oppression even after more than 70 years of freedom. The example of UP officials who rolled themselves into playing the triple role of prosecutor, judge and jury to punish the protesters of Citizenship Law with arbitrary fine for property damage without hearing them is against the basic principle of natural justice, and violative of due process. It’s worth recalling B R Ambedkar’s cautionary words, “How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril.”

LR Murmu, Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘What’s at stake’ (IE, January 26). Earlier this month, the news of a groom landing on a helicopter in Bijrad village, Barmer, Rajasthan was doing the rounds of social media. There was a similar news from UP last year. Despite two different parties holding office in these states, there is a consensus on the issues that must be resolved at the earliest. The next step is to erase any need for police protection.

Kirat Singh, Mohali

RAY OF HOPE

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘We, the women’ (IE, January 26). At present, there are 43.2 crore working-age women in India, of which 34.3 crore are not in paid formal work. According to estimates of McKinsey Global Institute, India could add \$770 billion to its GDP by 2025, simply by giving equal opportunities to women. I see a ray of hope in “the equal opportunity” provisions in the Code on Wages, 2019 in mitigating the inequality.

Jorawer Singh via e-mail

SIGN OF PREJUDICE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Her right to wear’ (IE, January 25th). The decision of the government college in Udupi, Karnataka to not allow girls with hijab to attend classes is against constitutional norms. When youngsters are already under stress because of the pandemic, such prejudicial moves must be avoided.

Tushar Khedkar, Aurangabad

14 THE WORLD

TOPOF THE WORLD



Former Pope Benedict XVI. *Reuters*

VATICAN

Critics of ex-pope scapegoating him over abuse: Vatican

Vatican city: The Vatican on Wednesday strongly defended Pope Benedict XVI's record in fighting clergy sexual abuse and cautioned against looking for "easy scapegoats and summary judgments," after an independent report faulted his handling of four cases of abuse when he was archbishop of Munich, Germany. The Holy See's editorial director, Andrea Tomielli, provided the Vatican's first substantial response to the report in an editorial that appeared in *L'Osservatore Romano* where he recalled that Benedict was the first pope to meet with victims of abuse, that he had issued strong norms to punish priests who raped children and had directed the church to pursue a path of humility in seeking forgiveness for the crimes of its clerics. **AP**

UNITED STATES

Afghanistan 'hanging by thread': UN chief

United Nations: Afghanistan is "hanging by a thread," with millions suffering extreme hunger, education and social services on the brink of collapse and a lack of liquidity limiting the capacity to reach people in need, UNSC Antonio Guterres told the UNSC on Wednesday. "We need to suspend the rules and conditions that restrict not only Afghanistan's economy, but our lifesaving operations," Guterres told the 15-member council. **REUTERS**

FLORIDA

Capsized boat found; 1 dead, 38 missing

Miami: The US Coast Guard said on Wednesday that its crews recovered one body and continue to search for 38 other people in the ocean off Florida days after their boat left the Bahamas in a suspected human smuggling attempt. Capt. Jo-Ann F. Burdian said finding the other migrants alive is their priority. Searchers worked throughout the night after a solitary survivor was found Tuesday clinging to the overturned hull of a boat that capsized off the Florida coast during a suspected smuggling attempt. Crews already scanned a vast area about the size of New Jersey, Burdian said. **AP**

Experts: Vaccine gap could set stage for new dangerous variant

THE NEW YORK TIMES
JANUARY 26

A CORONAVIRUS wave driven by the highly infectious Omicron variant wave may be cresting in parts of North America and Europe, but new cases are still climbing in less-vaccinated regions, and World Health Organization leaders warn that the global surge and the world's wide vaccine gap could set the stage for another dangerous variant.

Maria Van Kerkhove, the agency's Covid-19 technical lead, said in a livestream hosted on Tuesday that challenges existed in every country about reaching the most vulnerable unvaccinated communities. "The fact remains that more than three billion people haven't received their first dose yet, so we have a long way to go," said Dr. Van Kerkhove, noting that about 21 million cases were reported to the agency last week. "There are many countries still in the middle of this Omicron wave."

New daily cases remain at record highs globally, averaging about 3.3 million — an increase of over 25 per cent over two weeks and a staggering rise compared with a rate of about 600,000 a day in early December, according to a *New York Times* database that uses data from Johns Hopkins University. Cases have continued to rise in Latin America, the Middle East and Asia. And Omicron is still spreading in Eastern and Central Europe, where vaccination rates are lagging.

Although vaccine shortages are easing, only about 62 per cent of the world's population has re-



About 21 million cases were reported to the agency last week, WHO said. *Reuters*

ceived at least one shot, and a striking divide between the rich and poor regions of the world remains. In low-income countries, only 10 per cent of the population has received at least one dose. In high- and upper-middle-income countries, 78 per cent have received at least one dose.

The potential consequences of the vaccine gap have been underscored by Omicron, which was first identified in southern Africa. Low vaccination coverage creates conditions for widespread virus circulation and with that the possibility of new variants emerging.

During Tuesday's livestream, WHO officials again emphasised that the virus would continue to circulate and that Omicron would not be the last variant. The next one would need to be even more contagious to overtake Omicron, Dr. Van Kerkhove said, adding that the "big question" was whether it would be more severe. The agency said that without more equitable distribution and administration of vaccines, the pandemic would be prolonged. **PTI**

'Omicron lives much longer on plastic, skin than earlier variants'

Tokyo: The Omicron variant of coronavirus can remain alive on skin for over 21 hours, and more than eight days on plastic surfaces, which may be contributing to its faster spread compared with other strains, according to a study.

The researchers from Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine in Japan analysed the differences in viral environmental stability between the SARS-CoV-2 Wuhan strain and all variants of concern (VOCs).

The yet-to-be peer-reviewed study, posted recently on the preprint repository BioRxiv, found that the Alpha, Beta, Delta, and Omicron variants exhibited over two-fold longer survival on plastic and skin surfaces, than the Wuhan strain.

"The high environmental stability of these VOCs could increase the risk of contact transmission and contribute to their spread," the authors of study said.

On skin samples, average virus survival times were 8.6 hours for the original version, 19.6 hours for Alpha, 19.1 hours for Beta, 11 hours Gamma, 16.8 hours for Delta and 21.1 hours for Omicron, they said. There was no significant difference in survival times between Alpha and Beta variants, and they had similar environmental stability, which is consistent with the results of previous studies, according to the researchers. **PTI**

New ruling supported by Biden proposes startup visas to attract talent to US

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 26

THE AMBITIOUS America COMPETES Act of 2022, which was introduced in the US House of Representatives on Tuesday, proposes to open up new vistas for talented individuals from across the world with a new startup visa.

President Joe Biden, who supports the legislation, said the America Competes Act, 2022 is an important step forward in advancing legislation that will make the supply chains stronger and reinvigorate the innovation engine of the country's economy to outpace China and the rest of the world for decades to come.

The Act, among other things, amends the Immigration and Nationality Act to create a new classification of "W" non-immigrants for entrepreneurs with an ownership interest in a startup entity, essential employees of a

startup entity and also their spouses and children.

According to the provisions of the bill released by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the bill when signed into law directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish procedures for foreign nationals with an ownership interest in a startup entity to self-petition for lawful permanent resident status as an immigrant entrepreneur if the entity demonstrates a proven track record of success through job creation and significant revenue generation or receipt of investment capital.

It also directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish procedures for foreign nationals with an ownership interest in a startup entity to self-petition for classification as a W-1 non-immigrant and to receive extensions of such classification for up to eight years if the entity meets certain growth benchmarks. **PTI**

Johnson refuses to resign as he awaits 'partygate' report

AP & REUTERS
LONDON, JANUARY 26

PRIME MINISTER Boris Johnson was braced for the conclusions of an investigation into allegations of lockdown-breaching parties, a document that could help him end weeks of scandal and discontent, or bring his time in office to an abrupt close.

Senior civil servant Sue Gray could turn in her report to the government as soon as Wednesday. Johnson has previously promised to publish it in full and to address Parliament about its findings.

"When I receive it, of course I will do exactly what I said," Johnson said during a testy Prime Minister's Questions session in the House of Commons.

He batted away questions about the scandal and his future, saying he had "absolutely no intention" of resigning.

Asked by the opposition Labour Party Keir Starmer leader



Johnson leaves for the session in parliament on Wednesday. *AP*

if the ministerial code, which says that ministers who have knowingly misled parliament should offer to resign, applied to him Johnson said: "Of course."

"If he'd misled Parliament, he must resign," Starmer told Parliament. "Will you now resign?" "No," Johnson replied.

Gray's office wouldn't comment on timing, and Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said the Conservative government hadn't yet received the report Wednesday morning. Truss said she couldn't

MEANWHILE

MEET METHUSELAH, OLDEST LIVING AQUARIUM FISH

Meet Methuselah, the fish that likes to eat fresh figs, get belly rubs and is believed to be the oldest living aquarium fish in the world. In the Bible, Methuselah was Noah's grandfather and was said to have lived to be 969 years old. Methuselah the fish is not quite that ancient, but biologists at the California Academy of Sciences believe it is about 90 years old. Methuselah is a 4-foot-long, 40-pound Australian lungfish that was brought to the San Francisco museum in 1938 from Australia.



US willing to levy personal sanctions against Putin: Biden

Russia says 'destructive' sanctions will not hurt Putin personally

THE NEW YORK TIMES
JANUARY 26

WITH DIPLOMATIC talks seemingly stalled and the war of words between Washington and Moscow intensifying, President Biden says the US would be willing to impose personal sanctions against President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia if he directed Russian forces to invade Ukraine.

The threat to target the leader of a world power directly reflected both the Biden administration's intent to deter Russian aggression by conveying the high costs it would incur, as well as a recognition that Putin would most likely be the one who decides whether to invade.

Russia has said it has no intention of invading Ukraine, despite amassing forces along the country's borders to the north, east and south. Putin has not commented publicly on the crisis since December 23, a silence that has kept Western leaders unsure about his next move.

For weeks, the Biden administration has warned Russia that it would impose punishing economic sanctions if it invaded Ukraine. Asked on Tuesday whether those penalties could directly target Putin, Biden told reporters at the White House, "Yes, I would see that."



Ukrainian soldiers at a front line in Popasna on Wednesday. *NYT*

EXPLAINED How personal is personal?

WHILE IT was unclear exactly what measures Biden was referring to, the administration could move to seize an individual's assets and bar travel to the US by adding them to what is known as the Specially Designated Nationals list. But it is far from clear that such a move would matter to Putin.

Putin's spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, said that threats of direct sanctions against the Russian

leadership would not have any serious effect financially or change its course of action.

"It wouldn't be painful politically — it would be destructive," Peskov said on Wednesday.

At a news conference last week, Biden said he expected that Russia would ultimately invade Ukraine. But he acknowledged on Tuesday how hard it is to read the Russian leader.

Britain's foreign secretary, Liz Truss, signaled on Wednesday that her government would also consider directly targeting Putin with sanctions. "We're not ruling anything out," she said. Washington is expected to deliver a written response this week to Russian security demands.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Justice Breyer retires, giving Biden chance to pick liberal judge

LAWRENCE HURLEY & ANDREW CHUNG
JANUARY 26

LIBERAL JUSTICE Stephen Breyer, at 83 the oldest member of the US Supreme Court, will retire at the end of the court's current term that runs through the end of June, *NBC News* and *CNN* reported on Wednesday, giving President Joe Biden the opportunity to appoint a successor who could serve for decades.

Breyer authored important rulings upholding abortion rights and healthcare access, helped advance LGBT rights and questioned the constitutionality of the death penalty but often found himself in dissent on a court that has moved rightward and currently has a 6-3 conservative majority.

He was appointed to the Supreme Court by Democratic President Bill Clinton in 1994. Only conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, one of two Black men ever on the high court, has served longer among the current justices, joining it in 1991.

Biden during the 2020 presidential election campaign pledged to nominate a Black woman to fill any Supreme Court vacancy, which would be a historic first. Biden's fellow Democrats hold a razor-thin majority in the US Senate, which under the US Constitution gets to confirm Supreme Court nominees.

Potential Biden nominees include Ketanji Brown Jackson, a former Breyer law clerk who was



Justice Stephen Breyer. *NYT*

confirmed by the Senate last June to serve on an influential US appellate court, and Leandra Kruger, who serves on the California SC.

A Biden appointee would not change the court's ideological balance, but would enable him to refresh its liberal wing with a much younger jurist in the lifetime post.

Biden's Republican predecessor Donald Trump appointed three justices during his four years in office, all of whom were young enough to serve for decades. The Senate, then under Republican control, confirmed Trump's appointment of conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett in 2020 after the death of liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

After Biden defeated Trump in the 2020 election, some liberal activists urged Breyer to step aside while Democrats control the Senate, concerned that if he does not do so, Republicans could block confirmation of his successor in the chamber or a future Republican president could be able to name his replacement and tilt the court even further to the right. **REUTERS**

US varsity system's trustees vote to include caste as protected category

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 26

CALIFORNIA STATE University (CSU) system's trustees on Tuesday voted unanimously to ratify an agreement, which historically demands caste as a protected category to all of its anti-discrimination clauses for all contracts.

The development, described as historic by its proponents led by Equality Labs, comes days after over 80 Indian origin faculty members from the university



California State University. *NYT*

system opposed such a move. The development impacts all the CSU systems over 23 campuses

and eight off-campus centres enrolling 4,85,550 students with 55,909 faculty and staff.

Notably, Cal State is the largest four-year public university system in the country.

"Caste oppressed students, community members, and the labour movement stood shoulder to shoulder to tell our truths and secure this win," Thennmozhi Soundararajan, executive director of Equality Labs, a Dalit Civil Rights Organisation, said in a statement.

As many as 112 Cal State faculty, along with nearly 500 allied

academics, numerous civil rights organisations and labour unions submitted letters of support for the addition of caste to the Cal State Non-Discrimination Policy and to urge the Cal State trustees to ratify without delay the California Faculty Association's historic Collective Bargaining Agreement that includes caste protections and furthers caste equity for millions of CSU students, staff, faculty and workers.

"CFA members are in the process of voting on the agreement between CSU management

and CFA. This agreement includes the inclusion of caste as a protected category. It is about non-discrimination not discrimination," said CFA President Charles Tombois.

Following these decisive actions, the inclusion of caste in the tentative agreement is another important move towards equality and nondiscrimination for some of the most vulnerable members of the CSU community, said Ruvani Fonseka, assistant professor, San Jose State University School of Social Work a signatory to the faculty letter. **PTI**

WE'RE TRYING TO BUILD A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE NFT WORLD AND THE FINE ART WORLD, SAYS ARTIST'S GREAT GRANDSON

Branching out: Picasso heirs launch digital art piece to ride 'crypto' wave

JAMEY KEATEN
GENEVA, JANUARY 26

PABLO, MEET Crypto.

Heirs of Pablo Picasso, the famed 20th-century Spanish artist, are vaulting into 21st-century commerce by selling 1,010 digital art pieces of one of his ceramic works that has never before been seen publicly — riding a fad for "crypto" assets that have taken the art and financial worlds by storm.

For an exclusive interview before the formal launch this week, Picasso's granddaughter, Marina Picasso, and her son Florian Picasso opened up their apart-

ment — which is swimming in works from their illustrious ancestor — in an upscale Geneva neighborhood. There they offered up a glimpse, however tantalisingly slim, of the piece behind what they're billing as an unprecedented fusion of old-school fine art and digital assets.

They're looking to cash in on and ride a wave of interest in so-called non-fungible tokens, or NFTs, which have netted millions for far-less-known artists and been criticised by some as environmentally costly get-rich schemes.

A Picasso, his family's promoters say, would mark the entry of a Grand Master into the game.

In economics jargon, a fungi-



Marina Picasso, right, granddaughter of artist Pablo Picasso, and her son Florian Picasso pose with a ceramic art-work of Pablo Picasso in Cologne near in Geneva. *AP*

ble token is an asset that can be exchanged on a one-for-one ba-

sis. Think of dollars or bitcoins — each one has the exact same

value and can be traded freely. A non-fungible object, by contrast, has its own distinct value, like an old house or a classic car.

Cross this notion with cryptocurrency technology known as the blockchain and you get NFTs. They are effectively digital certificates of authenticity that can be attached to digital art or, well, pretty much anything else that comes in digital form — audio files, video clips, animated stickers, even a news article read online.

"We're trying to build a bridge between the NFT world and the fine art world," said Florian Picasso, the artist's great-grandson.

The artist's descendants are playing close to the vest, to drum

up interest and protect — for now — a family heirloom. They're showing only a sliver of the underside of the work linked to the NFTs, a ceramic piece about the size of a large salad bowl. The exposed parts show forms like a thick yellow line, a dribbling green splotch, and a brushed-on number "58" at the base.

Marina Picasso says the cherished pottery piece dates to October 1958, when she was a child.

"It's a work that represents a face, and it's very expressive," she said. "It's joyful, happy. It represents life... It's one of those objects that have been part of our life, our intimate lives — my life with my children." Sotheby's is hosting an auction

in March that will include a unique NFT as well as the actual ceramic bowl. Florian Picasso said they agreed on the colorful ceramic piece because it was "a fun one" to start.

An NFT Picasso brings with almost epochal symbolism, something like when the Beatles collection was finally put up on iTunes. The family and its business managers say the aim is to create a younger community of Picasso fans. "Everything is evolving," said Florian Picasso, insisting that the NFT honors the great artist.

"I think it fits within Picasso's legacies because we are paying tribute to him and his way of working, which was always being creative," he said. **AP**



@ieExplained

#ExpressExplained

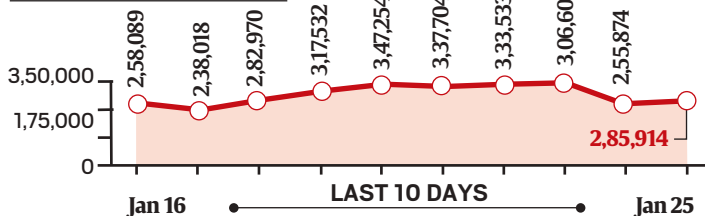
If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

DASHBOARD, AS ON JAN 25

695 DAYS SINCE PANDEMIC BEGAN	New cases 2,85,914	Active cases 22,23,018	Deaths 665
Weekly CFR: 0.37% Overall CFR: 1.36% Total deaths: 4,91,127			

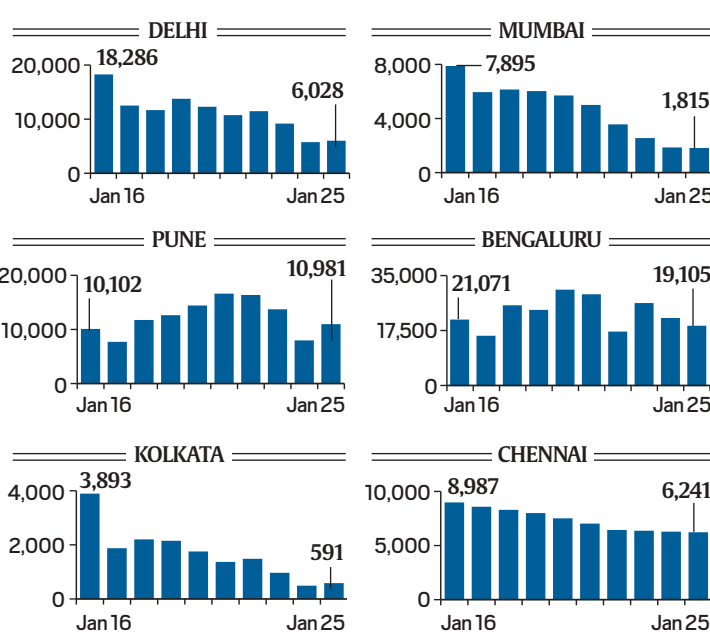
NEW CASES, DAILY



SURGE IN THE STATES

State	ON JANUARY 25			Weekly positivity
	New Cases	Active Cases	Deaths	
Kerala	55,475	2,86,077	154	43.85%
Karnataka	41,400	3,50,772	52	21.71%
Maharashtra	33,914	302,923	95	21.06%
Tamil Nadu	30,055	2,11,270	48	19.29%
Gujarat	16,608	1,34,261	28	15.22%

CASES IN THE CITIES, LAST 10 DAYS



TOTAL TESTS

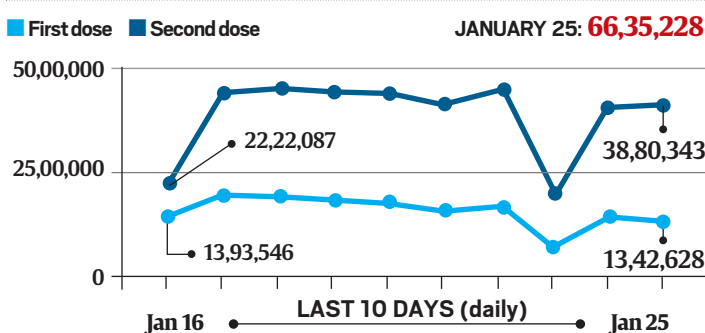
72,05,72,178

TESTS ON JAN 25	WEEKLY POSITIVITY	OVERALL POSITIVITY
17,69,745	16.61%	5.56%

INDIA TOTAL DOSES

163,58,44,536

(Adults 1st dose: **88,92,64,142**; adults second dose: **69,36,42,495**;
15-18 age group first dose: **4,35,09,633**; precautionary doses: **94,28,266**)



SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How Padma Awards are given

Former West Bengal CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has turned down the Padma Bhushan. How are the awardees chosen, is their consent sought, and how often have others refused the awards over the years?

DEEPTIMANTI WARY

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

ON TUESDAY, the government announced the names of 128 people, ranging from veteran politicians, businessmen, scientists and doctors to artists and ordinary people engaged in public service, who have been selected for conferment of Padma Awards this year.

This was followed by controversy when former West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee selected for the Padma Bhushan, turned it down. Singer Sandhya Mukhopadhyay's family, meanwhile, claimed she was offered the award but did not accept it; the award list did not have her name.

Is the recipient's consent sought?

There is no provision for seeking the recipient's written or formal consent before announcing the selection. However, every recipient receives a call from the Ministry of Home Affairs informing him or her about the selection. If the recipient wishes to be excluded from the award list, the name is removed, ministry sources said.

In Bhattacharjee's case, they said, a call was made to his home on Tuesday morning. "However, since he was unwell, his wife picked up the call and she was informed about the conferment of the award. If he did not want it, he should have informed us," a ministry official said.

Is it the first such refusal?

Several politicians, journalists, artists and eminent personalities have refused to accept an award in the past, for a variety of reasons. Among the first to do so was freedom fighter and India's first education minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who refused to accept the Bharat Ratna saying those on selection committees for national honours cannot be given awards. He was later given the award in 1992, posthumously.

Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee joins several senior Left leaders who have refused Padma Awards. In the 1990s, the late CPM veteran E M S Namboodiripad, Kerala's first CM, had turned down an offer by the then P V Narasimha Rao government to award him the Padma Vibhushan. In 2007, the late Jyoti Basu, West Bengal's longest serving chief minister, had turned down a proposal to confer him the Padma Vibhushan. The CPM Politburo had cited party norms against accepting "state awards".



Before Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee (left), former West Bengal CM Jyoti Basu (right) had turned down a Padma award in 2007. Express Archive

In 1973, former diplomat P N Haksar had turned down the Padma Vibhushan claiming that receiving an award "for work done" was "discomforting" for him. Noted historian Romila Thapar refused to accept the Padma Bhushan twice — in 1992 and 2005 — saying that she only wanted to "accept awards from academic institutions or those associated with my professional work".

In 2002, legendary Kathak dancer Sitara Devi refused to accept the Padma Bhushan, saying, "it is my insult and not an honour". She was upset that others — junior to her — had received the Padma Vibhushan.

In 2015, Bollywood scriptwriter Salim turned down the Padma Shri saying it was "too late". In 2019, author Gita Mehta — who happens to be Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik's sister — refused to accept the Padma Shri on the ground that it would be misconstrued, coming just ahead of elections.

What are the Padma Awards?

The Padma Awards are India's highest civilian honour after the Bharat Ratna. They are announced every year on the eve of Republic Day. The awards are given in three categories: Padma Vibhushan (for exceptional and distinguished service), Padma Bhushan (distinguished service of higher order) and Padma Shri (distinguished service). The award seeks to recognise achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines where an element of

public service is involved.

The categories in which the Padma Awards are given include Art, Social Work, Public Affairs, Science & Engineering, Trade & Industry, Medicine, Literature & Education, Civil Service and Sports. Awards are also given for propagation of Indian culture, protection of human rights, wild life protection and other categories.

The Padma Awards were instituted in 1954 along with the Bharat Ratna. At that time there was only the Padma Vibhushan, with three sub-categories — Pahela Varg, Dusra Varg and Tisra Varg. These were subsequently renamed Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri, respectively, through a Presidential notification issued on January 8, 1955. In 1978, 1979 and the years between 1993 and 1997, Padma awards were not announced.

The awardees do not get any cash reward but a certificate signed by the President, along with a medallion which they can wear at public and government functions. The awards are, however, not a conferment of title and the awardees are expected not to use them as a prefix or suffix to their names.

A Padma awardee can be given a higher award only after five years of the conferment of the earlier award.

Not more than 120 awards can be given in a year, but this does not include posthumous awards or awards given to NRIs and foreigners.

THIS WORD MEANS: SSLV

Small satellite launcher, big prospects ahead

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE

BENGALURU, JANUARY 26

INDIAN SPACE Research Organisation (ISRO) chairman Dr S Somanath indicated at a meeting with Minister of State for Space Jitendra Singh on Tuesday that ISRO's indigenous new launch rocket called the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) will have its much-delayed maiden development flight soon.

The Press Information Bureau in an official statement on the meeting said the new ISRO chief had "mentioned" to the minister the launch of an "SSLV-D1 Micro SAT in April 2022" as part of "forthcoming missions during the next three months".

Dr Somanath is credited with the design and development of the SSLV when he was director of the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre in Thiruvananthapuram from 2018 onward. The SSLV's maiden flight was scheduled for July 2019, but was delayed due to the Covid-19 crisis and other issues.

Vehicle stats

The SSLV can carry satellites weighing up to 500 kg to a low earth orbit.

SSLV "is the smallest vehicle at 110-tonne mass at ISRO. It will take only 72 hours to integrate, unlike the 70 days taken now for a launch vehicle. Only six people will be required to do the job, instead of 60 people. The entire job will be done in a very short time and the cost will be only around Rs 30 crore. It will be an on-demand vehicle," former ISRO chairman K Sivan had said in 2019.

SSLV market

The SSLV is intended to cater to a market for the launch of small satellites into low earth orbits which has emerged in recent years on account of the need for developing countries, private corporations, and universities for small satellites.

The launch of small satellites has until now been dependent on 'piggy-back' rides with big satellite launches on ISRO's workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).

This tried and tested vehicle, with over 50 successful launches, can carry satellites weighing in the range of 1,000 kg.

Dr Sivan had said in an industry meeting in 2019 that about 15-20 SSLVs would be required every year to meet India's domestic demand alone.

Already booked

The SSLV received a commercial booking in 2019 itself from the US space launch services intermediary Spaceflight Inc., which announced on August 8 of that year a deal with a commercial arm of ISRO to use the second developmental flight of the SSLV to launch a spacecraft for an "undisclosed U-based satellite constellation" customer.

"SSLV is perfectly suited for launching multiple microsatellites at a time and supports multiple orbital drop-offs. We're excited to add SSLV to our launch portfolio and manage many launches together — first to LEO (low earth orbit) mid-inclinations this year and SSO missions starting in the fall of 2020," Spaceflight

CEO and president Curt Blake had said.

Future synergies

The development and manufacture of the SSLV is expected to create greater synergy between the space sector and private Indian industries, which is a major aim of the space ministry. Indian industry has a consortium for the production of PSLV, and should come together to produce the SSLV as well once it is tested, ISRO has stated in the past.

One of the aims of the newly created commercial arm of ISRO, New Space India Limited (NSIL), is to use research and development carried out by the space agency over the years for commercial purposes through Indian industry partners.

"Manufacturing and production of SSLV and PSLV through technology transfer" is part of the mandate of the new firm. More than 500 industries already contribute to ISRO programmes, and more than half of the project budget outlay for space programmes flows to these industries.

Why this winter has been colder, wetter and less foggy than usual

ANJALI MARAR

PUNE, JANUARY 26

FOR MANY people, especially in North India, the winter of 2021-22 is appearing to be unusually cold and unusually long. The days, in particular, have felt colder and chillier than normal. Why is this happening?

Have the days indeed been colder?

Since December 2021, maximum temperatures across the North, Northwest and Central India regions have consistently remained below normal, resulting in "cold day" conditions. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) defines a "cold day" as one in which the maximum temperature falls below 16°C.

This January, Delhi has witnessed nine days (until January 26) when the maximum temperature remained below 16°C, with the lowest maximum temperature recorded at 12.2°C on Tuesday, reflected in the IMD's January 26 update for the previous 24 hours (see graph).

Similarly cold Januaries in recent years were felt in 2003, which saw 19 "cold days" in January, 2015 (11 days), and 2010, 2013, and 2004 (9 days each). There are several days still to go in January 2022, but it is unlikely that there would be many "cold days". On Wednesday, the maximum temperature at Safdarjung was 16.4°C.

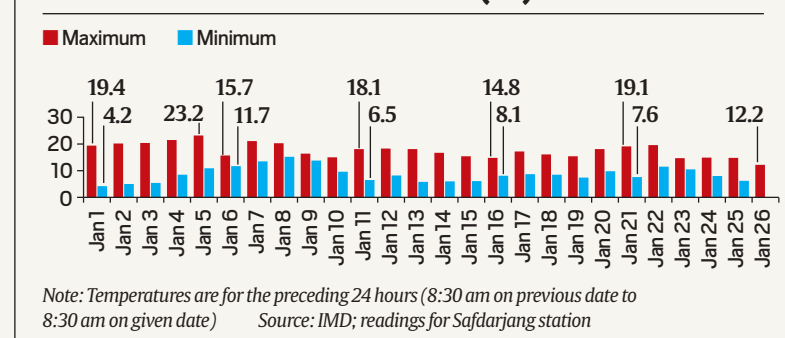
It isn't just Delhi. Since late last week, many places in Maharashtra have experienced "cold day" conditions as well. Maximum temperatures at several places in Madhya Maharashtra and Konkan, including Mahabaleshwar, Pune, Mumbai, and Nashik, have been 6°-8°C below normal.

"Cold days" often mean warmer nights. "Persistent clouding blocks out the rays of the Sun and heating during the day, but keeps the nights warmer than normal," said R K Jenamani, senior scientist at the National Weather Forecasting Centre, Delhi.

What weather systems are at play?

Winters over India are directly affected by the intensity and frequency of western disturbances — eastward propagating wind

DELHI: MAXIMUM & MINIMUM TEMP (°C) IN JANUARY



Note: Temperatures are for the preceding 24 hours (8:30 am on previous date to 8:30 am on given date) Source: IMD; readings for Safdarjung station

streams, capable of inducing rain or snow-bearing weather systems along their path.

Until January 26, seven western disturbances had passed over India. These caused hailstorms in northern Maharashtra, and heavy rainfall in Tamil Nadu.

"Frequent and higher numbers of western disturbances are associated with La Niña," said D Sivanand Pai, head, Climate

turbances were separated by 10 days earlier this month, it caused a prolonged cold spell in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Bihar between January 11 and 20.

How rainy has the winter been?

Precipitation, mostly snow and some rainfall, is common during winter over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh. This January, however, has seen widespread rain across the central, northwestern, northern, eastern, and northeastern regions. As many as 25 states or Union Territories have recorded rainfall varying from excess to large excess, the only exceptions being Mizoram, Tripura, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Lakshadweep.

Delhi is witnessing the wettest January in 122 years. The monthly rainfall recorded at the Safdarjung (88.6 mm) and Palam (110 mm) stations are 404% and 740% above normal respectively. Other states and UTs with large surpluses this month (until January 26) include Uttarakhand (106 mm), Chandigarh (207.7 mm), Himachal (172.1 mm), J&K (168

mm), and Punjab (104.6 mm).

Hasn't it been less foggy than usual?

Yes, Delhi in December normally witnesses 278 hours of fog — during which visibility falls below 1,000 metres — over 26 days, but December 2021 saw only 75 hours of fog spread over 22 days. This was the lowest for December since 1982.

In January too, Delhi remained affected by fog 252 hours against a normal of 292 hours — the lowest since 2008. The ongoing winter (until January 26) has recorded the lowest fog hours since 1991-92 over Delhi.

How has agriculture been impacted?

Farmers have been complaining about fungus attacks and lower yields: of grape in Nashik due to fog, and of chana in MP and mustard in Rajasthan due to occasional rain during the harvest season.

Rabi crops mostly are grown on soil moisture with little or no extra irrigation. However, sporadic rain has affected crops.

INPUTS: PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS



GOLD

₹48,555



RUPEE

₹74.78



OIL

\$86.98



SILVER

₹63,907

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market as of January 25, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg* Crude oil (Indian basket) as of January 24

CORPORATE WATCH
INSOLVENCY

Amid Amazon-FRL row, Future moving SC over repayments adds a fresh twist

KARUNJITS SINGH
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

CASH-STRAPPED FUTURE Retail (FRL) on Tuesday moved the Supreme Court to challenge potential insolvency proceedings over missing loan repayments, even as independent directors of the company rejected a Rs 7,000-crore offer by US-based private equity firm Samara Capital backed by Amazon.

Litigation by Amazon has become the key roadblock in the completion of the sale of Future Group's retail, wholesale and warehousing assets to Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), with the US e-commerce giant claiming that the proposed sale violates an agreement that it signed with FRL in 2019.

The fresh developments in the case add to the web of legal challenges and twists in the three-way fight for control over the retail major.

Why is FRL challenging potential insolvency proceedings?

FRL missed a payment of Rs 3,494.6 crore due to lenders on December 31 as part of a one-time resolution (OTR) plan to resolve liabilities. The company had sought a 30-day review period to complete the payment but has now sought a relaxation in the review period and sought to restrain lenders from declaring the company a non-performing asset (NPA), which may open it up to insolvency proceedings.

Experts noted that FRL would likely rely on past cases in which courts had held that lenders should look at the overall health and standing of a corporation and that large corporations in particular should not be forced into insolvency proceedings just because they have defaulted.

Prashanth Shivadas, partner at law firm Shivadas & Shivadas, said, "There are instances where courts have held that just because they have defaulted doesn't mean you can bring a large corporation which is a going concern to insolvency proceedings. You have to see balance sheets, financial performance, standing in the market."

Why has FRL failed to make payments to lenders in line with the OTR?

The company said in a regulatory filing that "due to ongoing litigations with Amazon.com NV Investment Holdings LLC, the company was not able to complete the planned monetisation of the specified business as contemplated in OTR Plan."

The case has undergone multiple twists. Amazon, in 2019, signed a pact whereby it acquired 49 per cent stake in

₹3,494.6 CRORE

■ Future Retail (FRL) missed a payment of ₹3,494.6 crore due to lenders on December 31 as part of a one-time resolution (OTR) plan to resolve liabilities

Future Coupons Private Ltd. (FCPL). Then, Amazon-backed Samara Capital, in June 2020, signed a non-binding term sheet to acquire Future Retail's businesses for Rs 7,000 crore.

Two months later, in August 2020, the Future group announced a Rs 24,713-crore deal for sale of the retail and wholesale business and the logistics and warehousing arms to Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL), a subsidiary of RIL.

Amazon then moved the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) opposing the proposed sale of the retail businesses to RIL and won a stay, which was later upheld by the Supreme Court.

Amazon had cited covenants in the agreement it signed when it bought 49 per cent stake in Future Coupons in 2019, which gave it a call option on acquiring Future Retail — promoted by FCPL — within

3-10 years. FCPL holds about 10 per cent stake in FRL.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI), however, in December 2021, withdrew the approval for the original 2019 deal, claiming that Amazon "misled" the regulator to believe that its purpose was its interest in the business of FCPL and "suppressed" that the purpose of establishing a strategic interest in Future Retail and to get a "foot-in-the-door" in India's retail sector. The order by the CCI may void the agreement which Amazon has cited to oppose Future Group's plans to sell retail assets to RIL.

Amazon has challenged the CCI order before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT). It has also proposed to assist FRL raise funds to pay lenders through a Rs 7,000-crore deal from Samara Capital and asked the company to abandon its proposed deal with Reliance.

Amazon had sent a proposal to the independent directors of FRL, who have since rejected the offer "as an attempt to buy the company's assets at the cheap", noting that the offer would not be sufficient to cover Future Retail's outstanding liabilities.

Directors at FRL also raised concerns about the time it may take to finalise any deal with Samara Capital highlighting that the company needs funds to pay lenders urgently.

INFLATION OVER 2%, STRONG LABOUR MARKET

Interest rates could rise 'soon': US Federal Reserve

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 26

THE FEDERAL Reserve on Wednesday signaled it is likely to raise U.S. interest rates in March and reaffirmed plans to end its bond purchases that month before launching a significant reduction in its asset holdings.

The combined moves will complete a pivot away from the loose monetary policy that has defined the pandemic era and toward a more urgent fight against inflation. "With inflation well above 2 percent and a strong labor market, the Committee expects it will soon be appropriate to raise the target range for the federal funds rate," the U.S. central bank's rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee said in a policy statement.



US Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell. Reuters file

The Fed also said its FOMC members had agreed on a set of principles for "significantly reducing" the size of its asset holdings by limiting how much of the principal from maturing bonds it would reinvest each month. That

plan would start after the liftoff in interest rates, the Fed said, without yet setting a specific date.

The Fed cited "solid" recent job gains even as the outbreak of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus pushed daily case numbers

to record levels, and said it continued to expect improvements in global supply chains to improve inflation. Other risks have arisen in the weeks since the Fed's December 14-15 policy meeting, with Western nations fearing a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine and investors selling off stocks. But that did not detract from the Fed's urgency to lean against inflation that has hit multi-decade highs.

"Supply and demand imbalances related to the pandemic and the reopening of the economy have continued to contribute to elevated levels of inflation," the Fed said.

Policymakers did not release new economic and interest rate projections on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, US stocks extend gains. S&P 500 was last up 1.90 per cent.

First since 2014: Oil breaks \$90/bbl

REUTERS
NEW YORK, JANUARY 26

OIL TOUCHED \$90 a barrel for the first time in seven years on Wednesday, supported by tight supply and rising political tensions

between Russia and Ukraine that added to concerns about further disruption in an already-tight market. Brent crude rose \$2.15, or 2.4 per cent, to \$90.35 by 12:55 p.m. EST (1755 GMT), the first time the global benchmark has broken \$90 since

October 2014. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was up \$2.25, or 2.6 per cent, to \$87.86.

Russia has amassed thousands of troops on Ukraine's border, fanning fears of an invasion. Energy market prices are higher on worries that Russia's gas sup-

ply to Europe could be interrupted; the nation is also one of the world's largest oil exporters.

US Secretary of State Tony Blinken said the United States will make sure global energy supplies are not interrupted if Russia takes action.

'Crypto money laundering rises 30% to \$8.6 bn in 2021'

Cybercriminals laundered \$8.6 billion in cryptocurrencies last year, up 30% from 2020, according to a report by blockchain analysis firm Chainalysis



~17% OF THE \$8.6 BILLION LAUNDERED FINANCE APPLICATIONS — THE SECTOR WHICH FACILITATES CRYPTO-DENOMINATED FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS OUTSIDE OF TRADITIONAL BANKS — UP FROM 2% IN 2020



Significant growth of legitimate and illegal crypto activity last year was behind the sharp rise in money laundering activity in 2021

Substantial increases in value received from illicit addresses seen in:

- Mining pools
- High-risk exchanges
- Mixers

Source: Chainalysis/Reuters

Global first: European Commission proposes digital rights, principles

REUTERS
BRUSSELS, JANUARY 26

THE EUROPEAN Commission, in a global first, proposed a set of digital rights and principles on Wednesday that aim to protect people's rights, support democracy and ensure a fair and safe online environment.

Those rights and principles also cover digital devices, ensuring that the products support the bloc's sustainability and green transition goals, with details provided on their environmental impact and energy consumption.

The declaration of digital rights and principles "establishes once and for all that what is illegal offline should also be illegal online," EU industry chief Thierry Breton said in a statement.

The EU executive said the digital rights and principles, which



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen with European Commissioner for Environment and Oceans Virginijus Sinkevicius in Brussels on Wednesday. AP

are based on European values, aim to provide a guide for policymakers and companies when dealing with new technologies.

An EU document outlines the bloc's commitment to strengthening the democratic framework for a digital transformation that benefits everyone and technological solutions that, among other things, respect people's rights and promote inclusion. EU digital chief

Margrethe Vestager said while Europe was not alone in this effort, it aimed to be the torchbearer.

"We see similar discussions happen in Australia, in India and in the United States," she told a news conference. "We aim to be in the forefront of this global momentum."

"We also aim to promote these principles as a standard for the world," Breton said.

Gates Foundation to add new members on board

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 26

THE BILL and Melinda Gates Foundation announced Wednesday it will add four members to its board of trustees, a first for the Seattle-based philanthropic giant whose decision making has been guided by very few hands since its incorporation in 2000.

The foundation said it would search for new trustees last July after its two co-chairs and trustees — Bill Gates and Melinda French Gates — announced their divorce.

Wednesday's announcement means the global charitable group will now have six people to guide its work and its \$50 billion endowment. However, Gates and French Gates will continue to have additional authority as its co-chairs.

Gates Foundation CEO Mark Suzman wrote in his annual letter Wednesday he would be joining



Bill and Melinda Gates. The foundation said last July it would find new trustees after the couple divorced. AP file

the board alongside Zimbabwean telecom billionaire Strive Masiyiwa, the African Union's Covid-19 vaccine envoy; Minouche Shafik, director of the London School of Economics and Political Science; and Thomas J Tierny, co-founder and co-chair of The Bridgespan Group, the philanthropic consulting firm that's been an influential force behind MacKenzie Scott's unconventional multi-billion-dollar donations.

Bogus bills, ITC fraud: Palghar CGST arrests 'accountant'

Mumbai: An 'accountant' has been arrested for allegedly issuing bogus bills of Rs 1,000 crore and committing an input tax credit (ITC) fraud of Rs 181 crore, GST authorities said Wednesday.

The 27-year-old man, who had studied till class 12 and worked as an accountant and GST consultant, was arrested by officers of the Palghar CGST Commissionerate of the Mumbai Zone, as per an official statement.

Investigations into the matter started based on inputs received from data mining and analysis, which pointed to M/s Nithilan Enterprises being engaged in availing and passing off fake ITC by issuing fake invoices without receipt of goods or services, it said. It later transpired that the accountant had stolen the identity of one of his clients, the statement said. PTI

BRIEFLY
'Green' Budget

New Delhi: The Budget will go 'green' again, with documents available mostly digitally, officials said.

Kidwai resigns

New Delhi: Cipla said Naina Lal Kidwai has resigned as independent director on its board, effective March 31.

Jio-bp charging

New Delhi: Jio-bp opened one of India's largest EV charging hubs in Delhi.

Adani Wilmar

New Delhi: Adani Wilmar's IPO will open Thursday. PTI

Court scraps \$1.2-bn EU antitrust fine on Intel

FOOYUNCHEE
BRUSSELS, JANUARY 26

INTEL ON Wednesday won its fight against a €1.06-billion (\$1.2 billion) EU antitrust fine that the chipmaker was handed 12 years ago for stifling a rival, in a major setback for EU antitrust regulators.

The judgment by Europe's second-top court in support of Intel's arguments is likely to cheer Alphabet unit Google in its fight against hefty EU antitrust fines and Apple, Amazon and Facebook, which are in the EU antitrust enforcer's crosshairs.

The European Commission had penalised the US chipmaker in 2009 for trying to block rival Advanced Micro Devices by giv-

ing rebates to computer makers Dell, Hewlett-Packard Co, NEC and Lenovo for buying most of their chips from Intel.

The Luxembourg-based General Court, Europe's second-highest, criticised the EU competition enforcer's analysis and annulled the fine.

"The (European) Commission's analysis is incomplete and does not make it possible to establish to the requisite legal standard that the rebates at issue were capable of having, or likely to have, anticompetitive effects," judges said.

The court annulled the entire article of the contested decision which imposed a fine of 1.06 billion euros on Intel for the infringement. REUTERS

Microsoft to offer clarity on UK Xbox subscriptions

London: Microsoft will start offering more information to customers about how it automatically renews Xbox online gaming subscriptions in the UK, the competition watchdog said Wednesday.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) secured undertakings from Microsoft for the latter to tell customers upfront about auto-renewals for Xbox Live Gold and Game Pass subscriptions that start at 7 pounds (\$9.50) a month.

Meanwhile, as per an AP report, demand for Microsoft's cloud-computing services and work software boosted its quarterly profits 21%. REUTERS & AP

WTO lets China impose \$645-mn tariffs on US in Obama-era case

REUTERS
BRUSSELS, JANUARY 26

THE WORLD Trade Organization (WTO) authorised China on Wednesday to impose \$645 million of compensatory tariffs against the United States in a ruling immediately blasted by Washington.

China went to the multilateral trade body in 2012 to challenge anti-subsidy tariffs the US imposed between 2008 and 2012, mainly during the term of US President Barack Obama, on 22 Chinese products ranging from solar panels to steel wire.

The decade-long case involving alleged subsidies has centred on whether the US could treat

US SAYS 'DEEPLY DISAPPOINTING'

■ USTR spokesperson Adam Hodge said, "The deeply disappointing decision today by the WTO arbitrator reflects erroneous Appellate Body interpretations". China had in 2012 challenged the anti-subsidy tariffs by US between 2008 & 2012

Chinese companies in which the government owns a majority stake as controlled by the state.

Boeing Q4 loss widens to \$4.16 bn on 787 issues

Chicago: Boeing is reporting a \$4.16 billion loss for the fourth quarter as the financial fallout from production flaws in one of its best-selling planes keeps getting worse.

The company took a charge of \$3.5 billion to cover additional delays in delivering copies of its 787 jetliner and compensation for airlines that are still waiting to get their planes.

The US aircraft manufacturer also said problems with the 787 will add \$2 billion in unusual production costs, double the earlier projection. AP

IOC to meet Peng during Beijing Games



Peng Shuai is likely to meet IOC president Thomas Bach. File

REUTERS
BEIJING, JANUARY 26

THE INTERNATIONAL Olympic Committee talked with Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai last week and will meet her in Beijing during next month's Winter Olympics, it said on Wednesday.

Peng's situation became a matter of concern in November when the former women's number one doubles player alleged that a former Chinese vice premier, Zhang Gaoli, had sexually assaulted her in the past. After that social media post, she was absent from public view for nearly three weeks.

Last month Peng said she had never accused anyone of sexually assaulting her, and that the post she made had been misunderstood. Zhang has not commented on the matter.

"Since the first call that the IOC held with Peng Shuai on 21 November 2021, the IOC team has kept in touch with her and had a number of conversations with her – the last one just the past week," an IOC spokesperson said.

"She mentioned again that she is looking forward to a meeting with IOC President Thomas Bach and Emma Terho, the Chair of the IOC Athletes' Commission, to which we had invited her in the first conversation."

The IOC has had several phone calls with the player but international concerns over her safety and wellbeing have not been allayed. The Women's Tennis Association has suspended tournaments in China due to its concerns over Peng's safety.

China has not directly commented on Peng's initial post, but said after the WTA's move that it "opposes the politicisation of sports."

The Beijing Olympics will start on

'AFC's organisation destroyed dream'

India's women's football coach questions Asian body's 'unprofessional way' in handling bubble breach

MIHIR VASAVDA
JANUARY 26

GETTING INTO the forensic details of the bubble breach like a cop that he once was, a visibly shattered India coach Thomas Dennerby blamed the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for 'destroying' his team's dream.

In a no-holds-barred interaction, the 62-year-old Swede said the continental body was 'unprofessional' in the manner in which the bio-bubble was handled, accused them of a delay in informing about the positive cases at the Indian team hotel and being unwilling to engage in a 'solution-oriented' discussion.

On Sunday, India were forced to withdraw from the Asian Cup after the team could not name at least 13 players, mandatory as per rules, for their Group A match against Chinese Taipei following a Covid-19 outbreak within the squad. As on Wednesday, Dennerby said 19 players and six officials were infected.

Speaking from his hotel room in Navi Mumbai, where the entire team is in isolation, Dennerby said the team and the All India Football Federation (AIFF) could've done nothing more in terms of taking precautions. "Honestly, we are not happy with the AFC's tournament organisation and lack of solution. In one way, it destroyed our dreams," he said.

The 12-nation competition is being held across three venues in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Pune. A Local Organising Committee was managing the on-ground logistics in the build-up to the tournament but it is learnt that the team hotels were chosen by the AFC following an inspection and the bio-bubble protocols, too, were set by them.

Dennerby gave a day-by-day report of the team's activities from the time they landed in Mumbai on January 13. The team had taken a commercial flight into Mumbai from Kochi.

Once all players tested negative, the team held its first training session on the evening of January 14. On January 16, the first case of Covid in a squad player who had entered the bubble by then, was reported within the team. Then, on January 18 when everyone had to undergo a mandatory pre-match RT-PCR test, the team's physio, strength and conditioning coach, and one player tested positive.

The physio and the strength and conditioning coach, Dennerby added, had been working closely with the hotel staff, which was tested on January 17. This was ominous given that the support staff interacts with most team members. Seven staff members were infected, the 62-year-old Swede said, but the hotel was informed only on January 19, even though the AFC knew it a day prior.

"Did they understand this was not good?



The team had taken a commercial flight into Mumbai from Kochi and returned a positive for a player inside the bubble. File

DENNERBY LISTS OUT DAY-BY-DAY EVENTS

The India coach provided a day-by-day account of the team's situation from their arrival in Mumbai on January 13 to the time they were forced to withdraw from the Asian Cup:

- JAN 13:** The team takes a commercial flight into Mumbai from Kochi. Players tested at airport, all negative.
- JAN 14:** First training session held under lights in Navi Mumbai.
- JAN 15/16:** Another round of testing; first positive case detected in the team.
- JAN 17:** Team hotel staff, who are a part of the bubble, undergo RT-PCR tests as per rules.
- JAN 18:** Players and team officials, undergo mandatory pre-match testing. The team's physio, strength and conditioning coach, and one player test positive.
- JAN 19:** Seven members of hotel staff test positive. According to Dennerby,

though, there was a one-day delay from the AFC's end in informing the hotel about the cases.

JAN 20: India play Iran. After the match, several players start showing symptoms.

JAN 21: Another round of Covid testing takes place on players and team officials.

JAN 22: Number of positive cases increase to 10. Two players, meanwhile, have fractures from injuries suffered in the first match.

JAN 23: Two hours before the Chinese Taipei match, at 5.30pm, players are tested again. Two more players test positive, taking the tally to 12. At 7.30pm, match is called off.

The AFC should have called the hotel directly and asked the (infected members) to leave and have no contact with the players. But they did not, that was a mistake. I think that was an unprofessional way to handle it in an AFC bubble, no explanation can be good enough."

The situation worsened for India after the goalless draw against Iran, he said, adding that 'not many players were feeling good'. The following day, on January 21, the players were tested again ahead of their match two

days later and that resulted in seven more positive cases. In the interim, two players suffered fractures, thus ruling them out of the competition and further reducing India's playing options.

"What was AFC waiting for?"

Once it was clear on matchday that India would not be able to field the required number of players, the team management, according to Dennerby, informed the AFC

about the same. Eventually, the Asian federation called off the match at the kick-off time, 7.30 pm. "What was AFC waiting for? If AFC already sent us out of this tournament, why do it this painful way? No respect, no compassion, no empathy..."

On Monday, the AFC said that India's results would be considered null and void, marking a heartbreaking end for the hosts, who were playing in the Asian Cup for the first time after 19 years.

Dennerby said he tried holding an online meeting to talk with his players after the team had to withdraw but the poor internet connection in the hotel meant even that wasn't possible.

"Eventually, I sent a message on our group. It was a heartbreaking time," the former Sweden and Nigeria coach said. "This is my worst feeling as a head coach ever. Me and the team are devastated. Our dreams are forever killed."

In an emailed statement to *The Indian Express*, the AFC said they were 'deeply disappointed with the unexpected and sad turn of events' but did not address the allegations made by Dennerby.

"The AFC has successfully conducted major tournaments across Asia in the face of serious challenges posed by the pandemic by implementing strict medical and health protocols that are in line with the host country's medical regulations," the AFC said.

"We will continue to focus on delivering the AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022 in close collaboration with the AIFF and the LOC by prioritising the safety, health and wellbeing of all the players, officials and stakeholders."

Indian women pipped 2-3 by Korea in semis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUSCAT, JANUARY 26

THE INDIAN women's hockey team's hopes of defending the Asia Cup title went up in smoke as Korea secured a come-from-behind 2-3 win to qualify for the final of the continental event at the Sultan Qaboos Complex here on Wednesday.

India started brightly and took the lead in the 28th minute through Vandana Katariya before Korea made a brilliant come-back after the change of ends and scored thrice through skipper Enubi Cheon (31st), Seung Ju Lee (45th) and Hyejin Cho (47th) to stun the holders. India will now play the loser of the second semifinal between Japan and China in the third-fourth place play-off match on Friday.

If the first two quarters belonged to India, the Koreans dominated the game after the half time break. India earned a penalty corner early on in the first quarter but Gurjit Kaur's flick was saved by the Korean goalkeeper.

Minutes later Shamila Devi's reverse hit from top of the circle flew inches over the goal. Lalremisiami gave India the lead soon from close range but the goal was disallowed because of a foul inside the circle. Seconds from the end of the first quarter, Vandana's reverse hit try was saved from close range by the Korean custodian.

The Indians came close twice and were by far the better side on display but failed to translate their chances into goals. The Koreans looked dangerous on the counter but the Indian defence was up to the task.

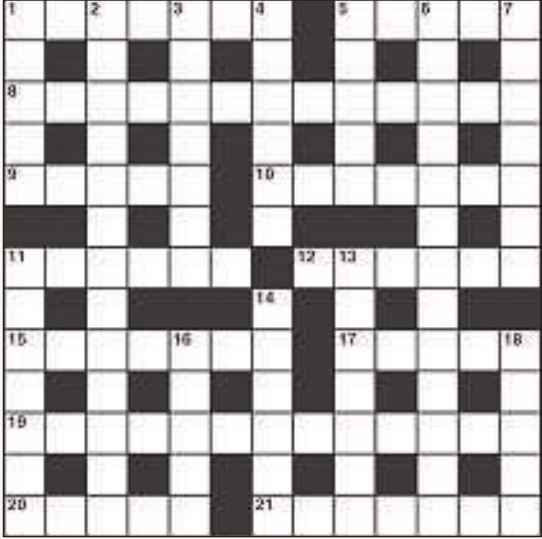
In the second quarter Korea secured their first penalty corner but failed to breach the Indian defence as skipper Savita produced a double save. Two minutes from the breather, India secured back-to-back penalty corners and Vandana this time scored with a rebound from the second set piece to give the defending champions a 1-0 lead at half time.

The Koreans came out a completely different side after the breather and drew parity in the 31st minute when Cheon scored a scrappy goal from a penalty corner after the initial shot was saved by Savita.

Poor penalty corner conversion cost India dearly as once again Gurjit was off target.

Just at the stroke of the third quarter, Korea surprised India by taking the lead through Lee as Savita made a mess of a routine save. Two minutes into the fourth and final quarter, Korea made it 3-1 in their favour when Cho pushed in the ball past an off-balance Savita after receiving a pass from Hyejeong Shin. With time running out, Lalremisiami reduced the margin for India six minutes from the hooter, guiding in Vandana's high ball but it was too little too late.

CROSSWORD 4648



- ACROSS**

 - 1 Registers the fastest times yet (7)
 - 5 Some broken nibs enrage a writer (5)
 - 8 Style of architecture that may be dropped (13)
 - 9 Settle without recourse to law (5)
 - 10 Trooped out to see a naval weapon (7)
 - 11 It's a struggle for an amphibian to get around (6)
 - 12 Country lovers (6)
 - 15 Honest part of one's goal (7)
 - 17 Discover and get rid of weeds perhaps (3,2)
 - 19 Go out of your way to show how supple you are? (4,9)
 - 20 Aim to include me? Correct (5)
 - 21 Members of the orchestra who take a bow (7)
- DOWN**

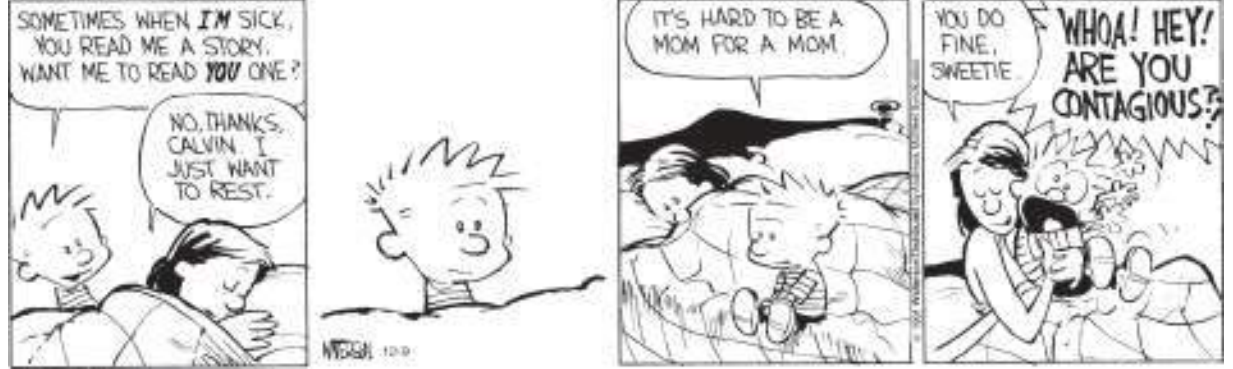
 - 1 One knows them to be well-informed (5)
 - 2 Is it measured in round figures? (13)
 - 3 Appear on stage again or make another record (2-5)
 - 4 A steed in not very frisky form (6)
 - 5 Risk involved in uncertain cures (5)
 - 6 Joining a club used by electricians (9,4)
 - 7 Apprehensive over sun treatment (7)
 - 11 Be equal to change in uniform (7)
 - 13 His wife will be late (7)
 - 14 Clues pieces of wood (6)
 - 16 Mocked the wrong bid for example (5)
 - 18 Sort of steps taken to get vermin (5)

Solutions Crossword 4647: Across: 1 Tempo, 8 Well done, 9 Cairn, 10 Windlass, 11 Cache, 12 Ill, 16 Jetsam, 17 Appear, 18 Pap, 23 Writs, 24 Cynosure, 25 Sabre, 26 Derelict, 27 China. Down: 2 Emanated, 3 Purchase, 4 Menial, 5 Blade, 6 Loyal, 7 Verse, 12 Imp, 13 Lap, 14 Approach, 15 Cast iron, 19 Africa, 20 Acids, 21 Snark, 22 Psalm.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

If it doesn't matter who wins or loses, then why do they _____? - Vince Lombardi (4,51)

PVEEE

--	--	--	--	--	--

AKLSCS

--	--	--	--	--	--

AFYOR

--	--	--	--	--	--

EORRKP

--	--	--	--	--	--

SOLUTION: PVEEE, FORAY, SLACKS, PORKEK
Answer: If it doesn't matter who wins or loses, then why do they keep score?

SUDOKU 4727

Difficulty Level 5s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4726

7	5							
1	6	2		8			9	
8				5				
	5		7					
2		3			9		1	
			1	4				
		6				3		
7			2		5	6	9	
					2	4		

BRIEFLY

Biennial Cup could prevent migrant deaths: Fifa prez

Athens: FIFA president Gianni Infantino said that increased revenues from a biennial World Cup would create opportunities for Africans who otherwise could migrate and find "death in the sea" crossing the Mediterranean. The idea of a World Cup every two years has been gathering steam with Infantino trying to get support from national federations, saying the switch would create an extra \$4.4 billion in revenues for the world body. "This topic is not about whether we want a World Cup every two years, but about what do we want to do for the future of football," Infantino said. "If we think about the rest of world and the vast majority of Europe, then we have to think about what football brings. Football is about opportunity, about hope, about the national teams. We cannot say to the rest of world give us your money, but watch us on TV. We need to include them. We need to find ways to include the whole world to give hope to Africans so that they don't need to cross the Mediterranean in order to find maybe a better life but, more probably, death in the sea." **REUTERS**

Martial leaves on loan to Sevilla

London: Sevilla have confirmed the loan signing of Manchester United forward Anthony Martial for the remainder of the season after the France international sealed his desired move away from Old Trafford. "Sevilla FC and Manchester United FC have reached an agreement which will see Anthony Martial join the club on loan until the end of the current season," the LaLiga side said. The 26-year-old has started only two premier league games this campaign with his final appearance coming off the bench in the 1-0 win over West Ham United. Martial joined United in the 2015/16 season and scored 79 goals in 269 appearances, but had grown into an increasingly peripheral figure this season. United interim manager Ralf Rangnick had praised Martial for the way he had conducted himself after the win over The Hammers, despite the forward making it clear he wanted to leave the club. **REUTERS**

Concussed Mane scores for Senegal

Bafoussam: Sadio Mane got up from a horrible clash of heads that left him dazed on the ground, possibly with a concussion, to score a goal and help put Senegal into the quarterfinals of the African Cup of Nations. Senegal won 2-0 against Cape Verde, which had two players sent off in the last 16 game in Cameroon's western city of Bafoussam on Tuesday. The second red card was dished out to Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha when he raced out of his area and tried to head a ball clear with Mane chasing it down. The players' heads clashed badly as they both leaped in the air and Vozinha clearly sustained a concussion as he tried to get up. **AP**

Wrist spinners are back in business

Chinaman Kuldeep Yadav, leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi to complement Yuzvendra Chahal in ODIs; No place for Ashwin in shorter formats

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, JANUARY 26

INDIA'S LIMITED-OVERS squad selection for the upcoming home assignments against the West Indies marked the return of an old template, wrist-spin taking centre-stage again. After a long hiatus, Kuldeep Yadav is back to the 50-over fold to pair up with Yuzvendra Chahal, while Ravichandran Ashwin hasn't been included either in the ODI squad or for the T20Is. India will play three ODIs and as many T20Is against the West Indies, in Ahmedabad and Kolkata respectively, starting from February 6. Rohit Sharma has recovered from his hamstring injury to lead India in the series.

Ashwin was brought back to the white-ball fold before the T20 World Cup last year. Then, he was picked for the ODI series in South Africa as well. There have been talks about the senior off-spinner being ruled out due to an injury. But the BCCI press release didn't mention anything, although it confirmed that "Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami have been rested" and Ravindra Jadeja has been "undergoing his final stage of recovery post his knee injury".

It is learnt that the selection meeting on Wednesday was lengthy, the Chetan Sharma-led committee dissecting India's 3-0 ODI series loss in South Africa and discussing the way forward. Both head coach Rahul Dravid and stand-in skipper for the South Africa series KL Rahul had spoken about a few changes going ahead and eventually, the selection committee decided to fall back on the wrist-spin pair that had contributed to India's white-ball recovery after the 2017 Champions Trophy.

Kuldeep underwent knee surgery in September last year and post his recovery, the selectors asked him to play a few practice matches in Gurgaon. It's not known if anyone from the selection committee tracked him there, but the fit-again chinaman bowler has been brought back to ODI squad. Kuldeep last played for India in Sri Lanka in July last year before going under the surgeon's knife.

That another leg-spinner, Ravi Bishnoi, has earned his maiden India call-up suggested that the selectors and the team management have seen wrist-spin as a wicket-taking option in the middle-overs, an area that needed serious shoring up after the failed T20 World Cup campaign and a 3-0 hiding to the Proteas.

Bishnoi, the 21-year-old from Rajasthan, has made the cut by dint of his performance for the Punjab franchise in the IPL.

Sundar back in the fold

After the South Africa series, Dravid had spoken about the right balance and all-round options. From that perspective, Washington Sundar's return is good news for the team.

He was India's first-choice off-spinner in the shortest format until he suffered a hand injury that had put paid to his T20 World Cup hopes. Then, the young all-rounder tested positive for Covid and was ruled out of the ODI series in South Africa. Washington was former India captain Virat Kohli's trusted option to bowl in the Powerplays and his ability to score quickly down the order contributed to the team's balance. Ashwin was brought back to the white-ball set-up after Washington had suffered the injury.

"Some of the guys who really help us balance the squad out and give us the all-round options at 6, 7, 8 are probably not here, not available for selection. So, hopefully when they get back, they probably give us the depth to play in a slightly different style,"



The BCCI release on team selection for the West Indies series didn't mention the reason for Ashwin's omission. *File*

Kuldeep underwent knee surgery in September last year and post his recovery, the selectors asked him to play a few practice matches in Gurgaon.

Dravid had said after the South Africa series.

Accordingly, another spin-bowling all-rounder, Deepak Hooda, has made the ODI cut for the first time.

Hooda bowls flatish off-spin and has the ability to go ballistic with the bat. Until Hardik Pandya is fit, the team will have to mix and match with the likes of Deepak Chahar, Shardul Thakur, Washington, Hooda and Axar Patel – "will be available for the T20Is" – for all-round options.

Venkatesh Iyer has been dropped from the ODI squad and it is learnt that for the time being, the selectors would consider him for the T20Is only. Excellent performance for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL last year saw Iyer's meteoric rise, but he didn't impress with his game awareness, especially in the ODIs in South Africa. After the series, Dravid didn't single out anybody but mentioned the game awareness issue. "South Africa, who batted first on two occasions, only scored 290 and 280. At the 30th over in both those games, I felt we should have chased them down. We didn't because we played some poor shots and we didn't play smart cricket in critical situations."

It is also learnt that the phasing out of Bhuvneshwar Kumar has begun. He has been picked only for the T20Is. As regards batting, with Rohit coming back, Kohli available for the home series and Rahul – "will be available from the 2nd ODI onwards" – dropping down the order in the ODIs, an improvement is expected.

From preparing pitches to facing West Indies: Bishnoi's journey

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, JANUARY 26

IT HAS been a rapid rise for Ravi Bishnoi. The boy from a humble background, who once had to work at a ground to make it fit for cricket training, starred at the 2020 U-19 World Cup, which prompted a big-money Indian Premier League contract with Punjab Kings, for whom he impressed greatly with his skills as well as temperament.

The last few days too have been quite eventful for the youngster from Jodhpur. He was among the three players acquired in the draft by the new Lucknow franchise of the IPL before next month's mega auction, his psyche doubling to Rs 4 crore. And on Wednesday, Bishnoi made it to the India squad after being named in the ODI and T20 sides for the home series against the men from the Caribbean.

It is close to being a typical rags-to-riches story. A few years ago, Bishnoi broke down after being rejected in trials in the Rajasthan U-19 circuit. Those days, seemed a distant memory when he caught the attention of the cricketing world, helping India colts to a runner-up finish in South Africa two years ago. In fact, the turmoil within Rajasthan cricket, owing to the return of Lalit Modi, didn't help Bishnoi's cause, with BCCI sanctions coming their way.

It was then that his coach Shahrukh Pathan convinced him to give one more year to cricket. Khan spoke to Disha Yagnik, a former Rajasthan first-class player and field-



Ravi Bishnoi was a star of the 2020 Under-19 World Cup. He was picked by the new Lucknow IPL team. *File*

ing coach of Rajasthan Royals, to put in a word to the authorities to have a look at Bishnoi once again.

Bishnoi was called and he got a talented U-19 batsman of the state team twice in his first two balls. That freakish effort convinced that selectors that he does have talent.

In the first game of Vinoo Mankad Trophy, Bishnoi grabbed five wickets and hasn't looked back since.

Interestingly, Bishnoi says spin was never his first choice, he had wanted to become a medium pacer. His two coaches whom he addresses as brother – Pathan and Pradyot Singh – felt Bishnoi didn't have the physique to become a pacer. "They told me to bowl leg-spin, I started to bowl and soon they felt I

should take this seriously," Bishnoi explains.

Pathan explains his rationale: "There were hardly any leg-spinners in India around four-five years ago. We felt there were more chances for a leg-spinner to play higher cricket, especially a leggie who can bat. Leg-spin is an art and it takes time and perfection. At the same time, he was too small, he used to run like a medium pacer, he didn't have strong shoulder or strong legs."

Expert advice

A little bit of help from Rahul Dravid, now Team India's head coach, during his time at the National Cricket Academy too helped. Dravid advised against changing Bishnoi's action and that if any coach tries, ask them to speak to him first. Not only did Dravid tell the youngster that he was reminded of Kumble but also offered a suggestion.

"Rahul sir told me that try to make the ball come back to the batsman. As in, don't offer width outside off and allow the batsman to cut or use the pace and work in the gaps. Attack the stumps, keep it straight and make the batsman drive back to you," Bishnoi recalled. Or in other words, bowl the Kumble line.

For a boy who used to play at an RTO ground where ticketed (challaned) cars were parked, it has been a rapid rise. He even had to do manual labour to make it fit for cricket training. Since they didn't have much money to spare, the two coaches and the young cricketers laboured for six months to spruce up the ground. On their own, just to reduce expenses. A lanky Bishnoi was one of those 'labourers'.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Medvedev summons Djokovic's fighting spirit

REUTERS
MELBOURNE, JANUARY 26

TOP SEED Daniil Medvedev battled back from two sets down and saved a match point against Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime to reach the Australian Open semi-finals with a 6-7(4), 3-6, 7-6(2), 7-5, 6-4 victory on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old Russian had his back firmly up against the wall for much of an absorbing contest as Auger-Aliassime produced some stunning tennis on Rod Laver Arena.

But he simply refused to lie down as he overturned a two-set deficit for only the second time in his career to set up a Friday semi-final against Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas who he beat at the same stage a year ago.

It was the kind of resilience absent nine-time champion Novak Djokovic has trademarked and Medvedev, the reigning U.S. Open champion, said he had taken inspiration from the Serbian to get out of trouble.

"At two sets down I was not playing my best and Felix was playing unbelievable, serving unbelievable, he was all over me to be honest. I didn't know what to do so I told myself 'what would Novak do?' Medvedev said on court, prompting some boos.

"What came to mind, was that I thought if Felix wants to win it he will have to fight for the last point.

"I managed to raise my level and when



Daniil Medvedev (L) overcame a two-set deficit to beat Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-7(4), 3-6, 7-6(2), 7-5, 6-4. *AP*

they closed the roof I felt the momentum and started serving better."

Ninth seed Auger-Aliassime, 21, was the dominant player in the first set and despite a wobble when serving at 6-5 he won a tiebreak courtesy of some Medvedev double-faults the Russian later blamed on the sweaty conditions.

Serving beautifully and playing with composure and precision from the back of the court, Auger-Aliassime cruised through the second set with a single break with Medvedev looking subdued.

"At two sets down I was not playing my best and Felix was playing unbelievable, serving unbelievable, he was all over me to be honest. I didn't know what to do so I told myself 'what would Novak do?'"

DANIIL MEDVEDEV

Auger-Aliassime was one set away from a first career win against the Russian and a place in his second Grand Slam semi-final, but the night was still young.

Medvedev hung tough towards end of the third set as Auger-Aliassime sensed victory but he managed to force a tiebreak and closed it out after a shower caused the roof to be closed. Serve dominated the fourth set but in the 10th game Medvedev coughed up a double-fault to hand his opponent a match point. Medvedev barely blinked though and escaped with some powerful serving. He then pounced in the next game to break serve as Auger-Aliassime sent a forehand wide, before holding his own to extend the match into a decider.

With the match moving into its fifth hour, Medvedev finally seized control with an early break of serve but Auger-Aliassime did not crumble. The Canadian earned a break back point trailing 4-3 but Medvedev snatched away the opportunity with a timely

ace and then had Medvedev down 15-40 as the Russian served at 5-4. Medvedev dialled up his inner Novak once again, however, reeling off the next four points to claim an epic victory after four hours and 42 minutes.

Smooth sailing for Tsitsipas

After a phenomenal performance against Jannik Sinner on Wednesday, Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas feels as though he is in the zone to produce something special at the 2022 Australian Open. The fourth seed credited his 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 defeat of the Italian in just over two hours on Rod Laver Arena to adopting a more humble approach to tennis after some setbacks. Injuries, including the elbow problem that threatened his participation in Melbourne this year, and difficult defeats had taught him the importance of remaining grounded. "You know when you're dancing and when you're doing well, you tend to glorify yourself, as if you are untouchable," he told reporters. His tennis in the quarter-final was not perfect, but he did manage to leave a rival tipped to be a future Grand Slam winner helpless at times.

QUARTERFINAL RESULTS
Women's singles: 27-Danielle Collins (USA) bt Alize Cornet (FRA) 7-5, 6-1; 7-Iga Swiatek (POL) bt Kaia Kanepi (EST) 4-6, 7-6(2), 6-3.
Men's singles: 4-Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE) bt 11-Jannik Sinner (ITA) 6-3, 6-4, 6-2; 2-Daniil Medvedev (RUS) bt 9-Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN) 6-7(4), 3-6, 7-6(2), 7-5, 6-4

To unlock door to final, Barty must decode Keys

REUTERS
MELBOURNE, JANUARY 26

MADISON KEYS faces the biggest test of her resurgence when she meets Ash Barty in the Australian Open semi-finals on Thursday, as the American aims to end the top seed's bid to delight home fans by winning an elusive title. Keys, who reached the last-four in 2015, will play in her first Grand Slam semi-final in four years having emerged from the "dark pit of despair" she had fallen into due to the pressure she put on herself to perform at the highest level.

"I know I'm going to feel nervous... excited. I know all of those feelings are going to be there," Keys said of her previous semi-final appearances at majors. "But it's also a completely different situation, time and person. I think you take the experience that you have from those moments and you try to apply it, but you also know that it's going to be a completely different challenge."

Keys can expect a tough time against a ruthless Barty, who is chasing a third Grand Slam title to add to her French Open and Wimbledon crowns, and also become the first local player since Chris O'Neil in 1978 to triumph at Melbourne Park. Danielle Collins takes on former Roland Garros champion Iga

Swiatek in the other semi-final, looking to secure a first win over the seventh seed and break into the top 10 of the world rankings.

Swiatek managed to temper her frustrations and rally from a set and a break down in brutal heat to overpower Estonian Kaia Kanepi 4-6 7-6(2) 6-3 to reach her first Australian Open semi-final. The 27th-seeded American Collins defeated Frenchwoman Alize Cornet 7-5 6-1. In their first career meetings, Swiatek wasted breakpoint chances in each of Barty's first three service games and it was the Estonian who converted her first chance in the seventh game to nose ahead.

Swiatek saved four setpoints in the ninth game that lasted 16 minutes but could not stop Kanepi from taking the opener on her ninth opportunity after another lengthy game. "In the first set I had so many breakpoints, I felt like I missed my chances because she broke me on her first breakpoint," Swiatek said on court.

PLAYING TODAY IN SEMIS

Madison Keys vs Ash Barty
Danielle Collins vs Iga Swiatek
Live on Sony Network, 2 pm onwards