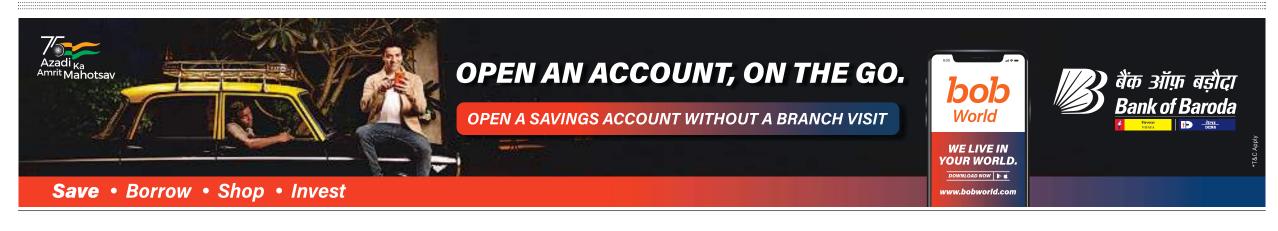
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JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2022, NEW DELHI, LATE CITY, 16 PAGES

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#### A YEAR AFTER VACCINATION BEGAN

## 3 of 4 adults are now double-jabbed, 95% have got the first dose

**KAUNAIN SHERIFF M** NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

ALITTLE over a year after India began its inoculation drive, three out of four eligible adults are fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, health ministry data show

A total 165.90 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines had been administered until Sunday. An estimated 95% of the eligible adult population have received the first dose, and 75% have received both doses, the data show.

India started vaccinating on January 17 last year, beginning with healthcare workers and frontline workers, and the older population of the country. Vaccination was subsequently expanded to cover everyone aged 18 years and older. Adolescents in the 15-18 age

#### INDIA FIGHTING **WAVE WITH GREAT** SUCCESS: PM

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi Sunday said Covid cases are declining and India is fighting the new wave with "great success". "Almost 4.5 crore children have taken the vaccine till now. So, 60% of those aged 15-18 took the vaccine in just 3-4 weeks," Modi said during his Mann Ki Baat programme.

REPORT, P7

group were made eligible on January 3 this year. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# For Gujarat Covid victim

& AVINASH NAIR

However, the family's claim

In an order dated January 19, the Supreme Court expressed displeasure over the relatively low disbursal numbers of exgratia claims in most states, and directed them not to reject any court order also recorded data submitted by the Gujarat **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2** 



#### 21st Among Equals

Rafael Nadal celebrates after winning the Australian Open final, a record 21st grand slam title, against Daniil Medvedev. In an epic showdown that lasted 5 hours and 24 minutes,

Nedel came back from two sets down to win 2-6 6-7(5), 6-4, 6-4, 7-5, Reuters

REPORT, P16 Nadal came back from two sets down to win 2-6, 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-4, 7-5. Reuters

## Disquiet over jobs and prices, but free ration, 'law & order' weigh in for Yogi

**LIZ MATHEW** MATHURA, HATHRAS,

JANUARY 30

THERE IS disquiet among youth over the absence of new jobs, palpable disappointment over the gap between what the BJP government promised five years

BUSINESS AS USUAL

ago and what it delivered, discontent over rising fuel and cooking gas prices, and anxiety over how and when will the economic tide turn. Yet, there's evidence

from the ground that the coin does not seem

to have flipped entirely from dis-



content to anger against the Yogi Adityanath government in UP. Of course, the ruling

party's charged poll campaign, with lines such as "fark saaf hai (the difference is clear)" and "soch imandar CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

#### **BUDGET SESSION BEGINS TODAY**

# **Govt misled House on** Pegasus, says Cong; moves privilege motion

Adhir writes to Speaker; notice in House over Vaishnaw's statement

MANOJCG NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

WITH THE first leg of the Budget session of Parliament set to begin Monday amid a high-octane campaign for Assembly elections in five states, the Congress on Sunday gave a notice in Lok Sabha for moving a privilege motion against Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw for "misleading" the House on the Pegasus spyware issue. A similar notice will be given in

Rajya Sabha as well Citing a report by The New York Times that India bought the Israeli spyware in 2017 as part of a \$2-billion package for weapons, Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranian Chowdhury. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

#### Poll echo in **Parliament**

THE ELECTORAL battle in five states is likely to find an echo in Parliament. The Opposition will use the discussions on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address and the general Budget to attack the government. All eyes will also be on the Budget to see if the government will announce any schemes with an eye on the elections

**Proof of Pegasus** use on phones, Cyber experts tell SC panel

**AASHISHARYAN** NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

AT LEAST two cyber-security researchers, who have deposed before the Supreme Court-appointed committee that's probing the use of Pegasus for allegedly spying on citizens, have told the panel that they found concrete evidence of use of the malware on the devices of the petitioners.

These cyber-security researchers were engaged by some of the petitioners to depose before the top court panel and provide details of the forensic analysis done by them.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2** 

# family, hope for ex-gratia hinges on a prescription

**SOHINI GHOSH** AHMEDABAD, JANUARY 30

FIFTY-FOUR-YEAR OLD Manilal Chavada, a resident of Kanodar village in Banaskantha, died at home on May 2 last year, just two hours after his family managed to arrange an oxygen tank. The medical certificate of cause of death states: "Patient (came) with severe breathlessness and pected case of Corona".

for Rs 50,000 ex-gratia, an-

nounced for Covid deaths, was rejected on January 17. Now, they are looking for a piece of paper from eight months ago in which the doctor prescribed oxygen for Chavada, so as to approach a Grievance Redressal Committee to appeal against the rejection.

In Odisha betel hub, farmers say



#### **KANCHAN VASDEV** & MANOJCG

JANUARY 30

DAYS AFTER Rahul Gandhi announced that the Congress will project a chief minister face in Punjab before the state polls, the party has fielded Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi from a second seat in what is seen as a signal that he is the frontrunner in the race. But the move has also sent out mixed signals.

Channi's name figured in the third list of eight candidates announced by the Congress Sunday. The party called the two-seat move a "masterstroke" aimed at denting Aam Aadmi Party's prospects by consolidating CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

#### **IDEA EXCHANGE**

**ED, NIA CAN WALK IN** PAGE 12

# By UNNY The New York Supari Supari .. subject to

# steel plant fight is for survival AISHWARYA MOHANTY ENVELOPED IN fog and an un-

DHINKIA (JAGATSINGHPUR) JANUARY 30

easy silence is Dhinkia, a village in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur district that is at the centre of one of the latest flashpoints over land acquisition for industry. Until a fortnight ago, its residents had stood guard round the clock, blocking the entry of the administration and protesting against ISW Utkal Steel Ltd's 13.2 million tonne per annum integrated steel plant that is proposed to



A betel vineyard in Dhinkia. Residents say this coastal area is suitable for the crop. Aishwarya Mohanty



come up here. Following a police crack-

down on January 14, violence had broken out between the two sides, leaving over 20 villagers and five policemen injured. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**ANYWHERE: SUKHBIR** 

# CRPF man's son is India's hero in U-19 World Cup, sets up win over Bangladesh

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

**DEVENDRA PANDEY** 

MUMBAI, JANUARY 30 AT THE CRPF camp in Odisha's

Maoist-affected Rayagada district, no one knew Ravi Kumar. A handful knew his father, Rajinder Singh, an Assistant Sub Inspector. But Saturday night changed it all. Ravi, a left-arm seamer, nabbed three wickets for 14 runs — highlighted by an opening spell of 5-1-5-3 — to set up India's five-wicket victory over Bangladesh for a place in the semifinals of U-19 World





Seamer Ravi Kumar (left) and his father Rajinder Singh.

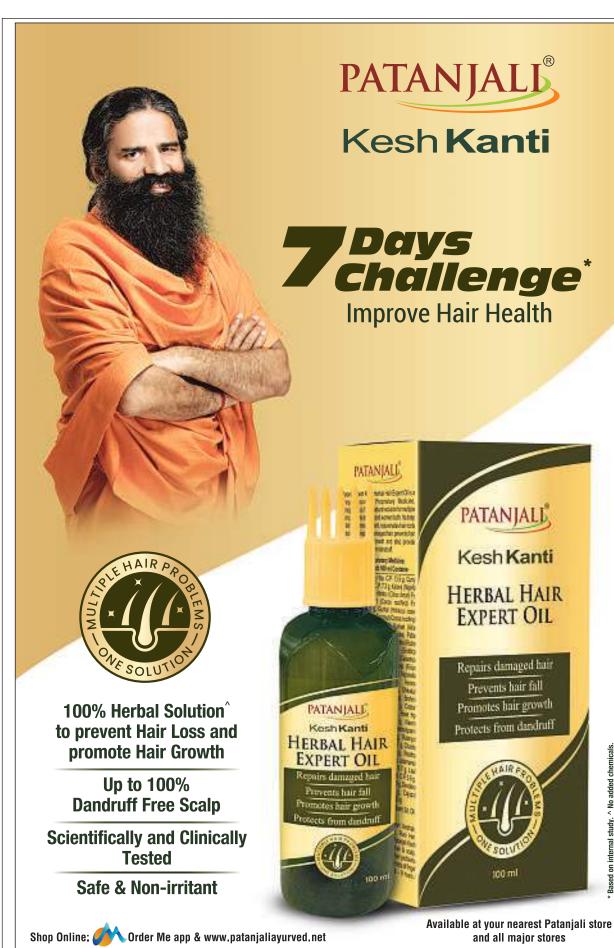
Cup in West Indies. It was India's sweetest moment in the tournament yet, as Bangladesh had beaten them to hai (Until yesterday, no one the trophy in the previous edition. knew Rajinder here. Today, all the officers know)... Ravi ka papa Today, all the talk in the CRPF

camp is about Rajinder and Ravi. "Kal tak toh koi Rajinder ko yahan janta nahi tha. Aaj sab saheb jante

Rajinder is the talk of our unit here. All the officers have called and congratulated me, I don't have many words to express my happiness," an emotional Rajinder told The Indian Express.

The father-son duo had to cross a series of hurdles to savour this day. The story of Ravi was one that nearly did not happen. His mother was worried about her son playing cricket all the time, and wanted him to focus on academics and earn a degree. Ravi, unperturbed, would tell her: "Aaj aap muihe rok rahi hai, ek din aisa aayega ki aap mujhe TV pe dekhoge (Today, you are stopping me but there will come a day when you will see me on TV).'

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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BENGALURU: INDUSTRIAL WASTE, SEWAGE AND ENCROACHMENTS TAKE A HEAVY **TOLL ON MUTHANALLUR LAKE** 

Till a decade ago the lake could boast a good water quality, but it's on the decline now, local residents lament

#### **TECH**



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# **EXPRESS** AUDIO

#### The protests against Kerala's SilverLine project

**NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY** 

Today on the 3 Things podcast, we talk about why many in Kerala are opposed to the massive rail infrastructure project, including environmentalists

### **FROM PAGE ONE**

#### Privilege motion

who wrote to Speaker Om Birla seeking permission to move a privilege motion, said, "It appears that the Modi Government has misled the Parliament and the Supreme Court and lied to the people of India.'

Responding to reports that government allegedly used Israeli spyware Pegasus to snoop on political leaders, journalists, judges and civil society activists, Vaishnaw had on the opening day of the Monsoon session of Parliament on July 19 last year told both Houses that the story was "sensational" and an attempt "to malign Indian democracy and its well established institutions".

"The Government, on the floor of the House, always maintained that it had nothing to do with the Pegasus spyware and it never bought the spyware from the NSO Group. The Modi Government also lied to the Supreme Court when it was directly questioned about the purchase and deployment of Pegasus," Chowdhury's notice on Sunday said.

"In a sworn affidavit, the Government said 'unequivocally, we deny any and all of the allegations against the Government' on the Pegasus issue. In light of the latest revelations by The New York Times, it appears that the Modi government has misled Parliament and the Supreme Court and lied to the people of India. In view of

#### **CLARIFICATIONS** & CORRECTIONS

30.01.22, PAGE 10

AN ITEM in Coomi Kapoor's Inside Track column inaccurately mentioned that the DGs of the BSF. CRPF. CISF. ITBP and SSB were not invited to the Republic

The Office of PRO (Defence), Directorate of Public Relations, Ministry of Defence, has said: "As per the information from the D-Ceremonial, Ministry of Defence, DGs of Paramilitary Forces were invited to the parade."

The error is deeply regretted.

the above, I demand that a Privilege Motion may be initiated against the Minister of Information Technology for deliberately misleading the House on the issue," he wrote.

A global consortium of media groups had revealed in July 2021 that the spyware had been used by governments around the world to snoop on opponents, journalists, businessmen etc.

With an eye on the Assembly elections, Opposition parties are likely to raise, besides Pegasus, issues such as "agrarian distress", Chinese "incursions" and the state of the economy. President Ram Nath Kovind will address a joint sitting of both the Houses on the opening day Monday. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Economic Survey 2021-22 after his address. She will present the Union Budget on Tuesday.

#### Double-jabbed

A 75 per cent second-dose coverage has significant public health implications. The Health Ministry said that while over 500 districts continue to report a case positivity rate of more than 5 per cent due to the spread of the highly infectious Omicron variant, the broad vaccination coverage has ensured that hospitalisations and deaths have been fewer.

Four large states — Gujarat (96%), Madhya Pradesh (93%), Karnataka (91%), and Rajasthan (77%) — have a second-dose coverage well above the national average, official data show. Five other large states are, however, reporting second-dose coverage below the national average: Bihar and Andhra Pradesh (65% each), Uttar Pradesh (67%), Maharashtra (68%), and Tamil Nadu (69%).

Second-dose coverage increased significantly in the last week of November, after South Africa warned the WHO about the emergence of the highly infectious Omicron variant.

#### UP polls

kaam damdar (honest thought, hard work)", and its very vocal supporters shout down every doubting commoner on the street. But what appears to be working for the BJP is a sense of relief over the "improved law and order situation", free ration distribution during the pandemic, the vaccination programme — and an underlying refrain that only a few spell out but many acknowledge, in private: 'Yogi*ji* has shown them their place." No marks for guessing who the "them" are.

And yet, there is no escaping that resentment over jobs lost in the pandemic, disappointment among backward communities and anger over the government's handling of farm protests make the UP elections an intense fight on the ground. For the BIP, its biggest trump card, as always since 2014, remains Prime Minister Narendra Modi who commands popularity, even reverence, among voters.

As Rajendra Sharma, from Mant constituency in Mathura district, puts it: "Ladai hai. Yeh gathbandhan hai Sapa-Lok Dal. BIP aur unmein takkar hai poore UP mein (There is a fight... a strong face-off between BJP and

the SP-RLD alliance)." Simmering resentment: Mathura, which witnessed vocal mobilisation against the farm laws, is considered a BJP bastion, particularly the area in and around Vrindavan. But this time, from the sweet shop owner at the entrance of Bankey Bihari Mandir to the young tour guides waiting at the main road for pilgrims, all of them have only woes to share.

"In the last four years, not a single job has been offered by the government for the youth — be it in Railways, Defence or any other sector. I have been filling forms, but nothing has come," says Rishi, a tour guide and self-styled supporter of BJP from Paltauni village in Mathura. The 25-yearold who has completed Class 12 says he did not get the Rs 500 promised for unemployed youth every month but adds that he has cleared the Non-Technical Popular Category (NTPC) recruitment exam conducted by the Railways, which triggered widespread protests last week by

those who missed out. Amit Sharma and Umesh Kumar Upadhyay, who also work as guides in Vrindavan, spoke of unhappiness over lack of jobs and rising prices. For Narendra Kumar, another guide, the stray cattle menace, which has become a poll issue, is an added complaint. "The cows and oxen have become a headache for the farmers. A farmer with 10 bighas has to spend at least Rs 15,000 for putting up lights to

keep them away," he said. Mohit Kumar, a supporter of the SP, argues that the government led by Akhilesh Yadav had offered more jobs during its 2012-17 term. "Now, many of us have lost two years due to coronavirus. There is no sign of jobs under this regime," he said. Mohit and his friend Anoop Kumar are not impressed by the BJP's "digital push" to help youths find jobs. "Our state has more villages and rural areas than urban centres. How is it going to help them?" he asked.

Advantage BJP: In Mathura, the improved power situation appears to be working in favour of BJP candidate Srikant Sharma, who is the state's power minister. The party is banking on the image of Adityanath and Modi standing together, hopes of an upper-caste consolidation and the buzz about the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Says Upadhyay, the tour guide: "We hope things will improve and we will stay with the BJP." Upadhyay and fellow guide Amit Sharma believe that "only a double engine government with Modi at the Centre and Yogi in the

state can bring development". Yogeswar Mittal, a shopkeeper on Mendu road in Hathras, agrees but admits that the five-year Adityanath regime has not made much of a difference to his life or his area. "Cooking gas is exorbitantly expensive. The price of every essential item has gone up. I am not even able to sell a small plot. I have to mobilise money to buy a place on my own because the road around is in a bad shape," says Mittal, who has rented a showroom to run his grocery shop.

He is also upset that the party did not accept any of the 32 names submitted by the local unit and "imported" Anjula Mahor from Agra as its candidate. "But I cannot vote against BJP. Our community supports the party. I am helpless," says Mittal.

The free ration, launched to alleviate the Covid lockdown distress, seems to be the most significant factor in favour of the BJP government. Its distribution by the state and the fact that its delivery is in bags with the PM's image as well has worked as a "doubleengine" in ways more than one.

Several voters across the two districts, even some who won't vote for the BJP, make it a point to mention the free rations. "In fact, one can say Covid has saved the Yogi government. While free ration wooed the rural population, the vaccination programme is being appreciated in the urban centres," says Anoop, the SP supporter in Mant.

"Improved law and order" is another factor that has satisfied voters. Many of them, especially from the forward castes, hailed the "kanoon vyavastha" under Adityanath. "Earlier, higher-caste girls could not step out... if there was any incident of them being teased, we could not even go to the police station. But it's not the situation now," says Satyenpal Singh, a farmer in Hathras.

Ram Singh Yadav, a state transport bus driver, is frustrated with the BJP, despite shifting his political loyalty from the SP in 2017 and 2019. He is "frustrated at the way the state treats its transport employees, who worked overtime during Covid". "I will not only vote against the BJP but will see that it's defeated," says Yadav, standing near his two-wheeler on Mendu road.

And yet, he unhesitatingly agrees with Mittal. "One thing this BIP government did effectively They taught the minorities a lesson. One has to admit that law and order has improved," he says.

Rishab Saraswat, who runs a sweet shop on a narrow lane leading to the Bankey Bihari Mandir, insists there is disillusionment among the youth and the core support base of BJP.

"But what saves BIP candidates is the community votes... the Mathura constituency is extremely caste-ridden and that certainly helps the BJP. Also, the youth seem to be influenced by the highdosage social media campaign of the BIP's IT cell. As for Srikant Sharma (BJP candidate in Mathura), the party and its leaders will rescue him," says Saraswat.

But that assurance comes with a rider. Hindus form over 80 per cent of the population here but the Jats, an influential community, are upset with the government and could swing towards SP-RLD. Mathura votes in the first phase on February 10, and Hathras on February 14.

#### Gujarat victim

government, wherein the state informed the apex court that against the 10,094 registered Covid deaths in the state, Gujarat government had received 91,810 applications for ex-gratia as of January 19, and payments were made in case of 59,895 while payments for 11,464 applications were pending.

As on January 29, data shared by the Gujarat government shows, out of 1,00,789 applications received by it for ex-gratia, 8,714 had been rejected. As of January 21, 613 re-applications are pending before the Grievance Redressal Committee. The death toll, as of January 30, stood at 10.438.

The Gujarat government had earlier attributed the wide disparity in its official death numbers and the claims submitted, to the Supreme Court's wide definition of Covid death to include anvone who had died 30 days after getting the infection.

On November 28, the state passed a resolution taking this into account, with its guidelines stating: "deaths occurring within 30 days from the date of testing or from the date of being clinically determined as a Covid-19 case shall be treated as 'deaths due to Covid-19', even if the death takes place outside the hospital/in-patient facility".

Chavada was a daily wager, employed at construction sites and earning around Rs 15,000 per month. Son Tanvir (26) says he suddenly took ill on April 25, 2021, developing high fever and cough and cold. "This was at the peak of the second wave, when beds or oxygen were not available."

Tanvir admits Chavada refused to get tested. "There was a thinking that one would die immediately if one tests positive for Covid." The family did the rounds of

"two to three government hospitals" in Banaskantha looking for a bed. But they couldn't find one and could not afford a private hospital, says Tanvir.

The local physician, an Ayurvedic doctor, prescribed Chavada some paracetamol and medicines for symptomatic treatment, he adds. After briefly improving,

Chavada's condition took a sudden dip on the night of April 30. Tanvir says they wanted to take him for a test, but Chavada was in no condition to be moved. "The local doctor told us that he will need oxygen. We started looking and, finally on May 2, we managed to get an oxygen tank, through the doctor's reference," savs a family member who does not wish to be named.

Blood test reports with the family show that on May 2, Chavada's indicators regarding liver function and C-reactive protein levels were well beyond the normal range.

"Within two hours of being put on oxygen on May 2, Chavada breathed his last," says the family member.

A relative says they submitted the ex-gratia claim application online with documents such as Form 4 of the death certificate and his blood test reports, sometime in December. On January 17, they received the reiection from the office of the mamlatdar of the village jurisdiction of Palanpur, stating: "No evidence of death from Covid-19 presented."

Mamlatdar Kamal Chaudhari said that if RT-PCR tests are not available for a patient, like in the case of Chavada, claims where the death certificate states "death due to COVID-19" by the treating physician are accepted.

#### Odisha farmers

Since then, 17 villagers have been arrested, and many others are in hiding. A police contingent remains deployed less than a kilometre away from the village. At the centre of the residents'

resistance to the JSW project is the fear of being displaced from their farmlands and losing their betel vinevards, a key source of livelihood. Dhinkia's fertile land and the coastal environment are also ideal for growing the cashew cash crop that supplements the residents' income.

This is not the first time Dhinkia has resisted an industrial project

Seventeen years ago, South Korean steel major POSCO had decided to build a similar facility in the area. It had to withdraw in 2017 following 12 years of protests by Dhinkia residents, with the National Green Tribunal eventually scrapping its environmental clearance.

The Odisha government later transferred the same land to

JSW. The company's proposed steel plant requires 2,950.31 acres of land, 30 per cent of which is planned to be acquired from Dhinkia, threatening its economy based around the "Paradip betel leaves" that are sold across the country.

"For generations, our families have depended on beetle vines. The weather, sand dunes and water supply make it conducive for betel. An industrial plant in our periphery means our water will eventually get contaminated," said Prashant Samal, a resident. "They (the police) are destroying our vineyards and we are left to fend for ourselves. This will cost us around Rs 30,000 this month. Who will compensate us for that?" he asked.

"Even during off season we manage to earn Rs 12,000 or more just by selling our betel leaves. Our produce has gained popularity in such a way that we don't go to the market, the market comes to us," said resident Dilip Das. "What makes our produce stand out is that we don't have to put in any extra effort or add any chemicals to it. The moisture, sand quality, weather, everything is optimum for betel farming here.'

Dhinkia village is home to nearly 4,000 people, more than 80 per cent of whom are from the Dalit community. The larger Dhinkia gram panchayat area has a population of nearly 11,000, according to sarpanch Kishore Parida.

The government has carved three new revenue villages -Mahala, Jogisahi and Patana out of the gram panchayat, besides the existing Trilochanpura. Many residents opposed this exercise in December last year, saying the government was using a "divide and rule policy" to push the project through According to sarpanch

Parida, these four revenue villages have agreed to give up their farm land for the project. "The protest is mostly concentrated in Dhinkia now. Betel vineyards from other villages have already been demolished and now they are demolishing the vineyards in Dhinkia," he said. In Dhinkia, 625 betel vinevards have been measured, of which 480 have been dismantled so far.

In its rehabilitation package JSW has announced compensation of Rs 17,500 per decimal (0.01 acre) of acquired land as against the government's rate of Rs 6,000 per decimal. Additionally, it has proposed a bonus of Rs 50,000 per betel vineyard after demolition, irrespective of its size. It has also proposed jobs for villagers aged between 20 and 30 from each

Dhinkia residents have rejected this. "A one-time compensation is hardly equal to what we earn in a month. What after that?." Samal said.

Prashant Paikray of the Jindal Pratirodh Sangram Samiti, the village body spearheading the campaign against the JSW steel plant, said: "These compensations are mostly on paper and fade out during implementation. A one-time compensation is nothing compared to a perennial source of income, which the villagers already have.

Another resident highlighted that most of the villagers, despite cultivating their lands for generations, do not have title deeds over them. "For generations we have lived here, this is our home. Today if they rehabilitate us, we will not get compensation, because they will pass us off as landless. This happens every time during natural calamities as well," he said.

#### India's hero

Rajinder remembered this line when he watched his son slice the Bangladesh top-order. with his incisive and slippery bowling, on his smartphone in

New Delhi

the camp deep into the night. He admits that there were times when he, too, was worried about his son's future. "I don't have money and resources to make him play for India," he says.

But then, seeing Ravi's drive and commitment, he told him: 'If you have the 'dum', you will play for India." That, his son did when he was barely 19. But not before overcoming several setbacks. Realising that his prospects of progress were bleak if he staved in UP. Ravi called his father after selection trials in Kanpur and told him he had heard talk about bribes for a place in the state's U-16 squad. Rajinder knew that was be-

yond his modest salary and savings. But the breakthrough moment came when a neighbour, who has a house in Kolkata, told Rajinder that Ravi could stay there and play. Then just 13, Ravi had no second thoughts and packed his bags. He started playing in the second division before quickly leaping to first division. Misfortunes continued to haunt him, though, but he never told his parents about them, "I was in an U-16 camp but my name was removed after some tests, bone test or something. I was not given a reason and I was out," says Ravi.

And whenever he felt defeated, he sought motivation from his father. "Sometimes there are thoughts that 'yaar, yeh toh bahut tough hai' but then I think about my father. Unke job se zyada aur kya tough ho sakta hai (What can be tougher than his job)? Every day, he goes inside the jungle not knowing what is ahead of him. At the same time, he is doing so much for us," says Ravi.

Late last year, he was picked for Bengal's U-19 team for the Vinoo Mankad Trophy. His success earned him a place in the Challengers Trophy, a tri-series at home and the Asia Cup. But just when destiny seemed to smile on him, he lost his uncle in Kolkata due to Covid.

Ravi has just one wish now: "I want people to follow me and say 'we have to be like him'." He knows though that this dream journey has only begun, and there's still a long way to go. But for now, the fame of Rajnder's son has travelled far beyond the walls of a CRPF unit.

#### Cyber experts

One of the two researchers anyalsed iPhones of seven people, of which two were found to he infected with Pegasus, this researcher told The Indian Express. The researcher submitted an affidavit to the Supreme Court and subsequently deposed before the panel to say that the evidence on the two phones were uncovered using a forensic tool. After deleting personally

identifiable data from the devices of the two persons, the cybersecurity researcher found that while Pegasus had infected the phone of one of the petitioners in April 2018, the other phone had "multiple entries" for various stages of malware deployment between June and July 2021.

"Multiple entries going back to March 2021 indicating that the Pegasus malware tried to delete entries from the process table databases," the first cybersecurity researcher said in the affidavit to the Supreme Court.

The other cybersecurity researcher, who analysed Android phones of six of the petitioners in the case, found distinct versions of the malware on four phones, while two of the remaining devices had variants of the original versions of Pegasus present on them, this researcher told The Indian Express.

"We have an emulator for Android on which we verified that it has all the variants of the malware. What we found is that this (malware) is so virulent that it could not have been used for legitimate purposes. It not only reads your chats, it can get your videos, turn the audio or video at any time," the cybersecurity researcher said.

The Supreme Court had on October 27 last year appointed a three-member panel, under the supervision of retired Supreme Court judge Justice R V Raveendran, to look into the allegations of unauthorised surveillance using the Pegasus spyware. The three-member technical committee comprised Dr Naveen Kumar Chaudhary, Dean of National Forensic Sciences University in Gandhinagar; Dr Prabaharan P, Professor at Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham in Kerala; and Dr Ashwin Anil Gumaste, Institute Chair Associate Professor at Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.

In July last year, media outlets from across the world had reported that Israeli's company NSO Group's software Pegasus had been used to illegally spy on journalists, activists, ministers and members of the opposition.

The Indian leg of the investigation, conducted by The Wire, had reported that among the potential list of targets were Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, political strategist Prashant Kishor, then Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa, now Information and Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw (who was not a minister when the alleged surveillance is said to have happened), along with several other prominent names. The list also mentioned numbers of around 40 journalists, including three editors of The Indian Express – two current and one former.

#### Channi

Dalit votes in the heartland of Malwa, a stronghold of AAP. But opinion in the party is

A section of the Congress said fielding Channi from Bhadaur (SC), besides his home turf of Chamkaur Sahib, was aimed at consolidating Dalit votes in Sangrur and Barnala districts. AAP's CM face Bhagwant Mann is the Lok Sabha MP from Sangrur, and had a clear lead in

all the nine Assembly segments

in the constituency.

This section of the party argued that the Congress, by fielding Channi from two seats, was trying to send out a message that he was its strongest state leader. But some of the senior leaders argued that Channi was on a "weak wicket" in Chamkaur Sahib and fielding him from a second seat was a "desperate move". Expectedly, AAP chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Channi has been fielded from a second seat because he was losing in Chamkaur Sahib.

In the 2017 Assembly elections, Amarinder Singh, then spearheading the Congress, had contested from two seats. In Uttarakhand, Harish Rawat as Chief Minister had contested from two seats the same year. Former Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, too, had contested from two seats in 2018.

"Channi could have taken on (SAD leader) Sukhbir Singh Badal in Jalalabad, which has around 70 per cent Dalit population. He could have taken on Mann in nearby Dhuri. It would have sent a strong signal and pushed the SAD and AAP on the backfoot," a senior Congress leader said.

But several senior leaders said announcing Channi as the CM face was a "foregone conclusion". "After talking so much about appointing a Dalit leader as CM...how can we now say that he is a night watchman. But we thought the decision would come closer to the elections so that there would be some time for (Navjot Singh) Sidhu to do something. But now, we hear the announcement could come in the next week itself," another leader said.

#### Classifieds **EXPRESS EDUCATION** NIRVANA IAS ACADEMY STANDS WITH YOU IN THESE **DIFFICULT TIMES CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE HAS NO ALTERNATIVE** BATCHES START: 1st FEB. 2022 **Subjects Offered:** General Studies • Law • Political Science • History **WITH JUST 35 STUDENTS IN A CLASS SO THAT** PERSONALISED COACHING & SOCIAL DISTANCING **GO HAND IN HAND** WEEKEND BATCHES AVAILABLE www.nirvanaias.com ROHINI: H-17/262. Near Rohini West Metro Station. (Opp. Metro Pillar No.424), Sector - 7, Rohini, New Delhi - 85. TILAK NAGAR: 30/4, Ashok Nagar, Near Tilak Nagar Metro Station, Gate No- 3, New Delhi - 18. Ph: 011-47032447, 9990471004, 999047100 Contact for Advt. Booking: M/s Friends Publicity Service (M): 9212665841, 9212008155

51-100 Satisfactory 101-200 Moderate 201-300 Poor 301-400 Very Poor

#### **MAX: 23 MIN: 8**

#### FIR FILED AGAINST ACCUSED NOW

# Shahdara rape-assault: Complaint by victim's sister was overlooked

JIGNASA SINHA

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

DAYS AFTER a young woman was abducted, allegedly gangraped by her neighbours, and paraded on the streets in Shahdara, police have booked the accused in another case of molestation and assault on a complaint by the woman's younger sister, who alleged that she was also sexually harassed and thrashed by them.

Police have arrested a man, eight women, and apprehended three boys — all from the same family - in connection with the gangrape case based on the victim's complaint and videos that surfaced online. Their motive was personal enmity. Police said the family held her responsible for the death of one of their relatives a teenager who was allegedly stalking the woman and proposed to her, which she re-

Nearly a week before the incident, the victim's sister alleged she was being harassed and had filed a formal complaint. However, no action was taken by police at that time, she said.

On Saturday night, police registered a case against the arrested persons under sections of molestation, physical assault, criminal intimidation.

In her complaint, the sister wrote: "I was attacked and beaten up on January 19... We had an auto-rickshaw that they burnt down. I used to work at a shop... but (they) broke in and didn't let me work. When I stay at home, their women come and thrash me. When I step out, Nearly a week before the incident, the victim's sister alleged that she was being harassed and had filed a formal complaint

they (men)... harass me. I am alone... sir, help me. These people say that they aren't scared of police... (They) don't let me work or earn any money. How am I supposed to run my house? I am in danger... They threaten me... izzat ki jaan ki...

DCP (Shahdara district) R Sathiyasundaram said, "We found that the sister had filed a complaint; we have registered an FIR against the same persons. The matter is being investi-

The Indian Express also accessed the FIR that was registered on the complaint of the victim. In it, she said she knew the boy who lived near her house and later committed suicide. Following his death, she alleged, his family created a ruckus at her father's and inlaws' place.

"I was hiding because of this...

A week ago, his (boy's) family beat up my sister and were asking about my whereabouts... Today (January 26) around noon, my sister came to meet me... when (they) caught me. They dragged me on the road and made me sit in an auto. (They) chopped my hair with scissors. They were thrashing me and threatening to kill me. They took

me to (Shahdara)...," reads the

The woman alleged the boys raped her while the women sexually assaulted her.

"I was beaten up with sticks, slippers, a pipe and... they kicked me in the chest. They put black ink on my face and forced me to wear a garland of slippers... They paraded me in three lanes while beating me with slippers in front of everyone. They again took me to their house, forced me to lie down and kicked me. It started from 12 and went on till 1.30 pm...," she alleged.

The woman was rescued after her sister and husband called police.

Police had said they have formed a 10-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) under an ACP-rank officer to investigate the crime.

# Fountains, cafe: New look for Nelson Mandela Road

**GAYATHRI MANI** 

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

FROM A statue of Mahatma Gandhi, a drive through cafe and a fountain with LED lights — the 1-km-long Nelson Mandela Road in South Delhi is in for a swanky revamp

The road, which starts from Munirka and covers posh colonies of Vasant Vihar, Munirka Enclave, Jawaharlal Nehru University, DLF Promenade and Ambience malls. is one of the nine sample stretches being redeveloped under the streetscaping and beautification project of the Public Works Department (PWD).

When streetscaping of these sample stretches was proposed, the PWD was planning to give them a thematic makeover. For Nelson Mandela Marg, the department was considering a statue and photographs depicting details of former South African President.

However, according to the plan proposed by the PWD in the tender floated recently for the redevelopment for the road, the thematic idea appears to have been dropped. Now on the cards for the road are a 42-foot statue of Gandhi and marble statues of various animals and birds such as a lion, panda, and a snail.

When asked about the change, a senior PWD official said, "We are planning to install both Gandhi and Nelson Mandela statues on both sides of the roads. Currently, tenders floated do not mention Mandela, but it would

be taken up once work is awarded and construction begins." Besides, the PWD is planning to install a fountain with 40 programmable colour changing LED lights for beautification of

The footpath will be redeveloped with granite cobble stones; will have benches made of teakwood and dholpur sandstone: 20 iron cast dustbins will line either side of the road; and retroreflective overhead signage boards will be put up. The entire drainage line on

this stretch.

the stretch will be redeveloped. Further, a rainwater harvesting system will be set up and the water will be used for horticulture work. To make it safe for pedestrians, walkways, zebra crossings

with thermo-plaster paint, a bus

stand-cum-rain shelter, a cycle

Surgeon, Orthopaedic

Centre, Patna

Osteoporosis is a disease in

abnormally thin, frail, and easily

fractured. Women are more at risk

for osteoporosis after menopause

because of decreasing amounts of

estrogen, a female hormone that

helps maintain bone mass. There

are certain risk factors which

osteoporosis are: family history

of osteoporosis, old age, history

of fracture, menopause, females,

rheumatoid arthritis, Diabetes &

Chronic kidney diseases. Also

factors for osteoporosis which

includes smoking, alcoholism,

underweight, inactive lifestyle,

low calcium and vitamin D3

There are certain preventive

maintain or improve your bone

treatments that can help you

density. Eating a good diet,

exercising regularly, and not

smoking are just a few of the most

Calcium intake: Premenopausal

women and men should consume

at least 1000 mg of calcium per

significant factors of preventing

levels & steroid use.

osteoporosis.

there are certain modifiable risk

cannot be modified for

which vour bones become

Further, a 55-feet Tricolour, a chattri-style structure, a drive through cafe-cum-toilet on ei-

ther side of the road and water ATMs are also on the plan.

parks nearby. So, people who live Munirka or slum areas can sit and relax once the road is redeveloped, Besides, students of INU living around the area can safely walk or cycle to malls. It will also decongest traffic and make it accident free," said a PWD official. The estimated cost of the

ticulture work

### AAP, BJP spar over land given by councillor to NGO

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

THE AAM Aadmi Party (AAP) Sunday alleged that the BJP councillor from Sawan Park gave land, that was earlier used to dump waste, to an NGO owned by her husband.

AAP MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak claimed, "The North MCD gave a land parcel in Ashok Vihar's Keshavpuram zone to an NGO owned by one Rajendra Kumar. The NGO's name is 'Panchvati Social Welfare Society'. The most important fact is that this ward's councillor is BJP's Manju Khandelwal. And, Rajendra Kumar, the one who received this land, is her

He claimed land in Delhi is "being besieged" in this manner. "BJP leaders are working overtime to transfer historical lands in their name. This is a criminal activity and action should be taken against these people," he said.

The land in question was ear-

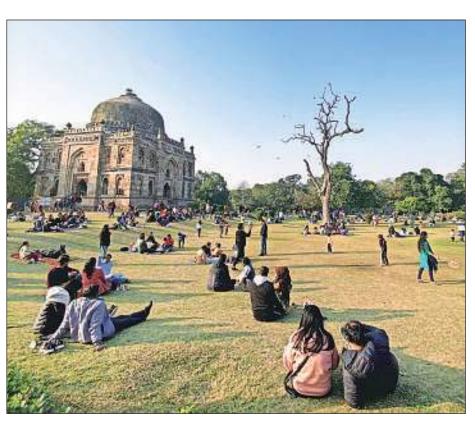
lier a dhalao used for dumping

Councillor Khandelwal hit back saying that a proposal was passed in the House meeting that unused dhalao land can be given to NGOs. "Now if I give it to any NGO, no one should have any objection. This organisation does social work and had recently held an eye camp and helped people during Covid."

When asked if her husband heads the NGO, she said, "It is not a crime to head that NGO, people from AAP and Congress are also office bearers there." She said as per the MCD rules, such land can be used for social welfare work for five years only.

Pathak said, "BJP's top leadership must answer as to what is happening in the MCD."

The AAP and BJP have been engaged in a constant war of words for the past year. The AAP has been alleging corruption in the functioning of the civic bodies while BJP has been accusing the same in the Delhi



### DELHI STEPS OUT

At Lodhi Garden on Sunday, after weekend curbs were lifted in the capital. Express

## MCD polls: Change in reserved seats makes candidates rethink strategy

**ABHINAV RAJPUT** NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

THE REVISION of reserved seats by the state election commis-

sion (SEC) for the MCD polls has made parties as well as candidates re-think their strategy. The main challenge is for sitting councillors, many of whose seats are now in the category reserved for Scheduled Castes or women. This also includes the three sitting mayors as well seats of the opposition.

Elections for 272 wards in the three civic bodies, currently ruled by the BJP, is scheduled for April.

According to the order issued on Tuesday, 15 of 104 wards in the South MCD, 20 of 104 in the North and 11 of 64 wards in East have been reserved for

Scheduled Castes, based on the 2011 Census. And, 50% of seats have been reserved for women.

Senior leaders in the BIP state unit said the change of reservation status of most wards would help the party deny tickets to candidates without them being unhappy about it.

The AAP, however, believes that new faces will not help the BJP. AAP MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak said, "Our campaign had always been against the party and not individual candidates. So even if all candidates are changed, it would not help the BJP."

Senior AAP leaders said the party would attack the ruling BJP on policy lines so that changes in candidates do not

eliminate anti-incumbency. In the 2017 polls, the BJP had brought in fresh faces to all seats

to work against anti-incumbency - it has been in power since 2011 - and won 181 of 270 wards and managed to increase its vote share by around 5%. Its vote share was 32.2% in the 2015 Assembly polls. AAP had finished second, while

Congress was a distant third. Soon after the reservation status of the wards was changed, some councillors were seen promoting their wives on social media. Said an AAP councillor, "If I have worked hard during the last five years and earned people's trust, why will I not seek a ticket for my wife?"

Delhi BJP state general secretary Harsh Malhotra said the MCD polls are decided by a margin of a few thousand votes and since the party has a pool of leaders in most constituencies, the change in reserved seats won't affect it.



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Assistant Professor, G.B. Pant Social Science

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davp 09142/12/0025/2122

#### through their diet. Calcium intake for postmenopausal women should be 1200 mg per day. Vitamin D intake: Men over the

age of 70 and postmenopausal women (those who no longer have monthly periods) should take 800 international units (20 micrograms) of vitamin D every day. In older women and men with appropriate calcium consumption, this amount appears to minimize bone loss and fracture rate.

reduce fracture risk by increasing bone mass in premenopausal women and maintaining bone density in postmenopausal women. Furthermore, exercise can help you strengthen your muscles, improve your balance, and reduce your risk of falling and suffering a fracture or other

**Smoking:** Smoking cigarettes is known to hasten bone loss, thus avoiding or stopping is strongly advised for bone health. According to one study, smoking one pack per day throughout the adult lives had a 5 to 10% drop in bone density by menopause, increasing their risk of fracture.

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Estimated Cost of the work ₹1,57,16,693/-21.02.2022 & 15:00 Hrs ast Date & Time of Bid Submission

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New Delhi

THE PROJECT

Nelson Mandela Marg Vasant Kunj Mall Road

1km

Road length ₹18.17 cr Cost; tender floated

statue, sculptures of birds made from scrap material, a sandstone fountain with LED lights, a drive-through cafe, cycle track, walkways

**FEATURES:** A high-mast

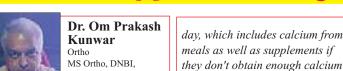
Tricolour, 42-foot Gandhi

track, parking facilities for auto rickshaws and cars on the side of roads will be created.

"The stretch connects important roads as well as residential areas and malls and there are no

project is Rs 18.17 crore, of which Rs 11.26 is estimated for civil work, Rs 4.70 crore for electrical work, and Rs 2.73 crore for hor-

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#### 'DELHI MUST TAKE A STRONG DECISION'

# Private school body renews push for reopening, writes to L-G's office

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS have sharpened their stance on reopening schools and have requested for a delegation to discuss the issue with the Lieutenant Governor.

The Action Committee Unaided Recognised Private Schools, a large umbrella body of private schools in the city, wrote to the L-G's office Sunday, pushing for schools to open and requesting a meeting with him.

Last Wednesday, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia had met with a delegation of parents who had submitted a memorandum requesting that schools and anganwadi centres be the first to reopen as and when Delhi begins lifting its cur-

**BRIEFLY** -

**Broker held** 

for cheating

home buyers

New Delhi: The Delhi

Police Crime Branch has

arrested a 47-year-old

broker who allegedly

cheated around 50-100

home buyers on the pre-

text of selling them luxury

apartments in Delhi-NCR

and fled with their money

five years ago. According to police, the accused,

Sanjeev Kumar Mavi, op-

erated more than seven

shell companies in Delhi.

The first complaint was

received from Ranhola

district in 2017, when he

allegedly cheated buyers

of Rs 1.75 crore. Then,

he went on the run.

Dheeraj Kumar, JCP

(Crime), said, "... He has

been arrested and booked

SDMC to build

parking lot at

Punjabi Bagh

New Delhi: Seeing the

overwhelming response

of people to the Bharat

Darshan park at Punjabi

Bagh, the SDMC is plan-

ning on building a parking

space in the area. "The ini-

tial idea is to build an au-

tomated five-floor parking

lot with space for around

200 cars," a senior SDMC

official said. The parking

lot would cost around

Rs 36.9 crore, and will take

a year's time to be com-

pleted, he added. ENS

in six-seven cases.'

of crores

rent set of Covid restrictions.

After this meeting, he had said the government would recommend the reopening of schools in the Delhi Disaster Management Authority meeting held last Thursday. However, the DDMA - chaired by the L-G had decided to defer discussions on the issue to the next meeting.

"We are now directing our requests to the L-G since the Aam Aadmi Party government has already stated their support for reopening," said an office-bearer.

"It is our humble request to you to kindly reopen schools as our students at all levels have been facing major learning losses for around two years now. We assure you of the safe and smooth reopening of schools. Many major metro cities in India and abroad have reopened schools. We believe it is time when Delhi



Some school administrators said they need to work towards doing away with the choice of not attending physical classes

Empty beds at the CWG village Covid care centre. As per Sunday's health bulletin, only about 10% of the 15,428 hospital beds

Daily Covid cases drop to 3,600; worst

is over in capital for now, say officials

to reopen activities and institu-

tions, including schools, as there

is clear evidence that we are in a

better position now, especially

with vaccination," said a senior

letin, only about 10% of the

15,428 hospital beds reserved for

Covid patients were occupied. Of

1,508 patients admitted, 447

were on oxygen support while

143 were on ventilator support.

daily cases peak recorded in April,

the number of patients on venti-

lator support has remained low.

Less than a tenth of patients ad-

Despite the city crossing the

As per Sunday's health bul-

government official.

also takes a strong decision to reopen physical learning spaces,'

read the letter to the L-G. "In addition, kindly allow a delegation of Action Committee Unaided Private Schools to meet your excellency to discuss this issue in detail," it stated.

In the meantime, some school administrators believe that a stronger approach needs to be taken towards reopening.

Minakshi Kushwaha, principal of Birla Vidya Niketan, said

ing away with the choice of not attending physical classes.

"This will be a huge loss for generations if we do not act fast. I think we need to take a strong stance and do away with the option of not attending physical school, with mandatory vaccination. I think that is the only way to move forward and break out of the complacency... For instance, the United States has done away with hybrid schooling," she said.

Sources said that the DDMA is examining the proposal to allow schools to reopen in the city.

The Indian Express had reported that from March 1, 2020. to October 31, 2021, Delhi schools were shut for 85 weeks or approximately 19 months fully closed for 65 weeks, partially for 20 weeks.

# Cloud over efficacy against omicron but monoclonal antibody therapy still in use

**ANONNA DUTT** 

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

WHILE THE second wave of the pandemic saw rampant use of antivirals and immune-modulating drugs that led to shortage and black-marketing, the third wave has seen a slew of patients being prescribed monoclonal antibody therapy.

Currently, there are two cocktails approved for use in Covid-19 patients in India – Casirivimab and Imdevimab called Regen-CoV2, and Eli Lilly's Bamlanivimab and Etesevimab. Both cocktails are indicated for use in those with mild to moderate Covid who do not require oxygen but who are at a high risk of progressing to severe disease.

However, many patients prescribed the therapy in the current wave were those with no significant co-morbidities or high-risk contacts of positive patients, who were given the "full" dose using the entire pack instead of sharing it with two people.

While the treatment resulted in reduction in viral load in delta variant infections, it has been the heavily mutated omicron variant. Last Monday, the US Food and Drug Administration revoked the emergency use authorisation of both the antibody cocktails approved for use in India. A third monoclonal antibody, Sotrovimab, which is effective against the new variant, isn't approved for use in the country.

The Indian Express spoke to two patients who were prescribed the therapy — one of them opted for it while the other

■ A 38-year-old woman studying in Melbourne, Australia, returned to Delhi feeling fatigued and jet-lagged. When she got fever and chills a day later, she decided to use the home-testing kits for Covid-19. They were negative, so she got an RT-PCR test that turned out to be positive. She immediately sent in a request for tele-consultation with a doctor from a reputed private hospital in the city.

"The doctor called me 30 minutes after the allotted time, from the middle of traffic, and said I should take the antibody cocktail therapy that would cost around Rs 1.5 lakh. I was shocked and told him that I would get back to him later," the student said. She has no co-morbidities.

The prescription that she received after the consultation listed paracetamol, azithromycin, and some supplements along with the therapy. She asked some physicians she knew and decided to stick with just the oral medications. "I got better with just those drugs. I still feel a little tired, but

that's it." She added, "Thankfully I checked with others, but many might just take the therapy without questioning. My mother was admitted to a hospital in Assam with Covid-19 and she said some of the others in the ward received it."

Dr Sumit Ray, medical superintendent and critical-care specialist from Delhi's Holy Family Hospital, said: "What we have seen is that there is a demand by patients, who have relatives in Mumbai or Kerala, for the therapy because it is being used back home. There are some doctors also who are pushing it."

On the other hand, 37-

#### THE THERAPY

**LAB DEVELOPED** antibodies that bind with the virus rendering it unable to infect human cells

IT HAS to be given early on when the virus is replicating in the body

THE THERAPY has been shown to reduce the number of deaths, hospital stay, and the need for mechanical ventilator

THE THERAPY should be given to those with mild to moderate symptoms but are at a risk of developing severe disease such as the old, those with co-morbidities, or the immune-compromised

**TWO ANTIBODY cocktails** 

vear-old Mumbai resident Karan thought that his hypertension and grade III fatty liver disease meant that he needed the therapy to stay out of hospital. He was prescribed the "full dose" of the Regen-CoV2 antibody cocktail. "I had come in contact with a

colleague who had the infection; I had no symptoms when I tested positive. By the same evening, I got a 102 fever and body ache. My doctor suggested that I get the full dose of the antibody cocktail because of my co-morbidities. Thankfully, for me the cost, which was over Rs 1 lakh, wasn't an issue as my company covers medical treatment,' Karan said, adding that his doctor couldn't have had a monetary incentive as she herself suggested he get the therapy at another hospital near his home.

"It is a precautionary treatment; I know I wouldn't have been able to manage on my own if I had more symptoms. My fever subsided the same night that I got the therapy," he said.

The "full dose" suggested by his doctor means he was administered the complete 1,200 mg each of Casirivimab and Imdevimab that comes in a single package of the Regen-CoV2 antibody cocktail.

#### How it works

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals had initially used the 1,200 mg dose each of both molecules for its clinical trial but was approved at half the dose, or 600 mg each, by USA and India when the efficacy of both doses was found to be almost the same. The company, on its website, says that Regen-CoV2 significantly reduced the risk of hospitalisation or death by 70% (1,200 mg) and 71% (2,400 mg) as compared to

placebo. The therapy uses lab-designed antibody molecules or a cocktail of such molecules to bind with the Sars-CoV-2 virus and prevent it from entering hu-

man cells. A study recently published in the journal Nature Medicine that tested the efficacy of all available monoclonal antibody therapies in neutralising the omicron variant of the Sars-CoV-2 virus in the petri dish found that both therapies approved in India have "completely lost neutralising activity against B1.1.529 (omicron) virus".

The country's foremost vac-



2 cocktails are approved for use in Covid patients in India. Tashi Tobgyal

have been approved for use in India – Regeneron's Casirivimab and Imdevimab, and Eli Lilly's Bamlanivimab and Etesevimab

**BOTH HAVE** been found to be ineffective against omicron variant of Sars-CoV-2

cine expert Dr Gagandeep Kang took to Twitter to describe the case of her 90-year-old uncle from Chennai who was given the antibody treatment after coming in contact with someone who had tested positive for Covid. "We know that 90% or greater infections are currently omicron in Indian cities. We know that the licensed monoclonal antibody products in India do not neutralise omicron. Yet doctors in private hospitals are prescribing monoclonal antibody therapy. Please remember that even among clinical vulnerable, most contacts will stay asymptomatic or have mild

symptoms & recover," she said. "It is unethical, immoral and unscientific," she said.

However, doctors and medical professionals are themselves using the therapy despite evidence that it does not work against the omicron variant. At least two doctors from Delhi, on condition of anonymity, said their colleagues and doctor friends had taken the therapy.

Dr Vinay Aggarwal, chairman of Pushpanjali hospital, said, "I did receive the therapy. I am over 70 years old, I have chronic bronchitis and heart conditions. I have had a history of coughing so hard that I broke my ribs. The government says that 80% cases are omicron, and the therapy does not work. But very few samples are sequenced and only about 8,000-9,000 omicron cases have been confirmed by the government across the country. So why should they say it should not be used? Our doctors have the experience in using the therapy and have found it to be beneficial. Not everything is misuse, clinicians should be given the freedom to prescribe therapies

once they have been approved." After testing positive for Covid-19, Delhi-based cardiologist Dr Prem Agarwal also received the therapy. He administered it to his wife and mother as well on suspicion of having the infection.

'My wife is a cancer survivor, my mother is over 90 years old, both are at a high risk of developing severe disease. All of the medicines that have been tried out for Covid-19 work the best when given early on. So, I decided to administer it to them,' he said.

# Rumours of infertility, misinformation: Why Nuh administered just 800 precaution doses

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA NUH, JANUARY 30

ONLY 821 precaution doses have been administered in Nuh district since third-dose vaccination for senior citizens (above 60 years) and frontline and healthcare workers started on January 10. Of these, 332 were administered on the first day itself. In the past week, on average, a paltry 13 precautionary doses have been administered in a day in the district.

Nuh has the lowest vaccination rate among 22 districts in Harvana. As per data shared by the district administration, first dose coverage in Nuh stood at 72% and second dose coverage

Nuh was among the 48 lowest performing districts in terms of vaccine coverage in the country as per data shared at a conference of state health ministers in Delhi in October 2021. At a rally in Nuh on November 2021, Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar said that the Prime Minister had expressed concern about the rate of vaccination in



reserved for Covid patients were occupied. Tashi Tobgyal

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** 

MAINTAINING A consistent de-

cline, Delhi reported 3,674 Covid

cases on Sunday at a positivity

rate of 6.37%, a drop from 7.41%

on Saturday. Delhi government

officials said that the case trajec-

tory over the past week has

made it clear that the worst is

Africa as well. Cases rose very

quickly and then reduced at a

similar pace. Delhi reached a

new peak of cases in this wave,

but hospitals were not over-

'We had seen this in South

over in the capital for now.

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

The community health centre in Nuh, where people queue up outside the single window for vaccination. Express

the district and appealed to people to not spread rumours and

In the 15-17 age group, only a third (29,206) out of over 90,000 eligible teenagers have been inoculated with the first dose since January 3.

Health department officials attributed the slow pace of immunisation to several factors including lower literacy, ignorance and rumours, and misinforma-

tion among locals on vaccines. Dr Harshit Goyal at Nuh community health centre (CHC), said. "There is a myth among people here that vaccines cause infertility among men. A lot of people say 'hamare bachhe nhi honge teeka lagwaya toh (If we get the vaccine, we will not be able to have children)'... We have been trying to educate people, but they indulge in conspiracy theories, and that along with a low literacy rate, contributes to a lower vaccination rate."

Officials said since the government had made it mandatory for people to get vaccinated and linked it to provision of services ration, petrol, pension, bank services etc — there had been a slight uptick.

whelmed. This is the right time mitted in hospitals have needed severe lung infections and pneu-

ventilator support, data shows.

pancy of ventilators was 164 out

of around 1,400 beds. During the

second wave in May, in contrast,

all 2,500 ventilator beds avail-

able at the time were occupied.

meanwhile, the overall case fa-

tality rate in the city has dipped.

Between May 2020 and

September 2021, the rate stood

at a consistent 1.74%. Since

then, however, the rate has

during this wave are that those

falling ill are not experiencing very

The two main observations

dipped to 1.41%.

Over the past two months

In January, the highest occu-

Nishar Khan, a resident of Tauru, who got his first dose earlier this month, said, "I could not get the vaccine earlier as I had been staying at my wife's house in Rajasthan since the pandemic hit. I recently returned and decided to get the shot as it has been made mandatory to access services and ration." At the community health

centre in Nuh, a single counter for vaccinations of all age groups had been set up. A health department worker was filling up registration details of people on the CoWin portal before their inoculations. "A majority of people who come here are not internet savvy. So, our staff helps them out in registrations," he said, requesting anonymity. Sunita, an ANM worker at a

primary health centre in Ghasera, said that vaccine hesitancy was a major concern: "There is a lot of misinformation and rumours about Covid still in this part of the state... Some believe that the vaccine programme is a conspiracy of the government. At the village and community level, we are working with panchayats to counsel people about the long-term benefits of vaccination."

monia. The second is that the

death rate is very low. Most of the

people who have died had serious

co-morbid conditions. It also

seems like vaccinations have

helped save many people from se-

vere symptoms," the official said.

eligible for vaccination in the

city, 1.2 crore have been fully vac-

cinated so far. Over 8 lakh chil-

dren in the 15-17 age group have

The pace of the precaution-

ary dose, however, has been

slowing down. So far, around 2.7

lakh have been administered the

also been vaccinated.

Out of close to 1.5 crore adults

Earlier this week, the Nuh SDM held a meeting with local clerics and maulvis, appealing to them to educate people about the benefits of vaccination and to not believe in rumours, after certain videos about the ill-effects of vaccine had gone viral on social media in the district.

Dr Surender Kumar, chief medical officer, Nuh, denied that misinformation and rumours were behind the low rate of third doses. "Since the rate of vaccinations only picked up in the district after November 2021, a majority of population is not yet eligible for the precaution dose. In schools, we have set up camps and have vaccinated almost a third of eligible teenagers. There is some ignorance among a minority of population, but our staff is constantly conducting awareness programmes to dispel ru-

## New keyboard that recognises Hindi, Urdu words to help cops record FIRs

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

IN A bid to help police personnel lodge FIRs and update case diaries easily, the Delhi Police has introduced a phonetic keyboard with a voice-typing feature that records Hindi and Urdu words.

Police said the feature will help personnel and complainants, who use Hindi, record their statements and facts. The feature has been added to the Crime Criminal & Networking Systems (CCTNS) software that is used by police to file FIRs, write case diaries

New Delhi

and submit chargesheets. A Delhi Police spokesper-

son said, "The investigating officers (IOs) faced difficulty in typing in Hindi and translating statements. With the new feature, the IOs can speak and record their work through the keyboard. Earlier, Hindi typists or data entry operators were used and the work was difficult and not 100% accurate. Also, the system didn't accept the Hindi script.'

The technology has been developed by Muktesh Chander, Special CP (Technology and Implementation), and is AI-based. It has a dictionary of traditional Hindi and Urdu words that are often used by police and courts. "The system catches new

Hindi and Urdu words as well and stores the same in the database. The dictionary will update itself. It has improved speed and accuracy," said the Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana approved the

technology and started a pilot project in all police stations in New Delhi and the North districts of the Delhi Police. The IOs and other duty offi-

cers will be trained to use the voice feature and Hindi-typing keyboard to lodge FIRs and update their diaries.



#### **DELHI CONFIDENTIAL**



#### Cong's CM Hunt

IS CONGRESS high command's decision to let Charanjit Singh Channi to contest from two seats a signal that he will be the party's CM face in Punjab? The jury is out on that. But the Congress claims it has set in motion an exercise to find out the opinion of the public as well as its rank and file on their preferred CM choices. Sources said as many as 70 people have been deployed by the data analytics department to get real-time feedback on the party's prospects in Punjab. The social media department has deployed close to 250 people to collect inputs from the public. Besides, at least two external agencies are doing surveys to find out the preferred CM candidate. Opinion of the party functionaries right from the block level is also being sought, the sources claimed.

#### COVID PRECAUTIONS

AS THE Budget Session of Parliament begins on Monday, all members have been asked to undergo RTPCR tests at least 48 hours before the session commences. In case anyone tests positive, they can come back after seven days of home quarantine, and won't need a negative test report. Members will be seated across the galleries and chambers of both the Houses. Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, who just recovered from Covid, met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Sunday to take stock of the situation. Both Houses will lose an hour of functioning each, due to the

#### **LUNCH TREAT**

IT WAS a rare treat for the team that created and performed for the Jammu and Kashmir tableau after the Republic Day celebrations this year. The team members were called by Union minister Dr Jitendra Singh, who hails from Jammu, for lunch at his official residence in the national capital before they returned home. The delegation turned up in full traditional costume to join the minister for lunch.

# Politics of polarisation not acceptable to BJP: Rajnath

Accuses SP, BSP of 'crossing all limits to get votes of a particular religion'

**LALMANI VERMA** LUCKNOW, JANUARY 30

EVEN AS Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath continued to invoke Avodhya movement to hit out at the Opposition SP, accusing it of opening fire on karsevaks in 1990, his party leader and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said that the "politics of polarisation" was not acceptable to the BJP.

Addressing people in Kasganj and Farrukhabad districts, he accused the Opposition parties -SP BSP - of "doing politics of polarisation" and "crossing the limits to get votes and support of a particular religion".

"The politics of polarisation is not acceptable to the BIP as it believes in politics of justice and humanity instead," Singh said. "We will not do politics on the basis of caste, community and religion."

He urged all communities to be cautious and said politics should be done for nation building and not only to form govern-

west UP seats today

Lucknow: Prime Minister

Narendra Modi will address a vir-

tual rally of the BJP in 21 Assembly

seats spread across five districts of

western UP on Monday. The party

has planned to link around 27 lakh

people from these constituencies

virtual rally will be addressed by

Modi from New Delhi, while

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath

will join the rally from Agra. BJP

state general secretary and rally

in-charge Anoop Gupta said the

rally will be streamed live on LED

screens set up at 98 mandal units

of the party in the 21 Assembly

constituencies of Saharanpur,

Shamli, Muzaffarnagar, Baghpat

and Gautam Buddh Nagar

Named "Jan Chaupal", the

to the PM's virtual rally.

PM to address virtual rally in 21



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in Kasganj on Sunday. Express

ment, "Either it is SP or BSP, they want to do politics by dividing society. That is not acceptable to us," he said. "SP is doing the politics of polarisation. They cross all limits to get votes of one community."

Taking a jibe at SP chief Akhilesh Yadav for taking 'anna sankalp' with a red pouch at a press conference in Ghaziabad on Saturday, Singh said, "Laal potli se kaam nahi chalega (red pouch won't work). Not sure what was tied in that red cloth. They say that grain was tied in it. One needs to make sacrifices to win the trust of people. The people will not trust potli (pouch).'

Singh said the SP should accept the reality and answer why riots occured during their tenures only, and no one dares to do rioting with the BJP in power. Claiming that the BJP government ensured good law in Uttar Pradesh, he said goons used to roam freely when the SP was in power. "When law and order is good, development takes place rapidly. Today, if UP is witnessing development, then there is better law and order behind it. Now goons, mafia do not get protection, but bulldozers are run over their illegal properties."

"And after 2017, the BJP government did development with 4G speed. If the party comes to power again, development will be done at 5G speed," he added.

Appealing to the people to vote for BJP and Apna Dal (Sonelal) in Farrukhabad district, Singh said: "Everyone wants Goddess Lakshmi to come to their homes. Goddess Lakshmi never comes on elephant (BSP's symbol), not on bicycle (SP's symbol) and never comes waiving hands (Congress symbol). Whenever Laskhmi comes home, she comes only on lotus (BJP symbol)." Constituencies in Kasgani and Farrukhabad vote on February 20.

in 17 yrs, says report pellate courts in both 2020 and . 2021 meant fewer appeals of prisoners sentenced to death being

Number of death row

prisoners 488, highest

**APURVA VISHWANATH** NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

THE NUMBER of prisoners on death row at the end of 2021 stood at 488, the highest in 17 years, according to the Death Penalty in India Report.

"2021 saw the highest number of prisoners on death row at the end of the year since 2016 at 488, an increase of nearly 21% from 2020. When compared with data from the Prison Statistics of India reports released by the National Crime Records Bureau, this is the highest the death row population has been since 2004, when it was 563." it stated.

The report on annual statistics on death penalty by Project 39A is expected to be released Monday. Project 39A is a criminal law reforms advocacy group at the National Law University, Delhi.

The report suggested that limited functioning of courts due to the pandemic has impacted the priority given to death penalty related cases.

decided, and a far greater number of prisoners remaining on death row at the end of the year," it said.

According to the report, while trial courts imposed a total of 144 death sentences in 2021, high courts decided only 39 matters in the same period. In 2020, high courts decided 31 matters related to death penalty compared to 76 in 2019. The Supreme Court, despite listing death penalty cases on priority in September last year, decided only 6 cases in 2021 compared to 11 in 2020 and 28 in 2019.

The report stated that of the 39 cases involving death penalty decided by high courts, only four resulted in confirmation of the death sentences. While 18 were commuted to life imprisonment, 15 in acquittal of all charges, and two cases were remitted back to the trial court. The report stated that the majority of cases in which trial courts imposed the death sentence involved murder, bucking an increasing trend of awarding death sentence for sexual crimes.

#### "The limited functioning of ap-

# Former minister raises allegations against Kerala Lokayukta: 'Will do anything for adequate reward'

**SHAJU PHILIP** 

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JANUARY 30

CPI(M)-BACKED LEGISLATOR KT Jaleel, who was forced to quit as Higher Education Minister in the previous LDF regime after the Lokayukta indicted him of nepotism in appointments, on Sunday raised serious allegations against Kerala Lokayukta Justice Cyriac Joseph, a former Supreme Court judge.

On his Facebook page, Jaleel posted the copy of a 2005 Kerala High Court verdict, issued by a bench also comprising Justice Joseph, which dismissed writ pe-

titions seeking action against the then UDF minister P K Kunhalikutty in a sex scandal.

Highlighting the name of Justice Joseph in the copy of the verdict, Jaleel attached a list of V-Cs of Kottayam-based Mahatma Gandhi University. In this list, he again highlighted the name of Prof Jancy James, whose tenure as V-C was from 2004 to 2008.

Along with this, Jaleel alleged: "The Lord, who had bargained the post of the MG University V-C for his own brother's wife for rescuing a UDF leader from a sensational case, would do anything, if he gets adequate reward."

Without naming Justice Joseph, Jaleel said the UDF has

**Publication Inc** 



Kerala ex-minister KT Jaleel

found a "new knife" to backstab the Pinarayi Vijayan government after three central government agencies had probed in vain. "The UDF leaders want to destabilise the present LDF regime, by allowing this gentleman, whose name

was recommended by Congress as chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, to continue in his present post," he

Justice Joseph was not available for comment.

Referring to the proposed amendment in the Kerala Lokayukta Act, which would reduce the orders of the quasi-judicial body into advisory in nature, Jaleel said people of the state would give scant regard for the demand that the orders of the Lokayukta should be binding on

Leader of Opposition V D Satheesan said it was unbecoming of Jaleel, who had served as

Higher Education Minister, to abuse a judge, who had delivered the verdict against him on charges of nepotism in government appointments.

"By coming out against Justice Joseph, Jaleel had disproved his own godfather Pinarayi Vijayan, who had considered Joseph as Lokayukta," he said.

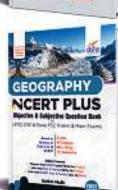
"The verdict and the appointment of MG University V-Care before the public. Nobody had then raised any allegation about the V-C's appointment. No scandal had emerged during her regime as we had seen when Jaleel was the minister. Jaleel has now emerged as a suicide squad for Vijayan," said Satheesan.

# Disha Publication emerges as a Leading Player changing the Test Prep Market



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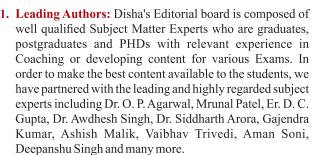


COVID-19 has forced the world into a new reality. Although the crisis is still unfolding, the last two years have seen a lot of companies going out of the market due to the deadly virus. However, at the same time, we have also seen companies converting this threat into an opportunity. The team at Disha Publication realized this opportunity and emerged as the 2nd Top Indian Academic Publisher by working harder during this period to serve the student community. In the recently concluded The Peoples' Choice Publisher Award conducted by Front List & The Federation of Indian Publishers with Nielsen as the Knowledge Partner, Disha emerged 2nd among the Top Indian Academic Publishers.

"This award would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of all our employees, quality content of our Authors, Booksellers, Online platforms of Amazon & Flipkart, thousands of Coaching Institutes, their Directors and Faculty members. I would also like to thank our dear students who have read our books and helped us create a WORD OF MOUTH for Disha Books thus helping us create a Big Brand," says Deepak Agarwal, Founder Director Disha

Founded under the able guidance of the legendary author of Chemistry, Dr. O. P. Agarwal in 2002, Disha is a proud holder of the status of being one of the leading test prep book Publishers. During the pandemic when most of the publishers were struggling for survival, Disha led the way and published more than 100 new titles in Test Prep. We collaborated with more than 15 new authors, especially in the UPSC segment. Amongst many, some of the USPs of Disha's products, which students swear by, are as follows:





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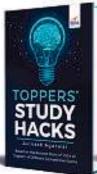
readers well, we also know that they require latest updated content which exactly maps with the latest syllabus, exam pattern, difficulty levels and variety of Questions. Disha's books are thoroughly revised and updated to cater to the needs of students at every stage. Student-Friendly Books: Disha's philosophy is to provide

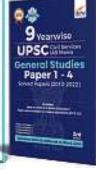
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#### HASHTAG POLITICS



#### Of flower and fire

AAP's attacks on its electoral opponents are getting quite filmy, literally. The party's Goa unit has come up with a meme based on the recent Allu Arjun-starrer Pushpa. Taking a dig at the Congress, AAP

Goa tweeted. "MLA Dekh Ke Bikau Samiha Kva? Congress Ka Nahi, AAP Ka MLA Hai (Did you think MLAs are for sale? I am not from Congress, I am an AAP MLA)."

992 LIKES, 503 RETWEETS IN 7 HOURS

#### 'Topi' take

The BJP has come out with a video attacking the SP. The video, uploaded on on Twitter, is titled 'Tab kyun nahin laaye they badlaav tum (Why didn't you bring change then?)'. The video asks why Akhilesh did not bring about a change when the poor struggled for a roof over their heads, and 'jab topiwala kamzoron pe hansta tha (when those wearing caps laughed at the weak)', in a reference to red caps worn by SP members. 2.9K LIKES, 1.4K RETWEETS IN 14 HOURS

#### - Ballotin —

#### BSP declares 8 more candidates

Lucknow: The BSP announced eight more candidates on Sunday for the fourth phase of the UP Assembly polls, replacing two from Unnao district. Eight candidates from Pilibhit, Sitapur, Hardoi and Unnao districts have been declared in the list. The party announced the candidature of Sevak Lal Rawat from the Mohan (SC) seat and Brijkishore Verma from the Bhagwant Nagar seat in Unnao, replacing Vinay Choudhary and Prem Singh Chandel respectively.

#### Punjab election mascot unveiled

Chandigarh: The state Chief Electoral Officer's office unveiled its election mascot, "Shera", on Sunday. Five persons with disabilities were specially invited on the occasion as the guests of honour. Punjab CEO S Karuna Raju said dressed in traditional Punjabi attire, "Shera", depicting a lion, represents the rich cultural heritage of the state.

# Shah in Goa, picks on 'small parties from other states'

**MAYURA JANWALKAR** PANJIM, JANUARY 30

ON HIS maiden trip to Goa to campaign for his party, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said that Goa's voters would have to choose between a "Golden Goa" and a "Gandhi parivar ka Goa".

"For us Goa is Golden Goa and for the Congress, Goa is the Goa of Gandhi parivar – they need a good vacation spot. Their leaders take a lot of vacations. They need a vacation spot. You tell me, Golden Goa chahiye, ya parivar ka Goa chahiye?" he told a gathering in Ponda, from where the BJP has fielded former CM Ravi Naik, who quit the Congress last month.

At his three public addresses in Ponda, Sanvordem and Vasco, the themes were recurrent. Shah trained guns on the Congress's "parivar first" approach, said parties like the Trinamool Congress

(TMC) or the **VOTING ON** Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) **FEBRUARY 14** had no plan for

Goa's development, and, at every address, paid tribute to late defence minister and former Chief Minister of Goa, Manohar Parrikar.

Attacking the Congress, Shah said Goa's annual budget under the previous Manmohan Singhled government at the Centre in 2013-14 was Rs 432 crore, "It was the Sonia-Manmohan government and TMC was supporting it,"



Shah during a door-to-door campaign in Sanvordem, Sunday. Courtesy: Goa BIP

Shah said, adding Prime Minister Narendra Modi had allocated Rs 2.567 crore for the state in 2021.

Shah said major infrastructure projects like the Atal Setu, the Zuari Bridge and the Mopa International Airport were possible in Goa only

"double engine" BJP government at the Centre and in the state. He said while the former Congress government in the state led by then CM Digambar

because of the

his leadership. "They have not announced it but he is going everywhere and saying it," said Shah. "Can

Kamat had nothing to show for

infrastructure development, his

party was going into polls under

Digambar Kamat do this (development)? Rahul Baba won't allow it. He will fear that Modiji will be popular, let it be. He does not care about Goa's development. He has developed Modiphobia...Achcha hi hai Rahul Baba, aap Modi, Modi hi karte rahiye (It's good. Rahul, keep chanting Modi... Modi). Look at his tweets. You won't see one positive tweet. Such people can-

not give development to Goa." With the TMC, the NCP and the AAP also in crosshairs, Shah said: "I don't know why all the parties from the country have descended on tiny Goa? I want to tell Goa's voters that there can be development only when there is stability....Can these small parties, parties from other states, give Goa development? Do they understand your problems? Do they

have solutions to these?"

"No party has come here to give a stable government. Someone wants to be an all-India political party, somebody wants to open their account...they can't form a government. Only the BJP can form the government and that is why we need your blessings," he added.

In Sanvordem in South Goa, along with CM Pramod Sawant, Shah walked from one house to another, distributing leaflets to voters and urging them to vote for the lotus symbol. About Parrikar. he said, "He was such a leader who had given Goa a name not only in the country but all over the world. Parrikarji laid the foundation of development here, where Dr Pramod Sawant is now constructing a strong building.'

**MANIPUR** 

**Deaths Today** 

**Deaths** 

Cases

578

Jan 21

2,041

329

Jan 30

3,682

826

Jan 30

Old model of polarisation will no longer work: Tikait

#### **CONG VS CONG**

# **Punjab Cong** has a familiar problem: factionalism

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR AMRITSAR, JANUARY 30

SPEAKING IN Amritsar on Sunday, Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief Navjot Singh Sidhu said, "Nobody can defeat the Congress. Only the Congress can defeat itself."

He was responding to a question on factionalism and infighting in Congress that is in the midst of a crucial Assembly election.

In all three regions of Punjab - Majha, Doaba and Malwa – candidates of the party have been at each other's throats and in some cases, levelling serious allegations against each other.

#### Majha: 25 seats

In 2017, Sidhu, then a new entrant in the Congress, had managed to effect a swing in favour of

his party not only in Amritsar East, where he FEBRUARY 20 was the candidate, but also

other seats in Amritsar city. But the tables have since turned. Sidhu is no longer a uniting force for the Congress in the region.

Deputy CM Om Prakash Soni, contesting from Amritsar Central, and Cabinet minister Raj Kumar Verka, contesting from Amritsar West, are not on the best of terms with Sidhu. Though Sidhu actively campaigned for him in 2017, Amritsar North MLA Sunil Dutti also does not enjoy good relations with Sidhu. It's this open factionalism that

Shiromani Akali Dal candidate against Sidhu in Amritsar East, will hope to cash in on. Amritsar MP Gurjit Aujla also

Bikram Singh Majithia, the

shares frosty ties with Sidhu.

In Batala seat, Sidhu managed to get a ticket for Ashwini Kumar, but that only set off more infighting in the Congress, Cabinet min-

TOTAL ASSETS:

₹79,72,822 (self)

IMMOVABLE ASSETS:

Wife: ₹6.89 crore

Self: ₹36,00,000

HARISH

Congress

ister Tripat Rajinder Singh Bajwa called a gathering at his house where speakers openly asked the Congress high command to give the ticket to Tripat Rajinder Bajwa, the party's reluctant Fatehgarh Churian candidate, or his son.

Meanwhile, Khadoor Sahib Congress MP Jasbir Singh Dimpa is opposed to at least two party candidates, Ramanjeet Singh Sikki from Khadoor Sahib and Santokh Singh Bhalaipur from Baba Bakala. Dimpa has decided to field his brother and former SSP, Harpinder Singh, from Khadoor Sahib as an Independent.

#### Doaba

Four Congress legislators — Sultanpur Lodhi's Navtej Singh Cheema, Jalandhar North's Bawa Henry, Phagwara's Balwinder Singh Dhaliwal and Bholath's Sukhpal Singh Khaira — had approached

Sonia Gandhi, asking for the ticket of minister Gurjit Rana to be cancelled from Kapurthala. While their request hasn't been

his son Rana Inder Partap Singh to contest against Navtej Cheema from Sultanpur Lodhi. One of the biggest embarrass-

granted, an angry Rana is getting

I Hereby Declare –

Wife: ₹2.99 crore

**PENDING CRIMINAL** CASES: Nil

& Ex MLA)

LOANS AND LIABILITIES:

**PROFESSION**:Pensioner

SOURCES OF EARNING:

interest on FDRs and

University (1978-79)

(Ex Member of Parliament

Spouse (Business income,

**EDUCATION: LLB, Lucknow** 

ments for the Congress in this region is Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi's brother Manohar Singh filing his nomination as an Independent against sitting Congress MLA Gurpreet Singh GP in Bassi Pathana.

There has been more mudslinging. The party's Bathinda Rural candidate Harvinder Laddi held a press conference in Chandigarh to level allegations of drug smuggling against a powerful Congress minister. Despite levelling such serious allegations, Laddi managed to get a ticket.

### 24 women in Congress 4th list of 61 candidates for UP polls BJP, the party nominated Thakur

**MAULSHREE SETH** LUCKNOW, JANUARY 30

THE CONGRESS party Sunday released its fourth list of 61 candidates. 24 of whom are women nominees, mostly newcomers.

The Congress has fielded a woman candidate, Reeta Maurya, from the Ayodhya constituency. It has also fielded Sudha Dwivedi from the Sareni seat in Rae Bareli. The party fielded Mohd Fateh Bahadur from the Gauriganj constituency

In Rae Bareli's Harchandpur seat, from where its sitting MLA Rakesh Singh had defected to the leader Surendra Vikram Singh. The Congress has so far an-

nounced 316 candidates for the elections to the 403-member Assembly. Of them, it has fielded 127 women candidates in keeping with AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's pledge that the party will give poll tickets to 40 per cent women candidates. Barring a few known faces, most of its women candidates so far are electoral debupolitics too.

The party had named 50 women contestants in its first list of 125 candidates. 16 women in its second list of 41 candidates,

and 37 women nominees in its third list of 89 candidates.

"While they might not be big names, they are active on the ground and whoever visits their constituencies would get to know about them from now onwards, and that is what the Congress is aiming at," a senior party leader said,

However, several UP leaders also could not recognise many candidates, but said they would know them as they become active in their respective belts.

The Congress has fielded Karishma Thakur from Govindnagar. She is currently Mahila Congress chief in Bundelkhand.

**UTTAR PRADESH** 

23,189

8,078

Jan 30

FARMERS & POLITICS

25

**Deaths** 

16,159

Jan 21

**Deaths Today** 

**PUNJAB** 

**Deaths Today** 

**Deaths** 

Cases

7,696

Jan 21



**GOA** 

**Deaths** 

Cases

2,668

Jan 21

**Deaths Today** 

### Via Gujarat

17,214

2,780

Jan 30

24

Gujarat Congress leader Hardik Patel campaigns in Varanasi on Sunday. PTI

7,536

2,184

Jan 30

**UTTARAKHAND** 

**Deaths** 

4,964

Jan 21

**Deaths Today** 

# Manipur BJP list finally out, three MLAs kept out

JIMMY LEIVON IMPHAL, JANUARY 30

BATTLING A problem of plenty in ticket aspirants, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) released on Sunday its much-awaited list of candidates for elections to the 60-member state Assembly.

While Chief Minister N Biren Singh will be contesting from his home constituency, Heingang, the party has refused tickets to three sitting MLAs. Only three of the 60 candidates in the list are women. The BJP list comes four days

behind its own deadline for the announcement. Many believe the saffron party was having a tough time choosing candidates, with four to five ticket aspirants in every constituency. The delay was also causing disquiet among ticket aspirants facing a tough competition as many leaders of other parties, such as the Congress, had joined the party ahead of the elections.

In Sunday's list, the party has dropped senior MLA Y Irabot Singh and given the ticket from his Wangkhei seat to Congress turncoat Okram Henry Singh, the nephew of former CM Okram Ibobi Singh. In Moirang, M Prithviraj has replaced MLA P Saratchanra, while in Kakching, the party has fielded Y Surchandra instead of the sitting legislator M Rameshwar Singh. Another former Congress

who had supported the BIP government in forming the government in 2017 despite its falling short of seats, will contest from Andro constituency.

The replacements have caused anger among many ticket banners in protest. In Sagolband, November last year.

Of the 20 seats in the hills, officer Dinganglung Gonmei against veteran Congress leader a retired bureaucrat.

fielded L Basanta Singh against former Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh in Thoubal. In Uripok, the party has fielded a retired bureaucrat Kh. Raghumani Singh against NPP MLA and deputy Chief Minister Y Joykumar Singh.

aspirants in the party, with angry workers burning BJP flags and where the party has fielded Congress turncoat RK Imo Singh, BJP workers ransacked the mandal office and uploaded a video on social media threatening to close it down. RK Imo, the sonin-law of incumbent Chief Minister N Biren Singh, switched over to the BJP from Congress

however, the BJP has retained all its six MLAs along with the new entrants from other parties. In Nungba, it has fielded retired IAS Gaikhangam. In Henglep and Tamenglong, where two BJP MLAs defected to Congress, it has fielded new faces, including

Meanwhile, the party has

LUCKNOW, JANUARY 30 "FARMERS FORCED to sell their produce at half price and hit by lathis know who to vote for," said farm leader and Bhartiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait, stressing that the "old model" of communal polarisation would no longer work in Uttar Pradesh ahead of the election.

**ASAD REHMAN** 

Speaking to The Indian Express on Saturday, Tikait also maintained that he would play no active part in the election campaign and refused to openly back any party, underlining, instead, the importance of people's movements to keep governments in check. "If governments are not work-

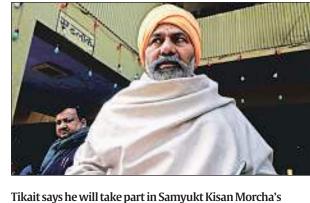
ing, people must learn to raise their voice in their language. People and farmers must keep their organisation and movement strong. Governments will come and go," he said in Lucknow.

"I am separate from the election. After the 13-month farm

agitation, I don't need to tell farmers who to vote for. They are selling their produce at half price. Potato, sugarcane and other produce is not being bought at MSP. There are no jobs and there is rampant inflation. People are buying gas cylinders at a high price and women are being forced to bring wood from forests to cook at home. Families involved in the milk trade are also suffering. Large companies are entering the food market. People, farmers have stood in lines, gotten hit by lathis. They are smart, and they know who to vote for," Tikait said.

He said politics over religion won't work anymore. "It is an old model now. Once or twice, the Hindu-Muslim factor came first. But now, there are models — of development, schools, etc. The old model will definitely not work."

Tikait, notably, had supported the BIP in the 2014 Lok Sabha and 2017 Vidhan Sabha elections. He defended himself, saying: "The whole country had supported the party then... This



'Mission Uttar Pradesh' against the BJP. Vishal Srivastav

time, I will only cast my vote. I will only tell people about the movement.

"After the movement against the farm laws, political parties have started talking about farmers, the poor, the adivasis. They talk of education now," said Tikait.

The farm leader from Western Uttar Pradesh, one of the most visible faces of the movement, was in the state cap-

ital on Friday and Saturday to meet a government committee and discuss the "unmet" demands of the farmers over the Lakhimpur Kheri incident.

Four farmers and a journalist had been run over by a convoy of SUVs including one owned by Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra Teni. His son Ashish, accused of driving one of the SUVs, has been arrested.

Tikait said: "I spoke to the officials on January 28, and they have said that they will fulfil their promises. The families of the deceased farmers will meet the officials, and a discussion will be held." He reiterated the farmers' demand for Teni's sacking.

Tikait also spoke about the fight between the SP-RLD and BJP in Western Uttar Pradesh and said, "There should be a contest. That is necessary."

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, which was part of the farm agitation along with the BKU, has announced it will launch "Mission Uttar Pradesh" from February 3 against the BJP in Uttar Pradesh.

Asked if he would take part in the protests, Tikait said: "When they will do it, I will take part. Am I not part of it when I say that those who sell their farm produce at half price know where to vote?'

On the promise made by Samajwadi Party to give 300 units of free electricity to farmers and the subsequent move by the BJP to half power tariffs for farmers, Tikait said, "When have they given this relief? For how long? They should have done it earlier."

On January 6, following in the footsteps of Opposition parties' poll promise of free electricity, the Yogi Adityanath-led state government had announced a 50 per cent reduction in the power tariffs for tubewells owned by farmers. As per government estimates, the decision, to be effective from this month, will benefit nearly 13 lakh consumers.

Tikait also weighed in on BIP leaders facing protests in western UP saying: "Why are they only going so close to the elections? They should have gone through the five years."

Asked to pick between the governments led by Akhilesh Yadav and Yogi Adityanath, Tikait said: "They have worked fine as per their capabilities. Like I said, they will work well if the movement is strong. Now, when the government's people go to villages, people ask them questions. You can understand who worked better based on that."

# EXPRESS NETWORK

#### **BRIEFLY**

#### **TELANGANA** Car driven by teen kills four

Hyderabad: women and a girl died when a car allegedly driven by a 16-year-old hit a group of labourers sitting on a pavement in Telangana's Karimnagar town on Sunday morning, police said. The incident took place around 6.50 am when the teenager lost control over the vehicle and rammed into a divider and hit those sitting on the pavement, they said. A police official said three women (aged between 27 and 32 years) and a 14-year-old girl died in the incident and two others were injured. The minor driver pressed the accelerator instead of the brake. Karimnagar ommissioner of Police V Sathyanarayana said. According to the police, he and two other minors who were in the car fled the scene after the accident, leaving behind the car. They were later apprehended by police and the owner of car was also taken into custody for allowing his minor son to

#### drive the vehicle. **MAHARASHTRA**

#### Lata Mangeshkar recovers: doctor

Mumbai: Mangeshkar is now cured of Covid and pneumonia, said Dr Pratik Samdani, who is leading the team of doctors attending her. Mangeshkar (92) was admitted to the intensive care unit of the Breach Candy Hospital in south Mumbai in the first week of January after she contracted Covid-19. Dr Samdani said that she continues to be in the ICU and off ventilator. Mangeshkar had lung ailments two and a half years ago and was treated for them. She used oxygen often at

#### **KARNATAKA**

#### Probe into prison irregularities

Bengaluru: Following allegations of special treatment and alleged corruption at Bengaluru Parappana Agrahara Central prisons, the Karnataka government has ordered a probe. The allegations emerged after a video, purportedly showing a prisoner in conversation with two senior jail officials, started doing the rounds. The government has appointed ADGP Murugan to probe into the irregularities. The DIG (Prisons) has been directed to assist Murugan in the investigation. Earlier, Home Minister Araga Jnanendra and Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai had assured to conduct a detailed inquiry into the matter and take stern action.

#### **MEGHALAYA**

#### Low-intensity blast in Shillong

Guwahati: A low-intensity blast was reported in the heart of Shillong evening. Sunday However, no casualties were reported. The blast occurred near Delhi Mistan Bhandar shop, located in the town's Police Razar area between 6 and 6.20 pm, police said. "We are on the job right now and do not have much details but we can confirm that it was a low intensity explosive. No casualties have been reported," said Idashisha Nongrang, Meghalaya Special DGP. Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma took to Twitter, describing it as a "cowardly act".

#### **MANN KI BAAT**

# India very successfully fighting new wave of Covid-19, says PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi said on Sunday, in his monthly Mann Ki Baat programme, that the number of Covid-19 cases in India are decreasing and the country is fighting the new wave of the pandemic with "great success".

"India is very successfully fighting the new corona wave. It is a matter of great pride that almost 4.5 crore children have taken the corona vaccine till now. This means that almost 60 per cent of the youngsters in the age group 15-18 took the vaccine within just 3-4 weeks. This will not only protect our youth, but also help them continue their studies," Modi said during this year's first Mann Ki Baat episode.

"Another heartening fact is that within 20 days, one crore people have taken the precaution dose as well. This trust of our countrymen on the indigenous vaccine is our great strength," he added.

On Sunday, the cumulative number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country crossed 165.70 crore, and



Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat on Martyrs' Day, observed to mark the death anniversary of the Father of the Nation, on Sunday. PTI

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said more than 75 per cent of adults in India have been fully vaccinated.

The Prime Minister began his latest Mann Ki Baat programme talking about Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary, which is observed on January 30, and said the day is a reminder to everyone about the teachings of the Father of the Nation.

Modi also referred to the installation of the hologram statue of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose at India Gate, and said the way people from across the country welcomed this and expressed

"Friends, in the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, the country is re-establishing its national symbols through these efforts. We saw that the Amar Jawan Jyoti near India Gate and the jyoti lit at the National War Memorial... were merged. There were tears in the eyes of many countrymen and martyr families on this emotional occasion," he said.

The Prime Minister also urged people to visit the National War Memorial. "Do take along your family and children too. Here you will feel a different energy and inspiration," he added.

Talking about the Padma awards, Modi said there were many "unsung heroes who have done extraordinary deeds in ordinary circumstances" in this year's list of recipients.

Pointing out that he had received many letters and messages with suggestions for 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', Modi said it was "unforgettable" that "more than 1 crore children" from the country and abroad "have written to me through their Mann Ki Baat post cards"

**FULL REPORT ON** www.indianexpress.com

# Mumbai's Covid-19 test positivity rate drops to 2.5 per cent

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** MUMBAI, JANUARY 30

MUMBAI RECORDED 1,160 new Covid-19 infections on Sunday and an overall recovery rate of 97 per cent, officials said. The test positivity rate (TPR) - the number of positive cases as against the total tests conducted — in the state capital dropped to 2.5 per cent, down from 4.3 per cent recorded three days back. The TPR has recorded a sharp fall from 28.9 per cent witnessed on January 7.

On January 30, out of 46,307 tests conducted, 1,160 turned positive, Besides, 10 new Covid-19 deaths were recorded in the city.

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is expecting the number of positive cases to drop below 1,000 in the days to come. However, the civic body has appealed to citizens to not let their guard down.

On January 7, out of the 72,442 tests conducted, 20,971 samples had returned positive. But after hitting its pandemic peak around January 10, the daily cases gradually started declining in the city.

On January 11, out of the 62,097 tests conducted, 11,647 were detected with Covid-19 with a TPR of 18.7 per cent. A **AFTER CRITICISM** 

Not mandatory for teachers to report those found drinking, Bihar govt now says

**SANTOSH SINGH** PATNA, JANUARY 30

FACING CRITICISM regarding a circular issued on Friday that asked school teachers and principals to provide information about people found drinking or selling liquor on school premises, Bihar's education department clarified on Monday that it was not mandatory, and was just an appeal made after receiving complaints about people using empty school build-

ings as a place to drink alcohol. Bihar Additional Chief Secretary Sanjay Kumar told The Indian Express: "It has been part of government policy to ask every citizen to provide information on drinkers and bootleggers on the condition that the identity of the informer will not be revealed. Some people are making much ado about nothing regarding the circular. Since there are reports of school buildings being used by drinkers, we have asked teachers and principals to bring it to our notice..." He stressed that it was not mandatory

**FULL REPORT ON** www.indianexpress.com

# Muzaffarpur shelter home case: 49 victims given compensation

**SANTOSH SINGH** PATNA, JANUARY 30

COMPENSATION HAS been given to 49 victims of the Muzaffarpur shelter home case, the Bihar government told the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in its latest action-taken report

The 2018 case is related to the alleged sexual assault of girls at an NGO-run shelter home in Muzaffarpur. Journalist and owner of the shelter home. Brajesh Thakur, is among the 19 people convicted in the case by a Delhi court under sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. 2012.

ernment and the NHRC confirmed the development on Sunday. The NHRC "has been informed

by the Government of Bihar that it has paid Rs 3 to 9 lakh to the 49

victims of sexual abuse", the rights commission said in a statement.

The compensation was recommended by the NHRC and the Delhi court, which had heard the case and pronounced its judgment in 2020. The NHRC was also informed by the Bihar government that the registration of NGO which ran the shelter was cancelled and the structure of the shelter home demolished in compliance of orders of the court.

Over a dozen cases were filed after a report by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences — on the status of 110 government and private-run shelter homes – brought the matter to light in 2018. Subsequently, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probed the case.

reported how the key accused and convict, Thakur, was once in line for a state award and how he allegedly fudged the data of his newspaper circulation.

# Bengal viewed as gas chamber of democracy, says governor

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** KOLKATA, JANUARY 30

IN ANOTHER showdown with the Mamata Banerjee-led state government, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said people view West Bengal as a "gas chamber of democracy" and alleged "trampling of human rights".

After paying tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary at Gandhi Ghat in Barrackpore, Dhankhar said: "I cannot see the land of Bengal getting drenched in blood and becoming a laboratory for trampling of human rights. People are saying that the state is turning into a gas chamber of democracy." The Governor further said

the situation in Bengal became such that the Calcutta High Human Rights Commission to form a fact-finding committee to probe into alleged human rights violations in post-poll violence last year.



West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar

"No amount of insults will deter me from my path. It was not appropriate for the chief minister of the state (Mamata Banerjee) to make derogatory remarks within and even outside the state. It has to be everyone's effort to ensure that there is peace in the society in line with the Constitution of the country".

ucation minister Bratya Basu said spokesperson of a party" "The Governor has no idea

Hitting back at him, state ed-

about the history of Bengal or the history of Indian politics. Now if incidents of violence have taken

place in the election, it is a collective failure. It is not failure on part of any political party. I would urge him not to act as the spokesperson of a particular political party and perform his constitutional duty in an unbiased way. He should cooperate with the chief minister," said Basu.

The governor, who has crossed swords with the Mamata Baneriee government over several issues since assuming charge in the state, recently accused the chief minister and the speaker of the assembly of transgressing constitutional norms by not providing him the information he had sought on multiple matters.

He has had run-ins over appointments of vice chancellors of universities, calling bureaucrats to his office for explanations.

On January 25, the governor, statue of BR Ambedkar on the assembly premises, had described the political condition in Bengal as "horrible and frightening".

-WITH PTI INPUTS

#### **RAJASTHAN PAPER LEAK**

A health worker gets a third

week later, on January 18, the

number of daily cases dropped

with 6,149 infections recorded

out of 47,700 tests at a positivity

Mumbai is presently at 10,796

with 10,15,451 recovery cases. The

civic body said that there was no

need to panic as only 6 per cent of

the total hospital beds were occu-

pied in the city. On Sunday, out of

the total 1,160 positive cases, 190

were hospitalised and only 29 re-

positive cases is registering a

steady decline, the number of

mained high. On Sunday, 10

Covid-19 deaths were recorded

deaths due to the infection re-

While the number of daily

quired oxygenated beds.

in the city.

The total active case tally in

Ganesh Shirsekar

Covid-19 vaccine dose, in

Mumbai on Sunday.

rate of 12.8 per cent.

### BJP MP says state minister involved; he denies claim

**DEEP MUKHERJEE** JAIPUR, JANUARY 30

THE OPPOSITION BJP on Sunday stepped up its attack on the Rajasthan government, alleging that a state minister was involved in the Rajasthan Eligibility Examination for Teachers (REET) paper leak case and demanding his resignation from the post.

The BJP, which has long sought a CBI probe into the issue, also questioned the role of an NGO that purportedly has links with the state minister.

BJP's Rajya Sabha MP Kirodi Lal Meena said that technical education minister Subhash Garg was involved in the paper leak case and was also linked to the NGO, named Raiiv Gandhi Study Circle.

"baseless" and said they were motivated by political concerns.

found that the question paper REET, which was held on September 26 last year, was leaked two days before the examination. A question paper is believed to have been stolen from an office of the state education department and the accused allegedly received at least Rs 1.22 crore in exchange for the paper.

Police investigations have

The developments come on a day the Ashok Gehlot-led Rajasthan government announced that a committee, under retired High Court judge Vijay Kumar Vyas, will study the examination process and ways to ensure no wrongdoing.

Meanwhile, Parashar, the REET coordinator for Jaipur district, was arrested on Sunday in connection with the Rajasthan Police's Special Operations Group, said.

### Two arrested for attack on Dalit man in Rajasthan

#### Bihar: Gandhian group protests against hate speech event Sanjeev said that among the

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** PATNA, JANUARY 30

HUNDREDS OF activists of Swaraipeeth Trust on Sunday sat on a silent protest at six places in Bihar — Banka, Araria, Supaul, Bhagalpur, Darbhanga and Saharsa — to protest against the hate speech made during Dharmasansad in Haridwar in December last year.

A Gandhian organisation, Swarajpeeth Trust's Bihar unit convenor Pranav Sanjiv told The Indian Express: "The idea behind the silent protest is to counter hate with love and compassion. All activists observed a fast on

show of strength displayed dur-

silent protestors at six places included 31 Muslims. "They (Muslims) are conveying that they treat Hindus, Sikhs and Christians alike, still if you (Dharmasansad) want to annihilate us, we are present before you. We would offer no resistance or lodge any complaint".

Dharmapeeth's Supaul unit convenor Pancham Singh said: "It was heartening to see several Hindus joining our Satyagrah. They said that if people of other religions are as much part of this country as they are...'

The Gandhian trust's Banka convenor Bhola Prasad Yadav said: "The beginning of any violence starts with resistance. But

we believe in spreading love and compassion" The three-day conclave was

held in December last year in Haridwar where several hate speeches were made targeting Muslims and calling for violence against them. Two FIRs were registered and a special investigating team is probing the case. Five people - the key organiser of the conclave and the controversial priest of Dasna temple in Ghaziabad, Yati Narsinghanand, Waseem Rizvi alias Jitendra Narayan Tyagi, Dharamdas Maharai, Annapurna Maa and Sagar Sindhuraj Maharaj – were named in the FIRs. So far, Narsinghanand and Tyagi have



Activists of Swarajpeeth Trust during a silent protest at Banka, Bihar, on Sunday. Express

#### **EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**

JAIPUR, JANUARY 30 POLICE HAVE arrested two sus-

pects for the alleged abduction and attack on a Dalit man in Raiasthan's Churu district this week, officials said on Sunday. "We have arrested two of the

accused — Umesh and Birbal. They were arrested on Saturday evening. We are investigating the role of the other named accused and some of them are absconding," said Rajgarh circle officer Himanshu Sharma on Sunday.

Eight men, believed to be from the Jat community, allegedly abducted 25-year-old Rakesh Meghwal on the night of January 26. They then assaulted him and forced him to drink their urine. In the FIR registered the next day. Meghwal – a resident of Rukhasar village — alleged that the assault stemmed from a dispute during the festival of Holi last vear.

Meghwal also said the accused used casteist slurs and a derogatory term, saying that the Dalits "would be taught a lesson" for having the "audacity" of getting into a confrontation with the Jat community.

At least six other accused are yet to be arrested. The suspects have been booked under IPC sections related to abduction, unlawful assembly and others. Relevant sections of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 have also been invoked.

# Ibrahim exit threat betrays heating power game between DKS, Siddaramaiah

Opposition and ex-chief minister Siddaramaiah. has come at a time when the tus-Siddaramaiah had seemed to

**JOHNSONTA** BENGALURU, JANUARY 30

Although his threat has more THE RECENT announcement of his impending resignation from the Congress by senior leader CM Ibrahim has once again set tongues wagging about a storm brewing in the Karnataka Congress due to a clash of ideas and personalities involving its two top leaders – state party president Siddaramaiah factions. DK Shivakumar and Leader of the

Ibrahim's resignation threat sle between Shivakumar and have settled down following the Congress's good showing in Assembly bypolls and Council ered close to Shivakumar. elections last year and a united

implementation of the Mekedatu water project earlier this month.

to do with Ibrahim's thwarted personal ambition and lack of Muslim leaders' standing in the Karnataka Congress, it has also underlined that the party's leadership is playing a balancing act by pandering to the demands of both the Shivakumar and the

One of the things Ibrahim seemed to suggest was he had been let down by Siddaramaiah despite being his loyalist – that when it came to picking the leader of the party in the Legislative Council the latter did not bat for him. with the post going to B K Hariprasad, a former MP consid-

In a series of sarcastic com-Ibrahim said



**CM Ibrahim** 



Siddaramaiah had become an "orphan" in the Congress and so there was no one to speak for him. "Siddaramaiah has given me a gift.

He has delivered it through the Congress party. I have accepted it happily," he said. "Shivakumar and Hariprasad are a good team, they have the same mindset so the AICC (All India Congress Committee) seems to have made the appointment."

The AICC's move to nominate Hariprasad as the Council's Opposition leader came a day after it appointed a former minister MB Patil, a Siddaramaiah loyalist, as the chairman of the party campaign committee for the 2023 state Assembly elections.

It is an open secret in the Karnataka Congress that Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah do not see eve to eve and are rivals in the chief ministerial race if the party comes to power next year. The two leaders cannot be more different from each other, with Shivakumar dubbed a "capitalist to the core" and Siddaramaiah a "socialist".

While both leaders are known to have a brash way of dealing party colleagues, Siddaramaiah has found relatively more acceptability and loyalty among Congress legislators. Shivakumar however earned more political capital in recent days by leading the Mekedatu protest march. The Congress leadership's call for sinking of differences and bringing the party back to power has resulted in the two

in recent days. The simmering differences between Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah surfaced last October when two pro-Siddaramaiah party functionaries' conversation was picked up by microphones ahead of a press conference. This private chat be-

leaders putting up a united front

nator and a spokesperson dwelt on Shivakumar's "shortcomings" as party president and seemed to indicate their greater confidence in Siddaramaiah's leadership.

While Shivakumar has attempted to inject new energy into the Karnataka Congress after becoming party chief in July 2020 amid the Covid first wave and lockdown, the bulk of 68 party MLAs are known to be more aligned with Siddaramaiah.

Shivakumar was appointed the state party chief months after being arrested by Enforcement Directorate (ED) over money laundering charges following an Income Tax (IT) investigation into his alleged tax evasion during 2017-18. He is one of the most wealthy legislators in Karnataka with assets close to Rs

Since taking Shivakumar has tried to get the party out of Siddaramaiah's grasp by replacing several old functionaries with his own loyalists. On his part, Siddaramaiah has tried to maintain his control over the party unit by ensuring that Shivakumar does not have a unilateral run and is assisted by as many as four working presidents. Many Congress MLAs believe

Siddaramaiah is a more versatile leader who does not carry the baggage of pending cases of corruption or other economic of-

A section, however, also feels both the leaders have shortcomings and would not be able to capitalise on the anti-incumbency factor against the incumbent BJP government and lead the party effectively in the 2023 polls.

New Delhi

850 crore declared ahead of the

#### WORDLY WISE

EDUCATION IS NOT PREPARATION FOR LIFE; EDUCATION IS LIFE ITSELF.

— JOHN DEWEY

# The Indian **EXPRESS**

∞ FOUNDED By ∞ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Investment in research, efficiency in government spending can increase agricultural incomes

Budgeting for farmers

#### UNLOCKING CLASSROOM ASHOK GULATI

Restarting schools must be a priority, vaccination of under-18 must pick up pace

HOUGH OVER TWO lakh Covid-19 cases are being reported every day in India, the third wave seems to be plateauing in large parts of the country — and so, reopening schools must now move to the top of the agenda of all governments. The crisis in learning and education, the regression of children's foundational skills in reading, writing and arithmetic, and the cost in terms of nutrition and equity have been underlined by various surveys. According to a parliamentary standing committee report last year, "around 320 million children in India had not stepped into a classroom for more than a year". Several states had reopened classrooms for a few months last year, but the Omicron-driven wave of infections led to another interruption. Children in the national capital lost more school-days to pollution.

As the third wave peaks in some cities, states like Maharashtra, Karnataka and Telangana have announced dates of reopening schools. Since 2020, when schools shut down to contain the imminent first wave of the coronavirus, then an unknown and unpredictably dangerous pathogen, we have come a long way. With 75 per cent adults vaccinated, better treatment protocols and a low rate of hospitalisation in the current wave, governments cannot afford to keep schools, and the lives of children, in a limbo for much longer. But the decision to reopen must be guided by data and science. It must not be a top-down diktat, but involve teachers, district administrations and parents. Two years into the pandemic, all states must have — at the very least — by now, devised an SOP that helps school administrations decide on reopening schools on the basis of the case positivity rate or the number of occupied hospital beds or other criteria devised in agreement with medical experts. Given that, at any moment of time, the burden of disease varies from state to state, district to district, this must be a local decision, taken transparently — and without panic.

The case for reopening schools is a strong one but it is not hard to see why state governments continue to exercise caution. Earlier fears that children will be carriers and infect the elderly at home have been assuaged by the high levels of vaccination among the adult population - 75 per cent of the adults have been fully vaccinated. The vaccination of children in the 15-18 age group has started but is showing signs of slowing down. That needs to pick up pace, schools need to be made part of the vaccination process. Surely, the choice is not a simple binary one and there will be risks. But as the third wave wanes, as the adult population moves to total vaccination, state governments must go to work on a reopening plan that ensures safety of children as well as access to learning. So far, the policy debate in the shadow of Covid has been, as it should, dominated by reviving the economy and ameliorating distress. Similar urgency, thought, planning needs to be brought to unlocking classrooms — the future is a terrible thing to waste.

### BATTLE FOR MANIPUR

The BJP hopes to extend its run in Imphal, Congress wants to retake the state

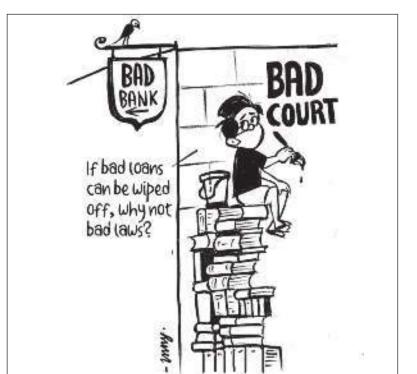
N FIVE YEARS, the roles have reversed for the Congress and the BJP in Manipur, where the first phase of elections is due on February 27. In 2017, the Congress was in pole position in state politics, having held office for three consecutive terms, and the BJP, the emerging challenger, was looking for allies. The Congress fell short of a majority by three seats, but it was the BJP, which had seven MLAs less than the Congress, that got to form the government, with some help from the Governor. A depleted Congress has now formed a pre-poll coalition with four Left parties and the Janata Dal (Secular) while the BJP, on Sunday, announced candidates for all 60 seats. The BJP's erstwhile allies, the National People's Party (NPP) and Naga People's Front (NPF), seem to be on their own.

The Congress's willingness to form a coalition and the BJP's decision to contest all seats have been triggered by a churn that began even before the 2017 elections. The BJP's extraordinary gains in that election was the outcome of many senior Congress leaders crossing over to the saffron party that had power at the Centre and funds at disposal. Biren Singh, who eventually became chief minister, was a member of the Ibobi Singh-led Congress government until a few months before elections. Over five years, many Congress, NPP and NPF MLAs and leaders joined the BJP, which while strengthening the party has also triggered factionalism within. In short, the BJP faces a problem of plenty but believes it now has enough leaders to fight battles in the Imphal Valley as well as Naga and Kuki-dominated hill seats. Also, with the leverage of office at the Centre, the BJP is well placed to negotiate post-poll deals if it falls short of a majority. The Congress, on the other hand, hopes to consolidate the anti-BJP by allying with the Left parties, which have a committed but shrinking vote base. But as in most northeastern states, elections in Manipur are influenced by kinship, proximity to power centres, etc. more than party or ideological affiliation.

To the BJP's credit, or call it luck, its term in office has seen fewer incidents of insurgency-related violence, road blockades and so on, as compared to the Congress years, which allowed the government to focus on state-building. Yet, Manipur recorded the highest number of arrests under UAPA in 2020, behind UP and J&K, with the government wielding the sedition law against journalists at will. The killing of an Army colonel and six others last year has disrupted the narrative and revealed the precarious state of peace. Holding up that peace is a challenge for the political process.

Freeze Frame

E P Unny



THE UNION BUDGET for 2022-23 to be presented by the finance minister is likely to talk much about macro-economic recovery, be it V-shaped or K-shaped. She may announce some measures to boost the MSME sector. greater investments in infrastructure, and so on. However, common people are more concerned with surging inflationary pressures, inflicting an "inflation tax" on their savings. Containing the fiscal deficit has always been a challenge. And it would be more so this year when economic recovery is still fragile. But what one hopes is that the FM will keep the budget accounts transparent.

Transparency in budgetary accounts is critical for the credibility of the budget. In this context, the FM deserves compliments for her last year's Union budget, when revised numbers for food and fertiliser subsidies were put up way above the budgeted numbers, clearing almost all arrears of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and the fertiliser industry. Think of revising the food subsidy budget estimate of Rs 1.15 lakh crore to Rs 4.22 lakh crore, and the fertiliser subsidy estimate of Rs 71,309 crore to about Rs 1.34 lakh crore. That was a bold move towards transparency. Even this year, the revised estimates of food and fertiliser subsidies are likely to be significantly higher than the budgeted estimates of Rs 2.43 lakh crore and Rs 79,530 crore respectively, and one hopes that the FM will keep them transparent and clear all the bills in the revised estimates.

Looking at the budget from the food and agriculture angle, I see the subsidies on food, fertilisers, and payments under the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi will dominate, and easily cross Rs 4 lakh crore, and may even go towards Rs 5 lakh crore in total. As a percentage of net tax revenue of the Union government (after deducting the share of states), this subsidy amount may turn out to be around 30 per cent. This share of subsidies, which are basically doles, is multiple times the government's expenditure on agri-R&D through its The upshot of this is that if the Union government wants the biggest bang for its buck, the right approach is to double or even triple the amount on agri-R&D and extension, especially in the emerging areas of high-value agriculture (horticulture, medicinal plants, livestock, fishery, etc). This is not just to raise their productivity but also build efficient value chains to supply these to lucrative markets, so that farmers' incomes can be significantly augmented. That's where the role of the private sector becomes important. ICAR needs not only a big infusion of funds but also an overhaul to collaborate with the private sector and FPOs to make its research outcomes marketable.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), which hovers around Rs 8,000 crore. Interestingly, our research at ICRIER shows that investment in agri-R&D brings five to 10 times higher returns in terms of agri-GDP or even poverty alleviation than the same amount spent through, say, fertiliser subsidies (or even power subsidies by states).

The upshot of this is that if the Union government wants the biggest bang for its buck, the right approach is to double or even triple the amount on agri-R&D and extension, especially in the emerging areas of high-value agriculture (horticulture, medicinal plants, livestock, fishery, etc). This is not just to raise their productivity but also build efficient value chains to supply these to lucrative markets, so that farmers' incomes can be significantly augmented. That's where the role of the private sector becomes important. ICAR needs not only a big infusion of funds but also an overhaul to collaborate with the private sector and FPOs to make its research out-

comes marketable. On the food subsidy front, which is ballooning, we know it is the result of the high economic cost of rice and wheat to the Food Corporation of India (FCI), the low issue prices at which it has to supply grains for the public distribution system (PDS), and the large population (67 per cent) to be covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). The economic cost of wheat and rice is almost 40 per cent higher than their MSP. Take, for example, rice, whose economic cost hovers around Rs 40/kg, but it has to be given at Rs 3/kg through PDS and almost free under the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. Given our weak governance of the PDS, ground reports suggest there is not only massive leakage of rice in the open market but it also goes towards ramping up our rice exports, which may touch 20 million tonnes this year, the highest ever in history. It would have been a matter of pride if these exports were on its competitive strength. But the reality is that

the export unit value is much below the MSP of rice. And when India exports, say, 20 mmt of rice in a global market that hovers around 45-46 mmt, it brings down the global prices of rice. This means that India has to export more quantities of rice to get the same amount of dollars, a perfect case for imposing an optimal export tax on rice. Also, this amount of rice which is being produced through heavy subsidies on power for irrigation and extremely low urea prices, means that we are exporting at least 40 to 50 billion cubic metres of water.

We surely need better policies on grain management and fertiliser subsidy. NITI Aayog has come up with a Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) putting Indian poverty at 25 per cent for the year 2015-16 based on NFHS data. The 2019-20 data set would give an even lower poverty ratio. Poverty based on the international definition of \$1.9 per capita per day (PPP) is even lower (around 11 per cent) for 2017-18, as per the Norld Bank. The Economic Survey had earlier made a case for reducing the coverage of beneficiaries under NFSA from 67 per cent to 30 per cent, which makes ample sense for targeting the poor and bringing efficiency to the PDS. I would submit that beneficiaries also be given the option to receive the money in cash in their accounts, which could be equal to MSP plus, say, 20 percent, in lieu of physical grains. This would reduce leakages, and also save on the high economic costs of these grains. If the coverage of beneficiaries under NFSA cannot be reduced, at least those who are non-poor can be charged at half the price of the economic cost.

Similar moves are needed on the fertiliser subsidy front. Else, the budget documents remain a mere accounting exercise, without ensuring efficiency and inclusiveness in government expenditure. That's not exciting.

> The writer is Infosys Chair professor for Agriculture at ICRIER

# Window To India

Michael Brecher was a pioneering scholar of Indian foreign policy

AS A YOUNG PhD student studying the Kashmir conflict at Yale University in the early 1950s, Michael Brecher had no idea that he would end up as a pioneering scholar of Indian foreign policy and its emerging position in the international system. Leaders of the Indian elite, including Jawaharlal Nehru, V K Krishna Menon, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Sheikh Abdullah, would confide in him, even though he wrote sympathetic yet somewhat critical essays about India's policies on controversial topics like Kashmir and nonalignment.

Brecher, who retired as a distinguished professor at McGill University's political science department last year after a nearly seven-decade-long stellar career, passed away at the age of 96 on January 16. He had made enormous scholarly contributions on topics such as Indian and Israeli foreign policies, Asia's new states and, later, large-scale studies on crises in world politics. In his long career, he wrote more than 30 books, scores of articles, and book chapters.

From his early days as a scholar, Brecher developed a striking skill for interviewing top political leaders and bureaucrats. In his unpublished autobiography, he narrates how he was successful in conducting candid interviews with key figures associated with India's independence and Partition. Louis Mountbatten, Clement Atlee, and other key figures spent several hours with him in the waning days of the Raj. Mountbatten's introduction to Nehru opened a door to this young doctoral student and soon-to-be assistant professor from Canada. Born to Jewish parents, Brecher had seen discrimination in his early days in the academy and in Canadian

Brecher's dissertation-turned book, The Struggle for Kashmir (1953), is one of the first scholarly analyses of the conflict and its intractability. A series of books on India followed, including Nehru's Mantle: Political Succession in India (1966) and India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World (1968). These opened up scholarship on India to the West and the larger world.

impressed by it. Pakistani journalists, who

heard Mrs Gandhi, said her offer came too ca-

sually and in response to a question by jour-

nalist on the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty. It's

possible that Prime Minister Gandhi made

the offer to see how the Pakistani side would

derstanding for India and its struggles. Nehru was so impressed by him that he took him along during his gruelling electoral campaigns and offered him several hours of his time for comprehensive questioning. Nehru: A Political Biography (1959) was the endproduct. It portrays not only Nehru's politics, but also his personality and the extraordinary rapport he had with the masses.

Brecher's dissertation-turned book, The Struggle for Kashmir (1953), is one of the first scholarly analyses of the conflict and its intractability. A series of books on India followed, including Nehru's Mantle: Political Succession in India (1966) and India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World (1968). These opened up scholarship on India to the West and the larger world. His works received much acclaim for being rigorous yet accessible to a wide array of readers. India's elite found in him a committed scholar who would bring much-needed international attention to the young republic's foreign and domestic policies.

Brecher was instrumental in the creation of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute in 1966, which is still in operation, with joint headquarters in Calgary and New Delhi. It enables hundreds of Indians and Canadians to visit each country for scholarship and academic exchanges. This initiative occurred to him during a visit to India in 1965 and when he proposed it to the then Finance Minister TT Krishnamachari, it was immediately embraced. The Indian External Affairs Ministry and Canadian foreign ministries as well as former Prime Minister Lester Pearson were very much in support and the institute was an-

society and developed a sympathy and un- nounced during Prime Minister Shastri's visit to McGill in June 1965 by Shastri himself. The institute was named after Shastri following his untimely death in 1966 and began operations in 1968. It is a rare success story of ongoing inter-state academic exchanges.

In the late 1960s, Brecher moved on to studying Israel's foreign policy after developing strong bonds with leaders such as Ben Gurion. From 1975, Brecher and a University of Maryland colleague, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, initiated the International Crisis Behaviour project, studying various forms of crises and their progression toward war, using a large dataset and quantitative and qualitative analyses.

As his colleague for the past three decades, I have witnessed Brecher's immense productivity and feel fortunate that his family shared excerpts from his unpublished autobiography. His passing away occurs after the death last year of another pioneering scholar of South Asia, Baldev Raj Nayar, whom Brecher brought to McGill. Navar and Brecher were great role models for scholars of India and South Asia globally. Both exhibited thoroughness in scholarship and were willing to face challenges in field research and personal lives. Their ability to approach and gain the trust of leading political figures of the day was unparalleled. Notable was the academic freedom that the founders of the Indian republic cherished and allowed, a far cry from today's controlled environment and lack of access.

The writer is James McGill Professor of International Relations at McGill University, Montreal, Canada





treaty of peace and friendship with Pakistan. talks on Pakistan's proposal for a no-war pact. Surprisingly, Mrs Gandhi made her offer at

#### CPM'S LINE

AT THE END of the 11th party Congress, the pro-Moscow view of the central leadership of the CPM succeeded in reversing the pro-Chinese line that had been adopted after the 1964 split with the CPI. The Vijayawada Congress adopted a political resolution taking a strong pro-Soviet and anti-China stand. Even till the 10th Congress in Jullundur in 1978, the CPM had criticised and praised China and Soviet Union in equal measure.

#### BILLA, RANGA TO HANG

BARELY 18 HOURS before his execution, condemned prisoner Billa admitted to having murdered seven persons in Bombay but remained non-committal on his role in the murder of Sanjay and Gita Chopra. "It's better that I am dying. What's the purpose of living in a society that does not trust you," he said. Meanwhile, Ranga "confessed" innocence and regretted he couldn't get justice.

#### EX-CHOGYAL DEAD

FORMER CHOGYAL OF Sikkim, Paiden Thondup Namgyal has died of cancer. He was 59.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2022

# THE IDEAS PAGE

#### WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Closing down schools is the absolute last decision that should be considered as a potential measure to mitigate any further spikes in the number of infections."

THE DHAKA TRIBUNE

# Case for a health booster

Budget can add momentum to transformation in healthcare system burdened by the pandemic. It needs to invest in cadre of skilled medical workers



#### K Srinath Reddy

A PRE-BUDGET assessment, just ahead of the presentation of the budget, is somewhat like a pitch and weather report by a cricket commentator before the start of play. It states how the match might be influenced by the prevailing conditions without showing any certitude that it will actually develop along those lines. So, this piece is more of a prayer than a prediction, hoping that the finance minister will provide the vulnerable health sector the protective "booster" it needs.

After decades of low government expenditure on health, the Covid pandemic created a societal consensus on the need to strengthen our health system. The recommended priorities varied, depending on whether they came from super-specialist doctors arguing for more hospitals and specialists or public health votaries pleading for the expansion and quality enhancement of primary healthcare services and disease surveillance systems. The Fifteenth Finance Commission accepted both viewpoints and recommended greater investment in rural and urban primary care, a nationwide disease surveillance system extending from the block-level to national institutes, a larger health workforce and the augmentation of critical care capacity of hospitals. The Union budget of 2021 reflected these priorities in a proposed Pradhan Mantri Aatmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana (PMASBY) to be made operational over six years, with a budget of Rs 64,180 crore. The Finance Minister also projected a broader vision of health beyond healthcare by merging allocations to water, sanitation, nutrition and air pollution control with the health budget. This resulted in a 137 per cent increase in the allocation to health, though the increase to the health ministry itself was a modest 11 per cent.

In the months that followed the budget, two major health missions were launched, under the Ayushman Bharat umbrella. The Digital Health Mission was launched in September 2021. The Health Infrastructure Mission, launched in October 2021, was a renamed and augmented version of the PMASBY. It aims to create a strong nationwide healthcare and disease surveillance infrastructure, ranging from health and wellness centres (HWCs) and blocklevel laboratories to more medical colleges and National Institutes of Virology.

These missions join the two other components of Ayushman Bharat launched in 2018. The Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC) component is nested in the National Health Mission (NHM) while the Pradhan Mantri Ian Arogva Yojana (PMIAY) is steered by the National Health Authority (NHA). Bringing these various missions together under the umbrella of Ayushman Bharat will help to create a coherent and connected healthcare delivery system. Primary healthcare services under the CPHC and linkage with water, sanitation, nutrition and pollution control programmes will strengthen the capacity of the health system for health promotion and disease prevention, going beyond disease management. The budget of 2022 must not only fund these missions adequately but indicate how they will link synergically while functioning under different administrative agencies. It will be appropriate for the Health Ministry to



C R Sasikumar

be the convening platform, even if the budget lines are separated.

The NHM received only a 9.6 per cent increase in the 2021 budget. Apart from the capital expenditure on new primary healthcare infrastructure, it needs an increase in its operational budget too, especially as long neglected urban primary healthcare needs urgent attention. PMJAY did not see an increase in allocation last year, because its utilisation for non-Covid care declined sharply in the previous year. The limited number of accredited healthcare facilities in tier-2 and tier-3 hospitals, in many states, is also a limiting factor for the scheme. More importantly, limiting cost coverage to hospitalised care reduces the PMJAY's capacity to significantly lower out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) on health, which is driven mostly by outpatient care and expenditure on medicines. The promise of HWCs to provide essential drugs and diagnostic services - it has been stalled by Covid - needs to be delivered soon if primary care has to become an effective instrument for reducing OOPE.

The Digital Health Mission can enhance efficiency of the health systems in a variety of ways. These include better data collection and analysis, improved medical and health records, efficient supply chain management, telehealth services, support for health workforce training, implementation of health insurance programmes, real time monitoring and sharper evaluation of health programme performance along with effective multi-sectoral coordination. The financing of this mission will be a feature of interest in the budget.

While increased investment in infrastructure and digital health is needed and will be of high value for strengthening our health system, that capacity will be a carriage without wheels if we do not develop a multi-layered, multi-skilled health workforce. We need to increase the numbers and improve the skills of all categories of healthcare providers, While training specialist doctors could take time, the training of frontline workers like Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) can be done in a shorter

District hospitals need to be upgraded, with greater investment in infrastructure, equipment and staffing. In underserved regions, such district hospitals should be upgraded to become training centres for students of medical, nursing and allied health professional courses. Medical college hospitals too should be strengthened. Public health cadres must be created in every state and training institutions must be established to infuse public health expertise into health programmes. While much of this needs to be done by the states, the Centre should

incentivise and support such

efforts by the states. Will the

Union budget signal such an

intent and commitment?

time. Every village should have two ASHAs and every sub-centre designated as a HWC should have two ANMs as a minimum. Similarly, urban HWCs too should be well staffed. Training and deployment of mid-level health workers in the HWCs too is a priority.

District hospitals need to be upgraded, with greater investment in infrastructure, equipment and staffing. In underserved regions, such district hospitals should be upgraded to become training centres for students of medical, nursing and allied health professional courses. Medical college hospitals too should be strengthened. Public health cadres must be created in every state and training institutions must be established to infuse public health expertise into health programmes. While much of this needs to be done by the states, the Centre should incentivise and support such efforts by the states. Will the Union budget signal such an intent and commitment?

With increased central investment in health, OOPE should continue the declining trend reported in the last reported National Health Accounts (2017-18). However, the decline should not be driven only by an increase in capital expenditure on infrastructure. An increase in current operational expenditure is also needed to improve service delivery and have an early impact on healthcare related financial burden of families. There may be some savings on Covid response this year, especially on the amount allocated to procure vaccines. Those savings must flow to improve non-Covid services which suffered neglect for the past two years. Research and innovation too must see greater investment. The expanded ambit of health, as defined in last year's budget, must continue for aligning other sectors to public health objectives. The Union budget of 2022 can add further momentum to our health system transformation. I fervently hope it will.

> The writer, a cardiologist and epidemiologist, is President, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI). The views expressed are personal.

# Why FM must not cut taxes

Buoyancy in tax revenues next year is uncertain, exports boom caused by pandemic is likely to diminish. These will put constraints on GDP growth



RAJESWARI SENGUPTA

WITH THE UNION Budget to be presented in Parliament tomorrow, many people are hoping that taxes will be cut to boost private spending and growth. Ordinarily, this might be a good idea. However, there are four main reasons why tax cuts are not prudent now

First, the strong revenue performance during 2021-22 gives a misleading impression of the government's fiscal position. Revenues this year have benefitted from some exceptional factors. One, strong profit growth in the private corporate sector, led mostly by the large firms; two, robust collections from the goods and services tax (GST); and three, rapid GDP growth. The crucial question to ask is what might happen to these factors in 2022-23. Here we run into some difficulties.

It is risky to assume that corporate profits will continue to grow as rapidly going forward. This is because we do not yet fully understand what led to the growth in 2021-22. If we look at the data of listed non-financial, non-oil firms in the private sector, we find that by June 2021, their profit margins were higher than in the pre-pandemic period. This could have been the result of an increase in their market share, given that the smaller firms bore the brunt of the pandemic. The larger firms also took emergency measures to cut costs. It is not obvious that as the pandemic recedes, the same trend will continue in 2022-23. If it does not, then corporate tax growth would not be as high

In addition, GST growth is likely to slow down. In 2021-22, average monthly GST collections increased to Rs 1.2 trillion from Rs 0.94 trillion in 2020-21. This increase was mostly on account of the resumption of economic activity. GST on imports also played a big role, fuelled by an import boom and higher tariffs. It is unlikely that we will witness a similar import boom next year.

As the recovery period ends and the economy normalises, GDP growth will slow down too. The main engine of growth for an emerging economy like India is private sector investment, which is still not showing any signs of acceleration, even as the broader economy recovers. Another engine of growth is exports. India has experienced an export boom in 2021-22. However, as the developed countries normalise their macro-policies, the global exports boom will diminish, and this will impact India as well. Hence, it is not certain where high GDP growth will come from in the next fiscal year. All these factors lead to uncertainty

about tax revenues.

Second, the fiscal deficit, targeted at 6.8 per cent of GDP for 2021-22, continues to be very high. There is little room to cut spending since demands for social spending such as on MGNREGA remain high, interest payments continue to be a big component of expenditure, and given the mounting pressure on the government to increase capital expenditure. There is consequently no room to provide tax relief without imposing further pressure on the deficit. Nor is it a good idea to allow the deficit to increase. The government's total debt has already reached 90 per cent of GDP, the highest ever, and there is significant pressure on the bond yields to go up. This could make it costlier for everyone to borrow.

Third, the pandemic has caused supply shortages the world over. India too has been experiencing supply chain bottlenecks. In a supply-constrained environment, any attempt to boost demand by increasing households' after-tax income would lead to inflation. This is exactly what has been happening in the US and other developed economies. In India, retail inflation, as measured by the consumer price index, has been running at 5-6 per cent, close to the upper limit of the RBI's target band. And, already there are pressures for inflation to go up as a result of rising oil and commodity prices. Tax cuts and the resultant increase in spending might push inflation beyond the limit, forcing the RBI into an uncomfortable choice: Raise interest rates sharply at a time when the recovery is beginning or allow inflation to tax the country's poor.

Finally, we are entering a period of global macroeconomic uncertainty. The US economy is experiencing its highest inflation in 40 years. The US Fed will consequently raise interest rates this year. When the developed world pulls back its expansionary policies, emerging economies like India need to display strong macroeconomic fundamentals, and the government must come across as credible.

One of the key reasons India was badly affected by the taper tantrum episode of 2013 was because it was doing poorly on macro fundamentals. In a way, the situation now is not very different. Once again, we are running a high fiscal deficit and the real interest rate is negative because inflation is lower than it was in 2013, but the government debt ratio is substantially higher. Hence, the government needs to be somewhat careful about its fiscal math.

With state elections coming up, it might be tempting for the government to slash taxes and win votes. But given its own fiscal limitations and the uncertainty surrounding India's growth and inflation trajectories in the next fiscal year, this would not be a prudent call.

> The writer is Associate Professor of Economics, IGIDR

# The conscience keeper

JS Bandukwala fought for human dignity and equality all his life

G N Devy

VADODARA WAS known as a cosmopolitan city in the 20th century. I moved there in 1980, and was surprised to see two striking instances of communal boycott and to read about a third instance that had occurred decades before my time in the city. The one before my time involved the young B R Ambedkar, who had returned from the US after completing his studies at Columbia. He had to take shelter in the house of a Parsi as no Hindu was willing to let out his house to the young lawyer despite being summoned by the Maharaja of Baroda as the Law Officer of Baroda state. Pained by the attitude, Ambedkar decided to leave the city in less than two weeks. The one instance I saw closely relates to the legendary theatre director Habib Tanvir who arrived in Baroda in 1985 for a year-long stay leading to the production of a new play. Like Ambedkar, Tanvir had to wind up his planned stay in Baroda as Hindus were not willing to rent a house to a Muslim, and the Muslims did not want a Leftist anywhere near them. In the 1980s, the RSS had already started making Gujarat its social laboratory. Its full scale erupted before the public eye later.

The third instance of social boycott that I know relates to J S Bandukwala. A nuclear physicist, he had come to Vadodara in the early 1970s to teach at M S University. He was

ostracised by his own community, not so much for who he was but for what he thought. In an interview with Ajaz Ashraf, Bandukwala narrates: "After completing my studies in the United States, I returned to India in 1972. I chanced upon the Bohra Syedna [spiritual head of the Bohra sect of Muslims] in Vadodara. He was praying in a garden. I stopped to pay my respect to him, and started talking to two of his family members. I was dressed in pants and a shirt, When they heard that I was a Bohra, they aggressively asked me how I could come to meet the Syedna in the clothes I was in. When a Bohra meets the Syedna, he is supposed to wear the traditional Bohra dress, stand and approach him in a particular way. They said, 'You are supposed to be Abde Syedna,' which means the slave of Syedna. My response was that it was not possible for me to be the slave of anyone but Allah. They tried to put pressure on me but I was not willing to compro-

During the 1980s, I used to teach at the English department of MS University. It was but natural for me to get drawn to Bandukwala who was in the science faculty. I have seen his amazing journey in life over these decades and have felt impressed and inspired by his quiet courage and his ability to speak out fearlessly even in the face of the

worst threats to his life. During the last 50 years, till he passed away on Saturday, the professor continued to speak simple truth to power and paid a heavy price for it.

When he was a young lecturer and the warden of a boy's hostel on the Baroda University campus, his house was vandalised by students. When he decided to contest elections, the university authorities refused to sanction his leave. As a rare case in the history of the university, Bandukwala decided to forfeit his salary for his work on the campus. He started teaching children from poor families without taking fees from them, as well as some students from affluent families to keep his finances going. After the small residential flat he occupied as a lecturer was vandalised by goons on the campus, the university authorities shifted him to a slightly larger flat meant for professors. After spending some time there, he quietly shifted to a house he had built in Sama. That house was attacked by a large mob during the 2002 Gujarat riots. I remember him telling me how the most precious things, such as his family albums and personal letters, were burnt before his eyes. Friends helped him to escape the mob of rioters which would have killed him that day.

After the riots, he sent his children away from Vadodara; and after the death of his wife, he lived the life of a lonely but unflinch-

ing crusader. He continued to work with the community, funded the education of innumerable children, wrote and published articles on issues of vital interest for social harmony and, most of all, refused to be intimidated. Throughout his life, he continued to face fatwas from Muslim clerics and threats and harassment from Hindu fanatics. Besides, given his identity, thoughts and social engagement, he remained outside the social circles that make up the hugely materialistic and somewhat bohemian society of Vadodara. For most of the time, the who's who of Vadodara pretended to have forgotten that J S Bandukwala continues to live in a small flat in Pratapgunj until they were forced to acknowledge his presence when important thinkers and social leaders from all parts of the world came to visit him. A conscience keeper, neglected by his own city and applauded by the world, an inspiring friend and a courageous crusader for human dignity and equality, JSB left this world on January 29. He left a large gap in Vadodara's moral core and a big imprint on the collective memory of an India caught in commu-

The writer is a cultural activist and a former colleague of J S Bandukwala at the M S University of Baroda

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### OLD & NEW FRIENDS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Making connections' (IE, January 29). The importance given to the five Central Asian Republics (CARS) is evident from the invites sent to their heads to grace India's Republic Day function as chief guests. Though the pandemic played the spoiler, India earnestly wants to buttress its trade ties with CARS. This is also in keeping with India's Connect Central Asia policy of 2012. Recent developments in the region with the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan have also made CARS warm up to India. Moreover, China's ambitions to bring smaller nations under its political and economic ambit are making CARS diversify its business dealings and look beyond China. India must seize the initiative and play

a bigger role in Central Asia. **Vijai Pant,** Hempur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'Making connections' (IE, January 29). The government's reaching out to five central Asian nation's may be good optics. However, India's relations with immediate neighbouring countries — Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh — are at all time low. These nations were considered to be all-weather friends. The much touted Chabahar port in Iran is also proving a non-starter

Deepak Singhal, Noida

#### REGRESSIVE MOVE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Weakening the watchdog' (IE, January 28). The Kerala government's proposed move to bring an ordinance to snip the powers of the Lokayukta is highly questionable. The haste with

which the move is taken through the route of ordinance speaks volumes of the government's intent. The decision is not likely to pass the muster of judicial scrutiny, if challenged in the courts. The move goes against CPM's much touted credo of purging corruption from public life.

Ravi Kumar Mathur, Ghaziabad

#### Burdening court

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Misreading jurisdiction' (IE, January 28). A corollary to the issues raised in the article about the Supreme Court's decision in the Alapan Bandyopadhyay case is the steep increase of the workload of the Delhi High Court. For a number of reasons, the DHC already has a lot on its plate. Because of this judgment, the cases that would have otherwise been dealt with by other High Courts, will now be filed before the DHC.

**Ayush Baheti,** Jaipur

#### STEROID OVERDOSE

THIS REFERS TO the report 'Steroid use, blood clots: AIIMS seeks nod to study Covid impact on bones' (IE, January 28). It is heartening that the AIIMS had submitted a proposal to Indian Council of Medical Research, seeking approval to conduct a study to probe cases of Avascular Necrosis(AVN) or death of bone tissue among Covid patients due to steroid use and blood clots. The study could throw light on the adverse effect of widespread use of steroids during the pandemic's second wave. It could also suggest remedial measures to overcome this problem among the affected persons.

Retheesh Balakrishnan, Delhi

### WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

# **Top Jaish commander** among 5 killed in J&K

**BASHAARAT MASOOD** SRINAGAR, JANUARY 30

ATOP Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militant commander was among five militants killed in two separate overnight gunfights in South Kashmir's Pulwama and Central Kashmir's Budgam, J&K police said on Sunday.

JeM commander Zahid Ahmad Wani was active since 2017 and was involved in several attacks in South Kashmir, the police said. He was killed in an encounter with the joint forces in Pulwama along with three others, including Inayat Ahmad Mir, son of the owner of the house. where the militants were hiding, the police said.

While the police said Inayat was a "hybrid militant", his family claimed he was innocent and have demanded the return of his body. "His (Inayat's) maternal grandmother passed away two days ago and he along with his other family members was at their house for the past two days," said one of his relatives. "On Saturday afternoon, Inayat's father sent him home to feed the cattle. We have no idea how he

The relative said the police took away Inayat's elder brother Naveed Ahmad Mir with them on Sunday morning.

Addressing reporters on Sunday, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar said Inayat was a "hybrid militant". He said the police will also book his father under the anti-terror laws for "providing

**PRESSTRUST OF INDIA** 

RAIASTHAN CHIEF Minister

Ashok Gehlot on Sunday de-

Narendra Modi address the na-

tion on the Pegasus issue to end

After paying tributes to

1. 1st Round provisional seat allotment result

any confusion on the matter.

JAIPUR, JANUARY 30



Security personnel near the site of encounter with militants at Tahab area of Pulwama district on Sunday. PTI

shelter" to the militants. In an official release, the police said Inavat "ioined the terror fold recently". In the evening, the police retweeted a video purportedly of Inayat's sister in which she says that three men came inside the house and that her brother refused to come out after the police and paramilitary cordoned it. The police said on Saturday evening, a joint team of Police, Army and paramilitary forces cordoned off Naira village in Pulwama after inputs about the presence of militants in the village

"While laying down the cordon of the spot, the hiding terrorists fired indiscriminately," the police said in an official release. "After evacuation of the civilians to safer places, the fire was retaliated leading to an encounter. In the ensuing encounter, four terrorists ere killed."

Apart from Zahid Wani and Inavat, others killed in the encounter were identified as Pakistani national Kafeel Bhai and Waleed Ahmad Reshi. The

PM should address nation on Pegasus issue: Gehlot

Mahatma Gandhi at the secre-

tariat in Jaipur on Shaheed

Diwas, the Chief Minister said

those who follow the ideology of

the man who assassinated the

Father of the Nation are ruling

the country and are entering the

claiming that India bought the

Reacting to a media report

parliament as MPs.

police said all four belonged to the JeM.

According to the police, Wani, an IED expert, was a top Jaish commander in south Kashmir. IGP Kumar termed the killing of Wani as a big success.

In a separate gunfight in Budgam, a Lashkar-e-Toiba militant was killed in an overnight gunfight. The police said that on Saturday night, a joint team of police, Army and paramilitary forces cordoned off Chrar-e-Sharief village of Budgam after inputs about the presence of militants. "As the joint search parties were approaching towards suspected spot, the hiding terrorist started firing indiscriminately... which was retaliated leading to an encounter," the police said.

"In the ensuing encounter, the hiding terrorist, identified as Bilal Ahmad Khan, was killed."

On Saturday evening, suspected militants shot dead a policeman outside his residence at Hassanpora village of Bijbehara in South Kashmir.

part of a defence deal in 2017, the

Congress leader said, "The cen-

tral government should give a

clarification. If the government

is clean, then the PM should

himself address the nation."

# Assam-Nagaland border: Police use 'mild force' during eviction drive

Matter

pending

in court

THIS IS the third eviction

drive in Lahorijan area -

two were carried out in

Following that, 11 Naga

petitioned Gauhati High

Court on the issue. The

court had said that no ac-

tion should be taken on

the 11 respondents. The

February 2. The Assam

government has been

conducting several evic-

tion drives to clear land of

year, two civilians, includ-

killed in one such drive in

stances of stone pelting by the

residents, and the police had to

Sipajhar area of Darrang

alleged "illegal encroach-

ers". In September last

ing a 12-year-old, were

matter is listed for

earlier December.

**TORA AGARWALA** GUWAHATI. JANUARY 30

A POLICEMAN was injured in a clash between police and protesters during an eviction drive in Assam's Karbi Anglong on

Sunday, authorities said. The drive, conducted to evict around 100 households in the Balijan 'C' area in Lahorijan, along the Assam-Nagaland border, began Sunday morning, on the order of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC). The council, which has executive powers over land revenue matters, was carrying out the drive aided by the police and district administration, to remove alleged "illegal encroachers" from According to reports, the res-

idents, who claim they have been living in the area for decades, started pelting stones, leading the police to lathi charge and fire rubber bullets in the air on Sunday afternoon.

According to Superintendent of Police, Karbi Anglong, Pushpraj Singh, there were multiple in-

Man arrested for

killing daughter's

cops say his sons

Lucknow: The Bareilly police on

Sunday arrested a man, his four

sons, and nephew for allegedly at-

tacking and killing a 40-year-old

woman in the district two days

earlier. The attack occurred almost

a year after the victim's son eloped

with the main accused's daugh-

same community, according to

the police. The SHO of the police

station concerned said the vic-

tim's son first eloped with the

prime accused's daughter in April

2020. The girl was a minor at the

time. Last April, the couple again

eloped and returned home a few

days later. The girl, by then, had

turned 18 years old, the SHO said.

tim's family fled the village, fear-

ing for their lives, and relocated

to Jaipur. The police said that on

Friday the victim and her hus-

band returned to the village for

some personal work when as-

sailants set on them. While the

40-year-old's husband managed

to escape, the attackers hit her

with sticks. The police filed an

FIR based on a complaint by the

victim's husband. ENS

After the wedding, the vic-

Both the families are from the

ter and married her.

mother-in-law;

among 6 held

**BAREILLY** 

the crowd. "We had to fire rubber bullets... no civilian was hurt but one policeman was severely injured," he said.

The area, located right on the border across Nagaland's Dimapur, has a mix of Naga and Bengali Muslim residents. Local residents claim they have been living in the area and have "all residents of Balijan 'C' had requisite documents". "We had requested some time from the KAAC but they carried out the eviction forcefully anyway. Now we have nowhere

> village chairman of Balijan 'C'. He said that in Khan Basti part of the Balijan 'C' area, which was evicted, 80 per cent of landowners were Naga. The local residents claimed they bought the land from descendants of late Hazi Manigul Khan, who established the village in 1910.

> to go," claimed K Aye, who is the

"The villagers are not claiming that this particular area is disnuted or that it belongs to Nagaland... this land belongs to Assam, but Nagas, who live there, have purchased this land. They have Aadhaar cards, voter IDs,

ing there for decades," said Kegwayhun Tep of Naga Student Federation (NSF), which had written to the KAAC asking them not to carry out the eviction.

Earlier this month, even Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio had written to his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma about the issue, asking him to intervene and "protect the lives and property of the Naga residents of Karbi Anglong in keeping with social justice and spirit of good neighbourly relations between the two states"

According to locals, Sunday's incident got tense when authorities were about to break a bridge which connects the village to Dimapur, after which residents got agitated.

Karbi Anglong Deputy Commissioner Dibakar Nath said the drive was conducted peacefully. "Initially some misunderstanding had happened with the residents but we spoke to DC Dimapur, and we sorted it out. The drive was done successfully and peacefully," he said.

After over 2 years, court acquits man accused of raping air hostess

**SADAF MODAK** MUMBAI, JANUARY 30

OVER TWO years after a 23vear-old airline security officer was booked over the alleged rape of a 25-year-old air hostess, a sessions court in a recent order acquitted the accused of all charges

An investigation was initiated by the MIDC police station in June 2019 based on the complaint. Initially, the police probed allegations of gang rape on the suspicion the complainant had been sexually assaulted by the accused and his roommates.

The probe eventually revealed that the injuries caused to the complainant were due to a fall from an autorickshaw. The sexual assault charges against the airline security officer, however, remained and he stood trial denying the allegations.

While acquitting the accused earlier this month based on the complainant's testimony and other evidence, the court said that the sexual intercourse between the two was consensual. In her initial complaint, the woman had claimed that she was sexually assaulted and based on the injuries on her body, the charge of gangrape was added to the FIR. The police. however, did not find evidence regarding it.

In her testimony to the court, the complainant said she had consumed alcohol on her own will and the injuries were due to a fall from an autorickshaw. The complainant through her lawyer Fragrance Fernandes had submitted that soon after she realised this, she approached the local police station.

#### Karnataka farmer finds his death certificate, approaches cops

Bengaluru: A 40-year-old farmer has approached police after he discovered a death certificate issued in his name by the taluk office four months ago. The complainant, Shivaraj, has named four government officials in his complaint. According to the death certificate, issued on August 13 last year, he died on August 5. Shivaraj said he came across his death certificate on December 14 posted on a wall near his village M Hosahalli. "I sent a complaint to the assistant

#### NO MORAL POLICING, SAYS COURT

# MP HC upholds right of inter-faith couple to marry

BHOPAL, JANUARY 30

THE JABALPUR bench of Madhya Pradesh High Court this week upheld the right of an inter-faith couple to stay together through marriage or in a live-in relationship, and said "no moral policing" can be allowed in an issue involving the decisions by two individuals taken "willingly"

The court was hearing a habeas corpus petition moved by Gulzar Khan, a 27-year-old a resident of Gorakhpur in Jabalpur, who said he married his neighbour Arti Sahu in a Bandra court on December 28 after the two eloped to Mumbai. Sahu also converted to Islam by choice, the petition said.

The couple, living in Mumbai, was detained by a team of policemen from Jabalpur while thev were on their way to collect their marriage certificate in Bandra on January 15, according to the petition. MP Police took them back to Jabalpur, after which Sahu's familv took her to Varanasi (UP) and illegally detained her there, it said.

Speaking to The Sunday Express, Khan said: "Soon after we got married, we sent three letters

families but also one letter to the concerned police station (to notify their marriage). But even then, we were brought to Jabalpur and I was beaten up overnight. It was only the next morning that they handed Arti to her family while I was let go, but all my documents were taken by the policemen."

Police officials in Gorakhpur denied the accusation. Station House Officer of the Gorakhpur police station, Archana Nagar, said, "We had gotten the two from Mumbai but they were handed to their family. Why would the police beat them? They are not some hardened criminals. These allegations are untrue.' Khan approached the High

Court on January 18. "After the way we were treated by the police, I lost faith in them. So I decided to approach the judiciary," the 27-year-old said on Sunday. Acting on the petition, Sahu

(19) was produced before the single bench of Justice Nandita Dubey and she testified that she willingly converted to Islam and married Khan.

The prosecutor Priyanka Mishra, appearing for the police, opposed the marriage in the HCby invoking the anti-conversion law. person can convert for the purpose of marriage and sought the court's direction to send Sahu to Nari Niketan, a home for women. Justice Nandita Dubey ruled against the prosecutor's stand on

January 28 and said: "Be that as it may, the petitioner and corpus both are major. No moral policing can be allowed in such matters where the two major persons are willing to stay together whether by way of marriage or in a live-in, when the party to that arrangement is doing it willingly and not forced into it." The court also rejected the demand to send Sahu to Nari

Niketan. "The corpus has clearly stated that she had married the petitioner and wants to stay with him. The corpus is a major person. Her age is not disputed by any of the parties. The Constitution gives a right to every major citizen of this country to live her or his life as per her or his own wishes.' Justice Dubey said, directing both the public prosecutor and the police to ensure the couple's safety.

Reunited, Khan and Sahu said they were leaving Jabalpur for a new beginning. "I have been beaten up a lot, threatened and she has been tortured... why should we be sacred anymore." Khan said.

#### commissioner and deputy commissioner but nothing happened. Eventually, I filed a police com-

plaint," he said. ENS

BIHAR COMBINED ENTRANCE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION BOARD I.A.S. Association Building, Near Patna Airport, Patna-14.

UNDER GRADUATE MEDICAL ADMISSION COUNSELLING (UGMAC)-2021 for MBBS / BDS / B.V.Sc. & A.H. in Govt. Medical / Dental / Bihar Veterinaty Colleges and Private Medical / Dental Colleges of Bihar

#### पुनर्निर्धारित कॉउन्सेलिंग कार्यक्रम से सम्बन्धित आवश्यक सूचना

आवंटन / नामांकन की पूर्व निर्धारित तिथि एवं कार्यक्रम निम्नवत् पुनर्निर्धारित किया जाता है; पूर्व निर्धारित तिथि

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Upgra 3. Docur 4. 2nd R public	uments Verification and Admission (2nd Round)	: 11.02.2022 to 13.02.2022	21.02.2022 to 24.02.202
Upgra 3. Docur 4. <b>2nd R</b>	rnloading of Allotment order (2nd Round)	: 10.02.2022 to 13.02.2022	18.02.2022 to 24.02.202
Upgra 3. Docui	ication date	: 10.02.2022	18.02.2022
Upgra	Round provisional seat allotment result		
	uments Verification and Admission (1st Round)	: 02.02.2022 to 05.02.2022	02.02.2022 to 07.02.202
2. Down	radation (1st Round)	: 01.02.2022 to 05.02.2022	01.02.2022 to 07.02.202
	rnloading of Allotment order and Choice		
public	ication date	: 01.02.2022	-

#### GOVT. OF BIHAR

BIHAR COMBINED ENTRANCE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION BOARD I.A.S. Association Building, Near Patna Airport, Patna-14.

POST GRADUATE MEDICAL ADMISSION COUNSELLING (PGMAC)-2021

for MD / MS / PGD / DNB (Degree & Diploma) in Govt./ Private Medical Colleges of Bihar

Advt. No.-BCECEB(PGMAC)-2021/04 Dated: 30.01.2022 Website: beeceboard.bihar.gov.in

**Notice for 2nd round counselling** 

In continuation to Adv. No. BCECEB(PGMAC)-2021/03 Dated: 21.01.2022 it is to inform all concerned candidates of PGMAC-2021, that the "Online Willingness" for PGMAC-

2021 Second round offline Counselling will start from 06.02.2022. 1. The candidates who are included in the 1st counselling of PGMAC-2021 and they want to participate in PGMAC-2021 2nd Offline Counselling (whether they are admitted / not

admitted / Absent in PGMAC-2021 1st Counselling held from 23.01.2022 to 29.01.2022) have to submit their Willingness for participating in 2nd round offline Counselling of PGMAC-2021 by visiting the link "Willingness for PGMAC-2021 2nd round offline counselling" available on Board's website: bceceboard.bihar.gov.in from 06.02.2022 to 10.02.2022 otherwise they will not be eligible for participating in the 2nd round Offline Counselling of PGMAC-2021. 2. Admitted candidates through 1st offline counselling of PGMAC-2021, have to submit

bonafide certificate issued from concerned institution and photo copy of all documents alongwith the print out of willingness submission slip at the time of 2nd round counselling. The eligible candidates who are not included in the 1st round counselling of PGMAC-2021 need not to submit their willingness for participating in 2nd round counselling of PGMAC-2021. Such candidates will be called for 2nd round counselling of PGMAC-2021 as per their merit and reservation policy.

: up to 14.02.2022

**Controller of Examination** 

: 16.02.2022 to 21.02.2022

: 14.02.2022

: 15.02.2022

#### 4. Important Dates:

- Last date of admission on the basis of 1st round counselling : 02.02.2022 06.02.2022 to 10.02.2022
- Willingness for 2nd round counselling iii. Free exit from Govt. Colleges.
- iv. Result / counselling programme publication of 2nd round counselling.
- v. Seat Matrix uploading
- vi. Proposed date of counselling / admission

The Supreme Court is not able to do hearings on the matter on priority, which it should have done. Who should be blamed?'

Pegasus spyware from Israel as **GOVT. OF BIHAR** 

Adv. No.- BCECEB(UGMAC)-2021/05 Dated 30.01.2022 Website: bceceboard.bihar.gov.in

विज्ञापन संख्या- BCECEB(UGMAC)-2021/03 दिनांक 24.01.2022 एवं 2021/04 दिनांक 25.01.2022 के क्रम में UGMAC-2021 के आधार पर बिहार राज्य के सरकारी चिकित्सा / दन्त चिकित्सा / पशु चिकित्सा महाविद्यालयों के MBBS / BDS / B.V.Sc. & A.H. पाठ्यक्रम एवं निजी चिकित्सा / दन्त चिकित्सा महाविद्यालयों के MBBS / BDS पाठ्यक्रम की सीटों पर Online Counselling हेतु UGMAC-2021 में सिम्मिलित सभी पात्रता-प्राप्त अभ्यर्थियों / सम्बन्धित अभिभावकों / संस्थानों को सूचित किया जाता है कि UGMAC-2021 के आधार पर प्रथम एवं द्वितीय चक्र सीट

## )22 )22 )22

#### **SALUTE THE SOLDIER** Martyrs of CISF on 31stJanuary CISF proudly remembers the



KISHORE HEP URI-1

supreme sacrifice of these bravehearts. On this day, they laid down their lives at the altar of duty while fighting with militants. Their courage and bravery would remain an abiding source of inspiration for the force. The force will remain eternally indebted to them for their noblest









TENDER TIME EXTENSION NOTICE-1 दिनांकः 29.01.2022 Due to unavoidable circumstances the date of submission and opening of following tender invited by the office of the Executive Enginee

(Maintenance), MB-II, Chinyalisaur (Uttarkashi) is hereby extended Tender No: NIT-78/EE(M)/MB-II/21-22

Name of work / Supply/Services: Repair and Overhauling of Tail Race Channel Gantry Crane of Capacity 40 Ton at Dharasu Power House Last date for submission of tender: - 10.02.2022 up to 11:00 Hrs. Due date for opening of tender: - 17.02.2022 at 11:00 Hrs.

For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website www.ujvnl.com' **Executive Engineer (Maintenance** 

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

UTTARAKHAND SAHKARI CHINI MILLS SANGH LTD. (UTTARAKHAND SUGARS)

No. 1776 Dated: 29/01/2022 E-Tender Notice for Sale of BISS SUGAR YEAR 2018-19 Online e-Bids are invited from reputed buyers of BISS SUGAR YEAR 2018-19 available in our cooperative sugar mills Bazpur and Nandehi as per detail given in tender document. Tender of BISS Sugar Year 2018-19 vill be uploaded upto 6:00 PM on 23-02-2022 and Technical and Financia Bid will be opened on the scheduled date 24-02-2022 at 10:30 AM to 3:30

Tender documents can be downloaded from e-tender porta https:uktenders.gov.in or Federation's website www.uttarakhandsugars.com.The bidders will have to deposit tender fees (Non Refundable ) of Rs. 2000/- (18% GST Extra) & Earnest Money in the orm of Demand Draft/RTGS/NEFT/ NET Banking for Rs. 30.00 pe Quintal (Rupees Thirty Per Quintal) in favour of Uttarakhand Cooperative Sugar Factories Federation Ltd. Payable at Dehradun. Tenders withou Earnest Money will not be accepted. The Bank details are available inside he tender document.

The details for submission of the E-Bids is available on the E-Tende Portals www.uktenders.gov.in & www.uttarakhandsugars.com from 31.01.2021 at 11:00 AM. The administrator reserves the right to cance any or all E-Bids without assigning any reason. The decision of the administrator shall be final and binding

इस निविदा के सम्बन्ध में सभी संशोधन, स्पष्टीकरण, शुद्धिपत्र, परिशिष्ट, समय वृद्धि आदि को केवल www.uktenders.gov.in & www.uttarakhandsugars.com पर ही दिया जायेगा। निविदादाता अद्यतन जानकारी के लिए नियमित रूप से इन वेबसाइटों को पडते रहें।

**Managing Director** 

### Don't use abbreviated form for exam: NTPC to Rlys

#### **ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU** NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

INDIA'S LARGEST power producer NTPC has asked the railways to not use the abbreviated form of its Railways Recruitment **Board Non-Technical Popular** Categories exam - RRB NTPC to avoid harming the reputation of the power producer during

ongoing protests. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have witnessed widespread violent

Date: 31.01.2022

IIITP/Tender/Man

power/2022/3030.

Bihar and UP have seen violent protests by aspirants over the RRB NTPC exam over alleged discrepancies

protests by job aspirants over alleged discrepancies in the railways recruitment process for Non-Technical Categories. The NTPC called on the railways to clarify that the

of the recruitment scheme in press releases, "While we are confident that railways is taking all the necessary steps to address the situation...NTPC Ltd has inadvertently been caught in the crossfire," the company said in a letter to the railways."This you would agree is also hurting our reputation," the company said while also urging the railways to rename the exams to avoid confusion in the future.

power producer was not linked

to the exam and use the full form

### **OSBI**

IT-ATM Department, State Bank of India, Global IT Centre, Sector 11, CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai - 400614 NOTICE INVITING TENDER

#### RFP NO: SBI/GITC/IT-ATM/2021/2022/824 DATED: 31.01.2022

Bids are invited by State Bank of India from the eligible bidders fo Procurement of Onsite Technical Support Services for Base24 ATM Switch Operations of State Bank of India. For details, please visit 'Procuremen News' at https://www.sbi.co.in

ncement of download of RFP: From 31.01.2022. Last date and time for submission of bids: 23.02.2022 up to 15:00 hrs. Deputy General Manager (IT-ATM)
IT - ATM Department Date: 31.01.2022

**OSBI** 

Networking & Communication Department, State Bank of India Global IT-Centre, Sec-11, CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai - 400614

for procurement of 4G LTE Connectivity for Offsite ATMs Corrigendum-3 dated 29.01.2022 can be accessed under Procurement news at Bank's website https://www.sbi.co.in or https://bank.sbi e-Procurement agency portal https://etender.sbi/SBI/ Place: Navi Mumbai Sd/- Deputy General Manager

ease refer to RFP No.SBI/GITC/NW&C/21-22/814 dated 23.12.202

(Networking & Communication Dept.) भारतीय सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, पुणे

जनशक्ति सेवा प्रदान करने के लिए बोलियों का आमंत्रण

Invitation of Bids for providing manpowe

आईआईआईटी पुणे



Date: 31/Jan/2022 service विस्तृत विज्ञापन संस्थान की वेबसाइट "www.iiitp.ac.in" पर उपलब्ध हैं। कोई भी अपडेट या संशोधन केवल संस्थान की वेबसाइट पर प्रकाशित किया जाएगा।

# **Classifieds**

#### **PERSONAL** I,Tanu Goyal W/o-Late Sh. Brii

Kishore Aggarwal R/o-C-1/25,

Model Town-3, Delhi-09 have changed my name to Tanu Aggarwal for all purposes. I,Subroto Ganguly S/o D Ganguly R/o N-171, Sector-25,

Noida, UP-201301 have changed my name to Subrato Ganguly for all purposes. 0040600807-1 I Anushka D/O, Aniruddha Abhyankar R/o 31, anandvan,

Maharashtra Co Op Group Housing Society, A/6 Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110063 have changed my name to Anushka Abhyankar for all purposes. 0040600812-1 Shoaib Akhtar S/o Iqrar Khan

R/o A-76 Gali No-2, Gokal Pur, Northeast Delhi-94. That my correct name is Shoaib Khan vide affidavit IN-DL71247778154570T sworn before notary dated 29-DEC-

I Jitender Singh S/O Joginder

Narula residing at WZ-283/297,Vishnu Garden,New Delhi - 110018, have changed my name to Jitender Narula Infuture For All Purposes vide affidavit dated 28/01/2022 at

**Deaths** 

2,34,281

Weekly

positivity

46.83%

23.33%

18.73%

19.23%

11.33%

= MUMBAI =

BENGALURU =

= CHENNAI =

72,73,90,698

**OVERALL POSITIVITY** 

165,70,60,692

**JANUARY 29: 65,73,432** 

39,22,918

13,50,509

5.65%

Ian 29

893

2,51,209

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

DASHBOARD, AS ON JAN 29

New cases **2,34,281** 

NEW CASES, DAILY

SURGE IN THE STATES

**New Cases** 

33337

27971

24418

11794

CASES IN THE CITIES, LAST 10 DAYS

3,50,000.

1,75,000

Kerala

Karnataka

Maharashtra

15,000, 12,306

20,000 7 14.424

2,500 7,759

TOTAL TESTS

INDIA TOTAL DOSES

First dose Second dose

43,71,804

18.38.449

**Ian 20** 

TESTS ON JAN 29

16,15,993

50,00,000

25,00,000

= KOLKATA ==

Tamil Nadu

Gujarat

**Active cases** 

18.84.937

Weekly CFR: 0.29% | Overall CFR: 1.33% | Total deaths: 4,94,091

**LAST 10 DAYS** 

**ON JANUARY 27** 

**Active Cases** 

3,36,920

2,52,162

2,44,344

2,08,350

98021

8,0007 5,708

35,0007 30,540

10,0007 7,520

WEEKLY POSITIVITY

15.63%

(Adults 1st dose: 89,33,70,213; adults second dose: 70,63,48,368;

15-18 age group first dose: 4,56,48,949; precautionary doses: 1,16,93,162)

LAST 10 DAYS (daily)

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#### SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# Ukraine, Russia and India

India has broken its silence on the crisis arising out of Russia's military build-up on Ukraine's border. What are Russia's intentions, why is the West concerned, and what are India's stakes in its ties with each side?

#### SHUBHAJITROY

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

INDIA THIS week gave its first official statement amid the tension between Russia and the West — led by the US — over Ukraine. It's been a tense one-and-a-half months, with the possibility of war looming large.

#### What's happening?

Ukraine has become a bone of contention in Moscow's relations with the West, with Russian troops massed near its border and NATO's forces on standby in case Russia attacks its neighbour. Ukrainian forces have been patrolling the border in the east and the north, including in Chernobyl in Ukraine, which falls on the shortest route between Russia and Kyiv, Ukraine's capital.

The crisis began in mid-December when Russia told Western powers that it had a list of demands. It wanted a guarantee from the West "in writing" to stop further eastward expansion of NATO, the removal of NATO troops from Poland and the Baltic states, and the possible withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Europe. Among the most important demands was that Ukraine should never be allowed to join NATO. The US and the West have ruled this out. The two sides are negotiating in Paris, in the presence of interlocutors from France, Germany, US and Russia. French President Emmanuel Macron and US President have separately spoken to Russian President Vladimir Putin in a bid to resolve the crisis.

#### Why is Russia doing this?

The New Yorker's editor David Remnick, the Washington Post correspondent in Russia between 1987 and 1991, has written a book, Lenin's Tomb: Last Days of the Soviet Empire, in which he quotes Vladimir Lenin as saying: "For us, to lose Ukraine would be to lose our head."

This has been the attitude of rulers in Moscow over the centuries, from the Tsar and the Bolsheviks to Putin. Throughout his 22-year rule so far, Putin has sought to restore Russia's influence in the countries that were part of erstwhile Soviet Union. Ukraine was the most crucial of the 14 then republics whose control Russia lost when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. It was the second largest economy, and second-most populous.

In an article on the Kremlin's website in July 2021, Putin wrote that Russians and Ukrainians were one people who shared a single "historic and spiritual space" and that the emergence of a "wall" between them in recent years was tragic. Ukraine disputes Putin's version of history.

#### What are the historical connections?

Historians say that Russia and Ukraine had been linked since the 9th century when Kyiv became the capital of the ancient state of Rus. From 1654, the two were united by treaty under the rule of the Russian tsar. They speak closely related languages and later formed, with Belarus, the Slav core of the Soviet Union.

When the Tsar's empire collapsed after the revolution led by Lenin, the Ukrainians created a state of their own and declared independence in January 1918. Although it turned out to be short-lived as the Bolsheviks took control over most of Russian Ukraine in 1920, that two-year period planted the seeds of independence among the Ukrainian people.

"The Bolsheviks were forced to recognise Ukraine as a separate nation and even grant a pro forma independence to the Ukrainian Soviet republic," historian Serhii Plokhy, a professor of Ukrainian history in Harvard University, wrote in *The Financial Times*.

The Ukrainian referendum of December 1 1991, in which over 90% of participants voted to leave the USSR, spelt the end of the Cold War superpower. Economics too played a role: Russia could not bear the burden of the Union

#### WAR CLOUDS OVER UKRAINE

unfold, according to the American think tank CSIS?

UKRAINE

CENTRAL ROUTE

could lead offensive

Separatists in Donbass

MILITARY SIZES IN 2020

■ Army ■ Paramilitary ■ Air force ■ Navy ■ Airborne ■ Reserve ■ Others

1 m 1.5 m 2 m 2.5 m

Chernobyl

### US President Joe Biden believes his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin could 'move in' to Ukraine. How could that scenario 2004: ORANGE REVOLUTION Allegations of widespread fraud

Controlled

by Russian-

separatists

3.5 m

Graphic: Reuters

■ SOUTHERN ROUTE

From Crimea, which

MOSCOW

Allegations of widespread fraud in presidential election led to mass protests. Top court voided election; fresh vote was held; pro-Europe Viktor Yushchenko became President.

#### 2013-14: MAIDAN PROTESTS

YEARS OF CONFLICT

President Viktor Yanukovich said he was suspending EU talks to revive Moscow ties; huge street protests broke out. Maidan Square uprising forced Yanukovich from power in Feb 2014.

#### **2014: RUSSIA INVADES**

In Feb and March 2014, Russia invaded and annexed Crimea. In April, pro-Russian separatists declared independence in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine; fighting broke out.

#### AIRLINER IS DOWNED

In July 2014, a missile brought down Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 above Donbass, killing 298 aboard. Buk surface-to-air missile was traced to Russia; Moscow rejected allegation.

#### 2018: KERCH CRISIS

In Nov 2018, Russian border guards clashed with Ukrainian ships in Kerch Strait connecting Black Sea and Sea of Azov; pro-West President Petro Poroshenko declared martial law.

#### **CONTINUING CONFLICT**

Ceasefires with Russian-backed separatists have not lasted. Violence has continued in Donbass, which has a large ethnic Russian population.

Reute

without its second-largest economy.

NORTHERN ROUTE

from Russian ally Belarus

Source: Center for Strategic and International Studies

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies

Could advance on Kyiv

RUSSIA

UKRAINE

PERMANENT UNITS

■ NEW UNITS

**POLAND** 

Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe too. It has major ports on the Black Sea and shares borders with four NATO countries. Europe depends on Russia for a third of its natural gas — providing enormous leverage to Putin in any dispute with the West — and one of the main pipelines passes through Ukraine.

#### **How did the West come into the picture?**Since the Cold War ended, NATO has ex-

panded eastward by taking in 14 new countries, including some from the former Soviet Union. Russia views this as a threat, and feels the West is not respecting the non-threatening commitments made in the early 1990s.

Ukraine is not a NATO member but has an assurance made in 2008 that it will eventually be able to join. After a pro-Russian president was removed in 2014, Ukraine has come closer politically to the West. It has done joint military exercises with NATO and been delivered weapons including US anti-tank missiles. This, according to Kyiv, has been done to boost Ukraine's defence after Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and reportedly provided support to separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Putin says NATO may use Ukraine as a launchpad for missiles targeted at Russia.

#### Where does India stand on this?

India made its first statement on the crisis on Friday. Ministry of External Affairs' official spokesperson Arindam Bagchi, responding to questions at the weekly briefing. said, "We have been closely following the developments relating to Ukraine, including the ongoing high level discussions between Russia and the US. Our Embassy in Kyiv is also monitoring local developments. We call for a peaceful resolution of the situation through sustained diplomatic efforts for long term peace and stability in the region and beyond."

#### Why now?

On January 19, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman called up Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and discussed "Russia's concerning military build-up on Ukraine's borders". New Delhi did not issue an official statement then, but has now finally broke its silence.

With key strategic partners on both sides, India can't afford any hasty moves. While there is concern about Russia's "muscle-flexing", India does not want to jeopardise its close military ties with Moscow, particularly amid the stand-off with China on the eastern border.

#### What's at stake in these ties?

The relationship with Russia goes back seven decades. While it has stagnated in some areas and atrophied in others, the strongest pillar is defence. Although New Delhi has consciously diversified its new purchases from other countries, the bulk of its defence supplies — estimates say 60%-70% is from Russia.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has held informal summits with the heads of only two countries — Putin and China's Xi Jinping. Russia has now emerged as a key diplomatic player amid the tension between India and China: Indian and Chinese foreign and defence ministers have negotiated in Russia. Russia is also key to India's engagements in Afghanistan, after Kabul fell to the Taliban.

#### And, what about ties with the West?

The US and Europe are both important partners from India's strategic calculus. Many American platforms have been used for reconnaissance along the India-China border. Winter clothing for 50,000 troops has been sourced from Western partners.

**Isn't the Russia-China axis a concern?**India is indeed conscious that the hostil-

ity between the West and Russia may push Moscow in the direction of Beijing. The West's approach towards Russia after

the West's approach towards Russia after the annexation of Crimea brought Moscow closer to China. India has always felt that it was the West that enabled this with Washington's anti-Chinese rhetoric and the collapse of oil prices, making Russia increasingly dependent on Chinese consumption. Western analysts see this as a "friendship of convenience" between two countries led by strongmen.

#### **Are there other concerns for India?**There is an Indian community in Ukraine,

mostly medical students. The Indian Embassy in capital Kyiv has started collating information on them, as part of preparations for possible hostilities. As per government estimates, 18,000 Indian students were in Ukraine in 2020, but the numbers may have dipped due to lockdowns and classes moving online.

### So, where does India stand now, after the statement?

When Russia had annexed Crimea, India had expressed "concern" but also qualified it by talking of "legitimate Russian interests". Putin had thanked India for taking a "restrained and objective" stand, and called up then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to express his gratitude.

Keeping in mind its ties with Russia, sources said, India hasn't issued any condemnatory statements as the Western powers are doing. For now, New Delhi is hoping that the situation will be resolved by skilled negotiators on both sides. CIA chief William Burns has handled several such tough talks in his previous diplomatic roles, while on the other side is Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

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# In India visit by Oman's Al Zaabi, old friendship and strategic ties

#### SHUBHAJITROY

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

INDIA IS laying out the red carpet for Mohammed Nasser Al Zaabi, the top defence official of Oman, who is in the country on an official visit.

#### Why is the visit important?

Al Zaabi, Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence of the Sultanate of Oman, is the executive head of the Omani defence establishment. The charge of Minister is held by Deputy Prime Minister Sayyid Shihab. Zaabi will co-chair the Joint Military Cooperation Committee (JMMC), the highest forum of defence engagement between the two countries, with Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar. This will be the first meeting of the JMMC since 2018, and it is expected to make a comprehensive evaluation of ongoing defence exchanges, and provide a roadmap of ties for the future.

Oman is India's closest defence partner in the Gulf region and an important anchor

for India's defence and strategic interests. Defence cooperation has emerged as a key pillar for the robust India-Oman strategic partnership. Defence exchanges are guided by a Framework MoU, renewed last year.

Oman is the only Gulf country with which all three services of the Indian armed forces carry out regular bilateral exercises and staff talks, enabling close professional cooperation and trust. Oman also provides operational support to the Indian Navy's antipiracy missions in the Arabian Sea.

#### What has been the trajectory of India-Oman ties over the years?

For almost 50 years until January 2020, Oman was ruled by Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said, who was a friend of India. The Sultan's father was an alumnus of Mayo College, Ajmer, and the Sultan himself studied in Pune, where his teacher was Shankar Dayal Sharma, the future President of India.

Sultan Qaboos died at age 79. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had met him in February 2018 when the two countries signed an agreement for the use of Oman's



strategically-located Duqm port, described the late leader as a beacon of peace for the region. The Government of India announced a day of national mourning on January 13, 2020 in the Sultan's honour, and in March 2021, conferred on him the Gandhi Peace Prize for 2019.

Sultan Qaboos had played a vital role in the release of Father Tom Uzhunnalil, the Catholic priest who was abducted in Yemen in March 2016 and held captive for a year and a half. The Sultan had also intervened to ensure the release of three Americans and a Canadian held by Iran, and of German and Australian hostages in Yemen.

His successor, his cousin Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, has been a generous benefactor of the Indian community in Oman. About 6.2 lakh people of Indian origin live in the country, of whom about 4.8 lakh are workers and professionals such as doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, teachers, managers, and nurses. Some Indian families have been living in Oman for 150-200 years.

#### What is the strategic imperative in India's relationship with Oman?

Access to the Duqm port is important for India to counter Chinese influence and activities in the Gulf region. This was a key takeaway from Modi's visit to Oman in February 2018, Duqm overlooks the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, and close is to Chabahar port in Iran. Along with Assumption Island that is being developed in the Seychelles and

Agalega in Mauritius, Duqm fits into India's proactive maritime security roadmap.

Following the signing of the military cooperation agreement, Duqm port and dry dock are available for the maintenance of Indian military vessels. In recent years, India has deployed an attack submarine, a warship and two P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft to the port.

Following Modi's visit to Oman, the joint statement said the two sides noted that the MoU on Military Cooperation, signed in 2005 and renewed in 2016, provided the general framework to strengthen bilateral defence ties. "Recognising their common responsibility towards promoting regional peace and security, the two sides underlined the importance of further cementing bilateral strategic engagement, especially in the areas of security and defence," it said.

#### Is there scope for cooperation beyond the military partnership as well?

the military partnership as well?

Duqm port also has a special economic zone, where Indian companies have made investments of about \$1.8 billion. The Adani

New Delhi

group has signed an MoU with the Duqm port authorities.

In the context of strategic oil reserves near Duqm, India had invited Oman to participate in building strategic oil reserves in India.

#### What else is on Zaabi's agenda in India? On the sidelines of the JMCC, Zaabi is ex-

pected to call on Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and receive exposure to the Indian defence production industry to explore possibilities of procurement and joint production.

A series of high-profile defence engagements is lined up in February, including visits to India by the Chiefs of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force of Oman, staff talks between the two navies, and a bilateral Air Force exercise in Jodhpur, which will see the participation of over 150 Omani personnel.

Force Chiefs will take place after a gap of five years, and will enable high-level re-engagement between the forces of the two sides.

The visits of the Omani Naval and Air

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# 12 IDEA EXCHANGE NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL, PRESIDENT, SHIROMANI AKALI DAL

# 6 The Centre has taken away all our powers. States are like municipalities... beggars... ED, NIA can walk in anywhere

Sukhbir Singh Badal on the Akali Dal's chances in the polls, the newly-minted farmers' party, the challenge from AAP and the Centre's stranglehold over states. The session was moderated by MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA, Resident Editor, The Indian Express, Punjab

Manraj Grewal Sharma: Most pollsters are making it out to be a contest only between the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) with Akali Dal in the background. What do you have to say about that?

I think this election will mark the end of pollsters because earlier there used to be 'paid news', now it is 'paid polls'. Arvind Kejriwal has misused Delhi's publicity funds of over Rs 800 crore to get this service. These channels approached me too for a poll, I said no, I don't have Rs 20 crore to give you.

Last time, the same pollster said AAP will get 100 seats, but they got 20. That too when there was an AAP wave and everyone was against the Akali Dal. We still got 31 per cent vote share, Congress got 36 per cent and AAP 21 per cent. Two years later in Parliament elections, AAP (seat share) went from 21 per cent to six per cent while the Akali seat share went up, and the difference between the Congress and Akali Dal was reduced to half a per cent. Six to eight months back, there were 13 corporation committee elections in Punjab. Out of 1,300 committees, AAP only got 25, we got 400.

You mark my words. We are going to form the government. Congress will not cross more than 15 seats. There is a complete rebellion in Congress. AAP is limited to pockets. There is no AAP in Majha and Doaba areas. And this time there's no AAP wave. Secondly, Kejriwal has indirectly started projecting himself as the main face, which the Punjabis do not want

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: But AAP has projected Bhagwant Mann as the

No, have you seen the new slogan, 'Kejriwal aur Bhagwant Mann ko mauka do. Why Kejriwal? Has the Congress ever said, Rahul Gandhi aur Navjot Singh Sidhu ko do? Has the BIP said. "So and so aur Modi ko do"? Puniab CM is a constitutional post. How can people say Kejriwal ko mauka do? Are we voting for Kejriwal or Bhagwant Mann? AAP is controlled entirely by Kejriwal. None of the AAP leaders in Punjab are allowed to hold a press conference; they are held by their spokesman Raghav Chadha. What was the philosophy of AAP? That an aam aadmi will be their candidate, like a milkman, or a workshop man, or a doctor. Where are those candidates now? Sixty per cent of the candidates fielded by AAP are defectors from Akali Dal and Congress. Their basic philosophy has completely vanished, that's why people have started moving

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: What makes you so confident? Because even now, the sacrilege issue is alive and more recently, there is a drugs case against Bikram Majithia (president, Akali Dal youth wing).

These are all false cases and everyone knows it. For five years, they tried their best to blame us, but they could not get a single proof. I'm confident because of the strength of our cadre. We have a strong cadre base: we are a 100-year-old traditional party, and

town, we have a base. And even with a storm like in the last polls, we got 30 per cent.

in every village, every

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: What about Akali leaders like Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa who say Akali Dal has become a family party?

And what has Dhindsa done? Fielded his son, his son-in-law. Today I am the president of Akali Dal. next it can be somebody else. It's a 100 year old traditional party.

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: Do you think you should have come out more strongly against the farm laws when they were tabled?

We told the BJP that if you implement the laws without approval of the farmers, we will not be part of you. So the day they forced the Bill in Parliament, we left them. Ninety per cent of the farmers' base is with the Akali Dal. Most of the unions are one of the subunits of the Communist Party. The ones who are fighting the elections here are mostly from the Communist Party.

Sunny Verma: You withdrew support from the NDA primarily due to the farm laws. Now that the government has repealed those laws, will you be open to aligning again with the NDA or the BJP?



**BADAL** Sukhbir Singh Badal is president of Shiromani Akali Dal, the oldest regional party of the country, which has formed government in the state seven times. The party, which broke away from long-term ally BJP over the farm laws in 2020, is now fighting hard to stage a comeback in a contentious five-cornered poll contest this February



Illustration: Suvajit Dev

I said this agitation was

led by farm unions, but

the movement was of the

people of Punjab. Now the

unions have come back to

fight elections... During

the agitation, maybe the

farm unions were the

frontmen. Now our cadre

has come back to us, the

Congress cadre has gone

back to them

We, at the moment, have now aligned with the BSP. We are not the types to switch sides. Now we are with the BSP there's no question of going with the BIP.

Vandita Mishra: You sort of tried to say that the farmers' agitation was basically a Left union-led movement. But all of us who went to the ground could see how deeply it had

The cordial relationships

which used to be

commonplace during

my father's time have

vanished. It's become

more personal, vindictive,

abusive. (Earlier) the

leader, the statesman,

never went beyond

a limit. Now, everyone

has become a

street fighter

percolated and that there was popular cynicism towards established parties

like yours. I think you did not take my answer in the right spirit. I said this agitation was led by farm unions, but the movement was of the people of Punjab. Now the unions have come back to fight elections, they will lose security deposit in at least 90 per cent of the seats they fight. During the agitation, maybe the farm unions were the frontmen. Now our cadre has come back

to us, the Congress cadre has gone back to them. Even Balbir Singh Rajewal, who's supposed to be their CM face, will not even be the second runners-up

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: What about the charge that Captain Amarinder was in cahoots with the Badals and their work did not stop despite the change of the government?

After Charaniit Singh Channi came. Navjot Singh Sidhu said Channi is in cahoots with us. Earlier, he was accusing Amarinder of being involved with us. Why are they so scared of us? As you said, we are written off. They have been trying their best to find something on us, but they failed. Amarinder registered a case against my family. We were acquitted by the courts. So these are political statements to cover up

Manraj Grewal Sharma: What about the charge that Jat Sikhs have had a hegemony over the CMship despite being only 25 per cent of the population and that Akali Dal is a Jat Sikh party?

Akali Dal is an all-inclusive party. Akali Dal has the maximum Hindu candidates. Most of the time, Akalis win all the Dalit

Vandita Mishra: In 2010, you had gone very strong on development issues like the Saanjh Kendra, the selfcertification push, in your campaign. Today what we are hearing is the Majithia case, the Bargari issue. Do you think this election campaign is now not leaving you space for those

kinds of issues anymore? Travel anywhere in Punjab and you'll see the road network created by the Akali Dal. We made Punjab power-surplus, we've created an airport network. In the last five years, you cannot find even one example of such development. The reason they are sticking to Bargari and Majithia case is because they want to cover up the incompetent five years. Congress shut down the Seva Kendras.

#### Vandita Mishra: What about the issue of whether a Hindu can be chief minister of Punjab?

I think anybody can be chief minister, he has to be competent. He has to have leadership qualities. Why should there be a difference between Hindus, Sikhs

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: Have you met the Prime Minister after the farm laws, after this break? He has been calling up your father.

No, I have not met the Prime Minister. There are certain courtesies that are extended at that level of leadership, so you cannot read too much into it. We left them because they stabbed us in the back. It is not that we wanted to leave.

Manraj Grewal Sharma: So there is no

going back to the BJP? Never? Never, I can't say. But at the

moment, no. Sukhbir Siwach: Are the issues of

farmers and the three farm laws still central in the upcoming election? Agriculture as a whole is a Central issue, farm laws not anymore because they

have been withdrawn. Now other issues have come up. Manraj Grewal Sharma: Sidhu has

been saying the state government should encourage diversification by giving MSP for vegetables etc.

Why didn't they give it in the last five years? I challenge Congress to name one new school they built, one new road, one new bridge, one new sewage treatment plant. They cannot even name one. This is the worst government Punjab has ever had. They have just ruined the state, fighting with each other.

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: The last time, sacrilege and drugs were the two issues that led to Akali Dal's defeat.

No, sacrilege was one small part. At that time Capt Amarinder Singh swore on Gutka Sahib that he would waive off all the loans, be it from banks, arhtiyas or any moneylenders, and people believed him. But they were defrauded. If sacrilege was a major issue, the Akali Dal wouldn't have got 31 per cent. There were at least 30 seats on which we lost by less than

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: It's alleged that Akali Dal did not collect revenue for the government but for its own leaders.

Please look at the revenue generation during the time of Congress and Akali Dal. Liquor revenue in 2002 was Rs 2,000 crore a year. In 2007, when Captain Amarinder left, it was Rs 2.000 crore a year; no increase in five years. We took it from Rs 2,000 crore to Rs 5,500 crore a year. Even in this tenure, the Congress government has failed to increase its liquor revenue. When we took over, VAT was Rs 5,000 crore, we took it up to Rs 70,000 crore a year.

Navjeevan Gopal: Coming to this

outside. Now, isn't that precisely its USP? Because there is a cynicism in the people for the parties that have ruled Punjab. Also, what is it that the regional party can do in Punjab which

drugs case against Majithia, the

step towards justice.

Congress is claiming that it is the first

the national party can't? If we want an outsider, why don't we get some party from Germany or the US? Why AAP? Second, Keiriwal calls for shutting down the Punjab thermal plant. He

goes to the Supreme Court and files an affidavit that the SYL canal should take water from Punjab to Delhi. So, where is the loyalty? National parties have other interests, they compromise the state's interest. That is the difference. For us, this is our life.

**P Vaidyanathan** Iver: In the backdrop of the farm laws protests, **Capt Amarinder** had raised issues of national security with the Prime Minister and the Home Minister. What are these

national security issues?

Punjab is a border state with Pakistan. Every day you see arms being thrown here, drugs being pushed through. We had 15 black years because of Pakistan. Once the farmers' agitation started and the whole state got involved, it was giving an opportunity to people across the border to fuel it, make it violent, and give it a different direction. So, for the safety, security of the country, please don't mess around with a border state, because neighbouring Pakistan is always waiting for an opportunity to get in.

#### P Vaidyanathan Iyer: How are you looking at Centre-State relations with a dominant party at the Centre?

The Centre has taken away all the powers. States have become like municipalities. Today, when we pay the salary bill

depends on when we get the funds from the Centre. Earlier, every day, money used to come into our accounts. So we could play with our own finances. Now dues are not cleared for months. So we have become beggars. Today, wherever the Centre

wants, it sends the ED there. NIA walks in from anywhere. Look at the new rule for IAS officers. They can transfer them, so all instructions will come from them. You're creating a dictatorship in stead of a democracy.

#### P Vaidyanathan Iyer: What about politics itself? Do you see politics itself becoming very vitriolic, very bitter?

my father's time have vanished. It's become more personal, vindictive, abusive. P Vaidyanathan Iyer: What would you

I think it is. The cordial relationships

which used to be commonplace during

#### attribute that to?

I think the new generation. In my father's time, the leader, the statesman, never went beyond a limit. Now, everyone has become a street fighter. Media also loves interviewing these kind

#### P Vaidyanathan Iyer: What is your vision for taking forward Punjab's industrial growth and economy?

First of all, Punjab needs to elect a strong CM who is decisive, who has a vision and who has performed. Everything depends on a CM. The CM is the engine, the rest are all coaches. In the last five years, the engine was stuck in a farmhouse. You don't need money, you need ideas, money follows.

#### Manraj Grewal Sharma: If you come to power in Punjab, what are the three challenges that you face? And how do you plan to resolve them?

Last time, my priorities were the road network and power. I challenge any state to have the infrastructure we have. This time, my priority is education and health care. Education means government education. I want to change from quantity education to quality education. I'm going to have a 500-bed medical college in every district. It solves two purposes. One, you're going to educate your children to become doctors. Second, a 500-bed hospital facility is created in the district.

#### Rahul Sabharwal: AAP pitches the success of its healthcare and education in Delhi as two of its main planks.

How many mohalla clinics are working? Is anybody saying that 250 mohalla clinics are doing well? How many New Delhi schools have been upgraded out of the 2,000? You do one, two or 10 schools

> and show that you've done everything there. Majority of the mohalla clinics are shut.

Anant Goenka: Punjab is an agrarian economy, but why is climate change not an election issue despite the falling water table? And when do you think climate change will become an election issue in

your state? It is a very important issue, but everyone is brushing it under the carpet. In fact,

it is the most important issue. The way the water level is dipping, in another 20 years, Punjab will be a desert. I have a plan for it. We are going to do groundwater recharging in our rivers -Sutlej, Beas. Second, my whole thrust now is going to be on solar power. I'm going to allow industries to set up their own solar power plants. As for power subsidies, instead of giving cash to the electricity department, we will set up a parallel solar plant and we will transfer that much power to the power company. And this will be a self-

Kanchan Vasdev: If the Akali Dal is voted to power, what would be the fate of the Majithia case?

financing model.

What happens in false cases? What do you do? Same thing will happen.



**MEANWHILE** 

### TRUMP DANGLES HOPE FOR JAN. 6 RIOTERS

Former President Donald Trump is dangling the prospect of pardons for supporters who participated in the deadly Jan. 6 storming of the US Capitol if he returns to the White House. "If I run and if I win, we will treat those people from January 6th fairly," Trump said on Saturday night during a rally in Conroe, Texas. "And if it requires pardons, we will give them pardons because they are being treated so unfairly.

# TOPOFTHE



Israeli President Isaac Herzog and UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah. Reuters

#### UAE Israeli President makes first **UAE** visit

Dubai: Israel's president, making his first visit on Sunday to the United Arab Emirates, said his country supports the Gulf state's security needs and wants more countries in the region to join its new detente with the Arab world. Isaac Herzog discussed security and bilateral relations with the UAE's de facto ruler Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. "We completely support your security requirements ... We are here together to find ways and means to bring full security to people who seek peace in our region," Herzog said during the meeting, in comments released by his of-**REUTERS** 

#### **SRI LANKA**

#### Hardline Tamil minority holds protest

Colombo: Sri Lanka's hardline Tamil minority party Tamil National People's Front (TNPF) on Sunday organised a protest march in Jaffna to protest against the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. "Tamils reject 13th amendment" rally was held near Nallur Kovil, organisers said. The amendment is aimed at creating provincial councils in Sri Lanka and enable Sinhalese and Tamil as national languages while preserving English as the link language. PTI

#### **PAKISTAN** Christian priest shot by gunmen

Peshawar: A Christian priest was shot dead and another wounded by unidentified gunmen who opened fire on them as they were returning home from Sunday mass in Pakistan's northwestern Peshawar city, police said. Bishop William Siraj was shot multiple times and died on the spot, while Father Naeem Patrick was wounded in the attack in the Gulbahar neighbourhood Peshawar, police said. The police rushed to the spot and started the search operation. A strict security has been made at the entry and exit points to nab the culprits. No group has immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. PTI

# NSO says criticisms 'hypocritical, denies violation charges

HARINDER MISHRA

JERUSALEM, JANUARY 30

ISRAEL'S EMBATTLED cyber tech company NSO Group has denied wrongdoing as it called criticism of its sale of Pegasus spyware programme to non-democratic countries "hypocritical," comparing the surveillance technology to military weapons systems being sold by others, amid mounting allegations that software was misused globally, including in Israel.

undeterred Chief Executive Officer of NSO Group, Shalev Hulio, in an interview to Israeli Channel 12 on Saturday, strongly defended the company's operations, though he also conceded that some "mistakes" may have happened over the years.

'I sleep soundly at night," Hulio told the Channel's interviewer when asked if he can do so amid so much worldwide criticism

Hulio's interview came a day after a New York Times report on Friday claimed that India bought Pegasus spyware as part of a \$2 billion defence deal with Israel in 2017, triggering a major controversy with the Opposition alleging that the government indulged in illegal snooping that amounted to "treason".

"There is not one country we've sold to, not one"that the US does not sell to, or that Israel

**What is** 

position?

ISRAEL DISTANCED itself from the controversy triggered by the blacklisting of the NSO Group after allegations of illegal use of its Pegasus spyware to target government officials, activists and journalists globally, saying it is a private company and it has nothing to do with the policies of the Israeli government

doesn't sell to. So it's a bit hypocritical to say it's okay to sell F-35s and tanks and drones, but it's not okay to sell a tool that collects intelligence," Hulio said.

He also pointed out that out of almost 90 clients that turned to them for the technology, they sold only to around 40 as per laid

In reaction to the blacklisting of the company by the US Department of Commerce in November, the company's senior most executive called it an "outrage" that he hopes will be lifted soon. "Our technology has over the years helped the interests and national security of the US quite a bit," he claimed. PTI **UKRAINE CRISIS** 

# NATO concerned over Europe's energy security amid tension

Russia's Lavrov: NATO wants to 'drag' Ukraine into alliances Deal on Russia

**REUTERS&AP** 

LONDON/MOSCOW, JANUARY 30

EUROPE NEEDS to diversify its energy supplies, the head of NATO said on Sunday, as Britain warned it was "highly likely" that Russia, the continent's biggest natural gas supplier, was looking to invade Ukraine.

Moscow denies any plan to invade but said on Sunday it would ask NATO to clarify whether it intends to implement key security commitments, after earlier saying the alliance's response to its demands did not go far enough. "If they do not intend to do so, then they should explain why," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on state television. "This will be a key question in determining our future proposals.

The foreign minister also claimed that NATO wants to pull Ukraine into the alliance.

NATO "has already come close to Ukraine. They also want to drag this country there," Lavrov said. "Although everyone understands that Ukraine is not ready and could make no contribution to strengthening NATO security."

In a sign of the tensions. Canada said on Sunday it was temporarily withdrawing non-



A Ukrainian soldier at a frontline near Myronivsky on Saturday. NYT

essential personnel from its embassy in Ukraine but added that the embassy would remain open. The European Union depends on Russia for around a third of its gas supplies and any interruption would exacerbate an existing energy crisis caused by a shortage. read more

"We are concerned about the energy situation in Europe because it demonstrates the vulnerability of being too dependent on one supplier of natural gas and that's the reason why NATO allies agree that we need to work and focus on diversification of supplies," NATO SecretaryGeneral Jens Stoltenberg said. Britain, meanwhile, is consid-

ering making a major NATO deployment as part of a plan to strengthen Europe's borders in response to Russia massing troops on the border with Ukraine, the government said on Saturday. Britain has said that any Russian incursion into Ukraine would be met with swift sanctions and would be devastating for both sides. NATO, meanwhile, has no plans to deploy combat troops to non-NATO member Ukraine in the event of a Russian invasion, NATO Secretary-General Jens

## sanctions bill likely this week, say senators

Washington: US senators are very close to reaching a deal on legislation to sanction Russia over its actions on Ukraine, including some measures that may take effect before any invasion, two leading senators said on Sunday.

Senators Bob Menendez, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and James Risch, its top Republican, hoped to move forward on the bill this week.

"I would describe it as that we are on the one-yard line," Menendez said on CNN's "State of the Union," using an American football reference meaning very close to the goal.

There is strong bipartisan resolve to support Ukraine and to punish Russia if it invades, Menendez said. Asked if an agreement will be reached this week, he said, "I believe that we will get there." The Senate bill would target the most significant Russian banks and Russian sovereign debt, as well as provide more US military assistance to

Nepal PM unhappy with

North Korea tests longest-range missile since 2017

ASSOCIATED PRESS SEOUL, JANUARY 30



Kim Jong Un

most tested since Biden took office. The Japanese and South Korean militaries said the missile was launched on a lofted tra-

KOREA Sunday fired

what

peared to be

jectory, apparently to avoid the territorial spaces of neighbours, and reached a maximum altitude of 2,000 km and traveled 800 km before landing in the sea. The flight details suggest the North tested its longestrange ballistic missile since

2017, when it twice flew intermediate-range ballistic missiles over Japan and, separately, three intercontinental ballistic missiles that demonstrated the potential to reach deep into the American homeland.

Sunday's test was North Korea's seventh round of launches this month. The unusually fast pace of tests indicates its intent to pressure the Biden administration over long-stalled nuclear negotiations as pandemic-related difficulties put further stress on an economy broken by decades of mismanagement and crippling U.S.-led sanctions over its nuclear

#### H1-B registration for 2023 starts on Mar 1: USCIS

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA** WASHINGTON, JANUARY 30

THE REGISTRATION for the much sought-after H-1B visa for the fiscal year 2023 will begin from March 1 and the successful applicants will be randomly selected and notified online by March 31, according to the US federal immigration agency.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require heoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in a statement said the initial registration period for the fiscal year 2023 H-1Bcap will open at noon Eastern on March 1 and run through noon Eastern on March 18, 2022.

During the period, prospective petitioners and representatives will be able to complete and submit their registrations using the online H-1B registration system, the agency said in a statement on Friday.

'If we receive enough registrations by March 18, we will randomly select registrations and send selection notifications via users' myUSCIS online accounts. We intend to notify account holders by March 31," the USCIS said in the statement.

As mandated by the Congress, USCIS can issue a maximum of 65,000 H-1B visas in a year. It can also issue another 20,000 H-1B visas to foreign students who have completed higher studies from a US university in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. PTI



Trucks sit parked on Wellington Street near the Parliament Buildings as truckers and their supporters take part in a convoy to protest Covid vaccine mandates for cross-border truck drivers in Ottawa on Saturday. Reuters

### Canada protest against vaccine mandates blocks Ottawa for second day

STEVE SCHERER OTTAWA, JANUARY 30

DOZENS OF trucks and other vehicles blocked the downtown area of Ottawa for a second day after thousands descended on Canada's capital city on Saturday to protest against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Covid vaccine mandates.

Trucks remained parked on the streets near parliament on Sunday morning, a day before lawmakers are due to resume work after the holiday break. Some truckers said they will not leave until the mandate is overturned.

Thousands gathered peacefully on Saturday, though some inci-

dents caused anger. One protester filmed dancing on the tomb of the unknown soldier and the appearance of flags bearing swastikas sparked anger on social media. The rally started out as a protest against a vaccine requirement for crossborder drivers, but turned into a demonstration against the Trudeau government with a strong anti-vaccination streak.

"Large crowds remained in the downtown core throughout the night." Ottawa police said in a statement. "Officers encountered several challenges with demonstrators, including sporadic road blockages by trucks... These high-risk situations were de-escalated and resolved with no arrests.' REUTERS

#### Britain to offer vaccinations to kids aged 5-11

London: Britain will this week begin offering vaccinations to children aged between five and 11 who are most at risk from coronavirus, the state-run National Health Service said on Sunday. Britain has been slower than some other countries in offering the shots to 5-11 year olds, and is not planning to vaccinate the age group more broadly.

NHS England said children in the cohort who were in a clinical risk group or who live with someone who is immunosuppressed would be able to get a first Covidshot, in line with advice issued last month by the Joint Committee on Vaccine and Immunisation. Children will be offered two 10 microgram doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech shot, which is a third of an adult dose. **REUTERS** 

#### coalition on key issues could not go against the official **YUBARAJ GHIMIRE** Bahadur

KATHMANDU, JANUARY 30

IN A conflict with two major

coalition partners on crucial issues, Prime Minister and Chief of Nepali Congress Sher Bahadur Deuba warned that he was ready to end the current coalition instead of "no-cooperation".

Deuba's warning came on Saturday as he failed to persuade two key coalitionpartners – Communist Party of Nepal ( Maoist centre) and the Unified Socialists — that refused to sup-Millennium Corporation (MCC) Nepal compact deal for ratification in Parliament

Deuba's reaction came after the leaders of the two parties said they would oppose the offi-



Deuba

cial resolution on MCC deal, although in the form of a grant, saying that, in the current form, the deal will have larger implications, including on the sovereignty of the country.

A leader, who was part of the meeting, said Deuba was initially firm on tabling the resolution on Sunday and have it endorsed on port the 500 million dollars February 1. "I am under pressure Challenge to have it endorsed by February 1 for which I need your support," the leader quoted Deuba. But, Narayan Kaji Shrestha

and Jhalanath Khanal from the Maoist centre and Unified Socialists, respectively, said they

position of their parties, which states that MCC deal is against Nepal's sovereignty and the policy of non-alignment it has followed for vears When Deuba dared them to

vote against it, the two leaders said it would be unethical on their part to be part of the ruling coalition and vote against the official resolution. "In fact, Deuba was hinting that he would prefer collapse of the coalition instead ofhaving to retreat from the commitment he has made before MCC." a former Prime Minister belonging to the ruling coalition told the Indian Express.

However, Deuba exhibited some flexibility and decided to have parliament session "adjourned" for 10 days to continue with the effort to bring coalition parties on board.

### Pak looks to secure \$3-bn loan from China

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN** 

ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 30 CASH-STRAPPED PAKISTAN is

looking to secure a \$3-billion (PKR 529 billion) loan from China and investments in half a dozen sectors during Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Beijing next week, according to a media report on Sunday.

Khan will visit the Chinese capital on February 3 to attend the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics and to also meet the top Chinese leadership on the sidelines for bilateral talks. The Express Tribune re-

ported quoting government sources that a final meeting to



Prime Minister Imran Khan

shape the agenda of the visit would take place on Tuesday.

A senior finance ministry official said the government was considering requesting China to approveanother loan to the tune of \$3 billion in China's State Administration of Foreign Exchange, known as SAFE deposits, so as to boost its foreign exchange reserves.

China has already placed around \$11 billion (PKR 1,940 trillion) with Pakistan in the shape of commercial loans and foreign exchange reserves support initiatives, including\$4billion in SAFE deposits.

The Chinese money is part of the country's current official foreign exchange reserves recorded at \$16.1 billion. In the last fiscal year, the country had paid over PKR 26 billion in interest charges to China only for using a \$4.5 billion Chinese trade finance facility to repay the maturing debt.

Last month, Pakistan also received a loan from Saudi Arabia of \$3 billion, which the country has used. The Pakistan government aims to secure Chinese investment in six priority sectors by highlighting the competitive advantages that the country - cheap but skilled labour, geographic access to Europe and Asia and tax exemptions. PTI

## Afghan soil would not be used against neighbours, Taliban assures Pak NSA

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN** ISLAMABAD, JAN 30 (PTI)

NATIONAL SECURITY Advisor Moeed Yusuf travelled to Afghanistan where he discussed trade ties and other issues with the top Afghan Taliban leaders who assured him that the Afghan soil would not be used against its neighbours, including Pakistan.

Yusuf, who led a high-level inter-ministerial delegation to Kabul on January 29-30, held talks with Afghanistan's acting Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi and Acting Foreign Minister Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi.

"The policy of the Islamic Emirate (of Afghanistan) is clear that we will not allow anyone to use Afghan soil against [our] neighbours and other countries," a statement issued by the presidential palace in Kabul quoted Hanafi as saying.

"We also want similar action from others," Hanafi said, while hosting the inter-ministerial delegation in the Afghan capital.

Yusuf just before his visit said that Pakistan was "not completely optimistic" of the Taliban government as organised terrorist networks are still operating in the war-torn nation and the Afghan soil is still being used against his country.

JILL LAWLESS AND JO **KEARNEY** LONDON, JANUARY 30 A POLITICIAN'S troubles are a

humorist's treasures. The scandal-prone British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has given cartoonists and meme-makers unimaginable riches for years, and with his hold on power now in jeopardy,

their fortunes are only growing.

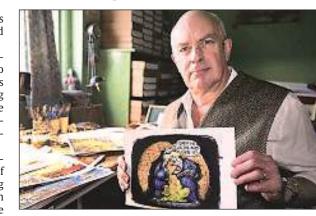
Johnson and his staff are facing civil and criminal investigations into social gatherings they hosted last year while the rest of the UK was hunkering down under Covid restrictions. The

episode raises serious questions about Johnson's leadership and political accountability.

But what gives it extra bite and gives humourists much to  $chew \, on \, - \, are \, the \, often \, ludicrous$ details: political aides hauling suitcases of wine into the Prime Minister's residence, or drunkenly breaking a swing set belonging to Johnson's toddler son.

One recent newspaper cartoon captured the collision of tragedy and farce by depicting Johnson as the betrayed Roman ruler Julius Caesar, stabbed in the back with corkscrews.

Martin Rowson, a political cartoonist for The Guardian says in democratic societies between mockery is one of the trade-offs



Boris Johnson's mounting trouble is treasure for satirists

'MOCKERY IS ONE OF THE TRADE-OFFS IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES BETWEEN GOVT AND GOVERNED'

Political cartoonist Martin Rowson in London. AP

"They have power and we have government and governed: the right to laugh at them."

Britain has a long and proud tradition of political satire. In the 18th century, cartoonists such as James Gillray lampooned British politicians and royalty with an irreverence - even viciousness that shocked European visitors. When Johnson became Prime Minister in 2019, some feared he would be hard to satirise because

he was already a cartoonish figure, with his thatch of blonde hair, rumpled clothes and blustering manner. Steve Marchant, learning coordinator at the Cartoon Museum in London, says they needn't have worried: Johnson is a gift for humourists.

"All you need to draw is an egg with some straw on top and you've

New Delhi

got Boris before you even attempt to draw the face," Marchant said. "And heisso-gaffe-proneis probably the politetermIshoulduse.Everyweek something happens with Boris, No cartoon is tisgoing to die poor thanksto the antics of Boris Johnson."

Rowson says Johnson's cartoonish persona is deliberately crafted. He's the latest in a long line of politicians who have "played to being caricatures" to keep themselves in the public eye. Even though we ridicule

them at the same time, it's a price worth paying for them," Rowson said. Even so, not all publicity is good news for politicians. Much of the humour around "partygate" has an undercurrent of anger. AP

#### FPIs withdraw ₹28,243 cr in Jan

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pulled out Rs 28,243 crore from Indian equities in January as the US Fed signalled interest rate hike. As per the depositories data, FPIs took out Rs 28,243 crore from equities between January 3-28. PTI

#### MANUFACTURING CAPABILITIES NEEDED TO SUPPORT MODEL: EXPERTS

# Eyeing non-metros, first-time buyers, e-tailers foray into social commerce

**PRANAV MUKUL** 

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

THE SOCIAL commerce model pioneered by Facebook-backed unicorn Meesho and which essentially connects buyers and resellers — is seeing a surge in the number of non-traditional ecommerce companies mushrooming across the country. These include Dealshare, Mall91, SimSim (which was acquired by Google's video streaming platform YouTube), among others. The biggest conventional name to enter the space happened in July last year when Flipkart launched its Shopsy app, with a catalogue of 15 crore products across categories such as fashion, beauty, mobiles, electronics and home.

Products listed on these platforms typically include unbranded or lesser-known brands that are bought by resellers from these marketplaces to get sold on their social channels to individual customers. The fundamental differentiator of purchasing power between the urban online buyer stationed in metro and tier-I cities, and the lower ticket size generating buyer in the rural and tier-II+ towns is what is

tle in the social commerce jungle to deepen penetration in nonmetro segments. However, retail sector experts believe that a replication of the Chinese success in the social commerce space may depend on India's ability to support this business with manufacturing capabilities.

Among the global names to enter the space, Singapore-based consumer internet company Sea Group's e-commerce platform Shopee has stormed into the segment. Having launched only in November 2021, the app has become the second most downloaded free app on Android platforms in December and January, according to SensorTower data.

The small-town placement of these social commerce apps, through which they are essentially looking to target first-time online buyers, has been witnessed in the numbers recorded. Meesho, for example, in 2021 saw that 71% of all new users came from Tier 3+ regions like Malkangiri in Odisha, Baikunthpur in Chhattisgarh, Munnar in Kerala, Mankachar in Assam, Khalari in Jharkhand, Lalgani in Uttar Pradesh and

"There have been some mod-



PRODUCTS LISTED on these platforms typically include unbranded or lesserknown brands that are bought by resellers from these marketplaces to get sold on their social channels to individual customers.

els in China relying on social commerce that have been very successful. People use social media channels to aggregate demand. Theoretically, in this model, you only manufacture or source after you have aggregated a minimum quantum of demand. Pinduoduo has been very successful in China in this model. Within India, what we've seen is the model being copied with a distinction from China that the purchasing power there is significantly higher than India, and secondly the supply chain and penetration of e-commerce in China is much better," Arvind Singhal, chairman and MD of retail advisory firm Technopak

told The Indian Express.

the middle-income group the purchasing power significantly falls. The discretionary spending power even more so. Many of these startups have the wrong idea about the addressable demand in India and the challenges in aggregating demand and delivering the products.

fit that a company like Pinduoduo derives," he added. While the market split of online buying is still heavily in favour of traditional e-commerce companies, compared to social commerce platforms, majority of the growth, even globally, is being tapped by the social commerce companies. According to

a RedSeer report, during the

Black Friday sale of 2020 in the

US, leading social commerce

company Shopify clocked \$5.1

Furthermore, Chinese supply

chains are very efficient - a bene-

billion in gross merchandise value, while Amazon was slightly lower at \$4.8 billion. A significant issue being flagged with this model is the rampant incidences of fake and counterfeit goods being delivered through the platforms, given that there's little or no control over the

supply chain and inventory. Most

recently, according to reports, an

Lucknow by a complainant alleging duplicate products being delivered from the platform.

In response to a set of queries sent by The Indian Express, a statement from Shopee noted: "Shopee is a Singaporean company committed to helping Indian small businesses thrive through our online e-commerce marketplace. We aim to partner in India's digital economy mission while contributing to the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. We are humbled that thousands of local sellers are already growing their online business on Shopee".

The sale of counterfeit items, and other products that infringe IP, is strictly prohibited on our platform. We require our sellers to be compliant with both local regulations and our own policies. We also employ various proactive screening measures to identify listing violations, and we provide procedures for IP holders to request takedowns of infringing listings," it added. In India, the next frontier being targeted by these social commerce companies is the grocery space, where many of them including Flipkart and Meesho have marked their

**BY 1 YEAR** 

# IPO in sight, LIC Chairperson's tenure extended

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** MUMBAL JANUARY 30

WITH THE mega initial public offering (IPO) expected in the current fiscal, the government has extended the tenure of LIC Chairperson MR Kumar by one more year.

The extension is for a further period beyond March 13, 2022 or till he attains the age of superannuation, or until further orders, whichever is the earliest, the government said in an order on Sunday. The extension is to facilitate the launch of LIC's IPO which is expected in March this year. The corporation which is in the final stages of the IPO launch is expected to submit the draft prospectus to market regulator Sebi in the coming weeks.

Kumar's term as LIC Chairperson was originally supposed to end on June 30, 2021, but the government extended his term by nine months till March 13, 2022. LIC IPO is expected to be the largest in the history of Indian capital market.

The government has also extended the tenure of LIC MD Raj Kumar by one more year beyond



M R KUMAR Chairperson, LIC

the date of his superannuation on January 31, 2022 or until further

Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has cleared the extensions. "These extensions may be treated as a one-time measure which are not to be quoted as a precedent," the government said in the order.

Earlier this week, LIC reported a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 1,437 crore for the first half of ongoing fiscal against Rs 6.14 crore in the year-ago period. The insurer said new business premium growth rate stood at 554.1 per cent in H1FY22, against 394.76 per cent during the corresponding period

### PDIL sale: Bid deadline pushed to Feb 28

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

THE GOVERNMENT has extended by about a month till February 28 the deadline for prospective buyers of PDIL to submit EoI.

Department Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) had on December 14 invited preliminary bids for selling the government's 100 per cent stake in the CPSE which is under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers.

Earlier, the last date for submitting expression of interest (EoI) was January 31. In view of the prevailing situation arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic and on the request of the interested bidders, the late date for submission of EoIs is extended to February 28, DIPAM said in a notice on its website.

As of March 31, 2021, Projects & Development India Ltd (PDIL) has paid-up equity share capital of Rs 17.30 crore, revenue of 129.68 crore and net profit of Rs 19.07 crore. PDIL was incorporated on March 7, 1978 and is engaged in providing engineering and consultancy services in design engineering and related project execution services from concept to commissioning of various projects. WITH PTI

#### SECTOR WATCH **COMMODITIES**

## Gold worth ₹3.4L cr bought in 2021 as easing of Covid curbs unlocks sentiment

**GEORGE MATHEW** MUMBAI, JANUARY 30

DESPITE THE Covid pandemic and the overall slowdown in the economy, gold demand in India surged to 797.3 tonnes valued at Rs 3,40,860 crore during the calendar year 2021. indicating that consumers are Of the total gold bought, still pinning their faith in the yellow metal. This is an 81 per cent rise in value terms when compared to demand for 446.4 tonnes of gold worth Rs 1,88,280 crore in the previous year, according to World Gold Council data.

The government had cut Customs duty on gold and silver to 7.5 per cent from 12.5 per cent in the Union Budget for 2021-22, enabling people to import more gold into the country through official channels. India, which depends on imports for its requirements. imported 924.6 tonnes in 2021

- valued at Rs 4.28 lakh crore —compared to 349.5 tonnes in 2020, an increase of 165 per cent, a major drain on the country's foreign exchange reserves. Of the total gold purchased during the year, 610.9 tonnes, valued at Rs 2,61,140 crore, were accounted by jewellery demand, a rise of 96 per cent in value terms. However, investment demand showed only 45 per cent rise to 186.5 tonnes valued at Rs 79.720 crore.

With the easing of lockdown restrictions in the second half of the year and a successful progress of the vaccination programme, eco-



₹2,61,140 cr, were for iewellery demand, a rise of 96% in value terms. File

nomic growth altered consumer sentiment significantly, triggering spending and investments across the board during Dussehra and Dhanteras. This marked a remarkable recovery, with many retailers reporting record sales volumes above even those of pre-pandemic levels and imports and exports rising in tandem. With more weddings yet muted celebrations, higher savings and pent-up demand boosted jewellery market.

The spurt in demand that is, in part, a result of pent-up demand in Q4 is less likely to be repeated this year, though the revival will continue to set a new normal above pre-pandemic levels. The next few years starting with 2022 will be years to watch for the effect of policy reforms, technology and industry collaboration to let gold evolve into a more transparent mainstream asset class,' said Somasundaram PR, Regional CEO, WGC, Full report

on www.indianexpress.com

#### 'Boost for Q3 manufacturing outlook, cost of doing biz a worry'

Outlook for the manufacturing sector seems to have improved in October-December even as the cost of doing business remains a cause for concern and hiring prospects remain subdued, according to a FICCI survey



63% respondents reported higher production in the third quarter of 2021-22 (October-December

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** 

THE ELEVATED cost of inputs

punctured the margins of most in

India Inc in the three months to

December 2021. Operating profit

margins for a sample of 432 com-

panies (excluding banks and fi-

nancials) contracted 200 basis

points year-on-year as raw mate-

rial costs jumped 466 basis points

y-o-y. However, with aggregate

revenues rising smartly - 32 per

cent y-o-y for the sample - oper-

ating profits were up 20 per cent

y-o-y and net profits increased a

under a third of the revenues of the

sample; excluding the two, rev-

enues have increased by only 27

per cent while profits have gone

up by 21 per centy-o-y. The recov-

ery is somewhat uneven; even as

the IT services companies contin-

ued to turn in splendid results.

business was dull at Bhel where

RIL and TCS account for just

good 24 per cent y-o-y.

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

on the respe December 2021-22 had a higher number of orders as against July-September 2021-22

#### **MANUFACTURERS ARE** looking forward to the upcoming

Union Budget to enhance growth and investments in the sector

HIGH RAW MATERIAL prices, high cost of finance, the uncertainty of demand, shortage of working capital, high logistics cost, low domestic and global demand due to supply chain disruptions are some of the major constraints that are affecting the expansion plans of the respondents

**HIRING OUTLOOK** for the manufacturing sector remains subdued as around 75% of respondents mentioned they are not likely to hire additional workforce in next 3 months," FICCI stated on the survey

(% chg y-o-y) 166.7

RM to sales

(bps, chg y-o-y)

Q4 Q1 Q2 Q3

est, Companies with strong brands

were gainers. However, high prod-

uct prices appear to be keeping de-

mand muted in some categories.

Several managements point out

the recovery in rural geographies,

post the second wave, has been

Source: FICCI/PTI

Manufacturing sector showing sustained economic activity, with existing average capacity utilisation in the range of 65 to 70 per cent, as per the findings of the latest quarterly survey

margins of India Inc in Q3

33.1 32.1

41.9 26.2

Q2

FY22

order inflows were weak due to

delays in tendering. At Larsen &

Toubro, order inflows during Q3

Top-line growth was impres-

sive as companies were able to

push through price hikes even if

the growth in volumes was mod-

were a shade below estimates.

Total expenditure

OPM

FY21

(bps, chg y-o-y)

36.6 32.6 35.5

Q3

FY22

High costs dent profit

242.7

# Budget should bring more PLI rates to boost job creation: CII

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU** NEW DELHI, JANUARY 30

AHEAD OF the Budget, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on Sunday pitched for additional incentive rates to be included in the Production Linked Incentive Schemes based on the number of jobs created.

The CII has suggested that employment-intensive sectors such as leather and food processing could be provided an incentive scheme to attract investments and create employment.

"With the imperative to support jobs and create new employment as the country recovers from the pandemic, CII

Q3: Kotak

Mahindra

Bank net

**rises 15%** 

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** 

KOTAK MAHINDRA Bank re-

ported a 15 per cent rise in its

standalone net profit at Rs 2,131

crore for the quarter ended

December 2021 as against a net

profit of Rs 1,854 crore in the same

quarter a year ago. The total in-

come of the lender on the stand-

alone basis grew by 4 per cent to

Rs 8,260.48 crore in Q3FY22, from

Rs 7,950 crore in the same quarter

of FY21, Kotak Mahindra Bank said.

profit rose 31 per cent to Rs 3,403

crore in October-December period

of 2021-22, as against Rs 2,602

crore in the year-ago period.

Income was down at Rs 14.176

crore on a consolidated basis, from

Rs 14,671 crore in year-ago period.

China Jan factory activity growth slows as Covid surges

On a consolidated basis, net

MUMBAI, JANUARY 30

The CII suggested that employment-intensive sectors such as leather and food processing could be provided an incentive scheme

suggests that the Budget add a job-creation component to the incentive.

CII also recommends that more employment-intensive sectors be brought under the purview of the PLI schemes which will greatly encourage investments in these sectors. CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said.

based on the proposed number of jobs being created in the project, giving higher weightage to job creation in the PLI schemes, said CII. Apart from the PLI scheme

for employment, CII brought out a range of measures that could be taken up in the forthcoming Budget that would help jobs to gain traction as the pandemic impact is being felt across income classes.

To provide relief to workers hit by the pandemic in the rural areas, the chamber recommended that the outlay for MGNREGA be enhanced considerably to support the rural poor, which would also encourage consumption growth. WITH PTI

#### **DHFL CASE**

## NCLAT sets aside order that directed to consider Wadhawan's 2nd offer

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU** NEW DELHI JANI JARY 30

THE NATIONAL Company Law

Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has set aside an earlier order of the Mumbai bench of the NCLT, which had directed the administrator of the debt-ridden DHFL to put the second settlement proposal by erstwhile promoter Kapil Wadhawan before its lenders for consideration.

The appellate tribunal observed that NCLT has passed directions to consider the second proposal from Wadhawan, despite the fact that the Committee of Creditors (CoC) of DHFL had already by an overwhelming majority approved the Piramal Capital & Housing Finance's resolution plan and the administrator had applied before it for its approval.

Citing a recent judgement

passed by the Supreme Court in the case of Ebix Singapore, the NCLAT said "there was no scope for negotiations between the parties once the CoC has approved the

resolution plan". "The said exercise was beyond the jurisdiction of the adjudicating authority (NCLT), hence unsustainable and liable to be set aside,' said a three-member NCLAT bench in its judgement passed on Ianuary 27, 2022.

The NCLAT direction came over a batch of petitions filed by Union Bank of India on behalf of the CoC, DHFL's Administrator and Piramal Capital & Housing Finance successful resolution applicant challenging NCLT order.

On May 19,2021, the NCLT had directed the administrator of DHFL to place the second offer by Wadhawan before CoC for consideration, decision, voting and to inform it within 10 days. WITH PTI

#### **BRIEFLY** —

#### ComMin plan

New Delhi: The commerce ministry has proposed repeal of decades-old laws pertaining to tea, coffee, spices and rubber, and introduce new legislations. PTI

#### Apex Chamber

New Delhi: Kuldeep Singh Bagga, chairman of Taxation Committee of Apex Chamber of Commerce & Industry of NCT Delhi, in a memorandum to the finance minister. has suggested rebates in the Budget. ENS

### UK growth at slowest pace since last April which led to government advice

**REUTERS** 

LONDON, JANUARY 30

BRITISH BUSINESSES grew at the slowest pace since April 2021 during the past three months, after demand for face-to-face services slumped due to the Omicron variant of coronavirus, the Confederation of British Industry said on Sunday.

Britain's economy only recovered to its pre-pandemic size in November, before being hit by the highly infectious Omicron variant to work from home and restrictions on hospitality in Scotland and Wales. The CBI's monthly growth index-which is based on quarterly growth rates from its previously published surveys of manufacturers, retailers and other services businesses – fell to +12 in January from +21 in December.

That was the lowest reading since April's, which covered a three-month period when pubs, restaurants and non-essential retailers were largely closed due to a previous COVID wave.

**REUTERS** BEIJING, JANUARY 30

GROWTH IN China's factory activity slowed in January as a resurgence of COVID-19 cases and tough lockdowns hit production and demand, but the slight expansion offered some signs of resilience as the world's secondlargest economy enters a likely bumpy new year.

The official manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) registered 50.1 in January, remaining above the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction, but slowing from 50.3 in



Mong Kok district, in Hong Kong. Reuters file

December, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on Sunday. The official results contrasted with those in a private sur-

vey of mostly small manufacturers in coastal regions, which showed activity fell at the fastest rate in 23 months.

#### Pharma: Beijing to tighten anti-monopoly efforts tical ingredients (API). China leads

**REUTERS** BEIJING, JANUARY 30

CHINA WILL toughen law enforcement to curb monopoly practices and unfair competition in the pharmaceutical industry as the government seeks to foster a good business environment, the industry ministry said on Sunday.

The action follows November's regulatory guidelines to stamp out monopolies in active pharmaceuthe world in making and exporting these products. In a statement, the ministry of industry and information technology said it would strengthen law enforcement against unfair competition, and resolutely investigate unfair competitive acts like commercial bribery". It will also stiffen enforcement

of anti-monopoly laws in the areas of drug shortages and APIs, prepare and adopt antitrust guidelines in the API market, it added.

# **Man United player arrested**

**ENS/AGENCIES** 

JANUARY 30

MANCHESTER United's star forward Mason Greenwood has been arrested on alleged sexual assault and domestic violence The Greater Manchester Police have confirmed an arrest in the case, with-

out revealing the name of the person. "An investigation was launched and following enquiries we can confirm a man in his 20s has since been arrested on suspicion of rape and assault.

He remains in custody for questioning," said the police statement.

The Associated Press in its report, however, has mentioned that Greenwood, 20, has been

"Manchester United player Mason Greenwood was arrested on suspicion of rape and assault on Sunday after a woman posted visual and audio allegations on social media of an incident," the report said.

United have suspended the player, pending inquiry, as a club statement to Reuters said: "Mason Greenwood will not return to training or play matches until further notice."

The Manchester United Supporters Trust (MUST) backed the club's decision, posting on Twitter: "The club has now confirmed that Mason Greenwood will not return to training or play matches until further notice. MUST fully support the decision of the club

This follows a post on Instagram, capturing pictures and videos of a young woman with several cuts and bruises and blood gushing out from a wound. The woman also shared an audio clip in which a man was heard threatening a woman for refusing to have sex with him.

The posts have since been taken down. United had initially said they wouldn't comment on the matter until the facts were established and adding: "Manchester United does not condone violence of any kind."

The Daily Mail reported that police officers visited the woman's family home where her father said they had been devasted by the revelations

Greenwood had earlier got into trouble while playing for England. Back in 2020, he and Phil Foden had been axed from the England team for sneaking girls into the team hotel while on the national team duty.

Later he had issued an apology, promising that he would learn from his mistakes. "It was irresponsible of me to break the COVID-19 protocols which are in place to protect players, staff and the public.

"In particular, I want to apologise to Gareth Southgate, for letting him down, when he had shown great trust in me," Greenwood had said then, adding: "Playing for England was one of the proudest moments in my life and I only have myself to blame for this huge mistake. I promise my family, the fans, Manchester United and England that this is a lesson I will learn from."

However, there have been reports about Greenwood arranging rowdy parties at a secret location during lockdown. Greenwood became United's youngest ever player to play in the Champions League,

against PSG, at the age of 17. His football flourished after that and the United academy graduate became a first-



team regular.

Manchester United said Greenwood will not return to training till further notice.

# After sexual assuault charge, Musetti, star attraction Pacer Ravi steers India

The young and not-so-young hope to launch 2022 campaign on Indian soil

**SHIVANI NAIK** JANUARY 30

DANIIL Medvedev wasn't exactly battling windmills when he had a tilt at the chair umpire, complaining against Stefanos Tsitsipas allegedly receiving on-court coaching in the Australian Open semifinal. Maybe he read the winds of change howling in - with pinpoint tactics. Fresh off the Next Generation Finals last November at home in Milan where coaches could yell out instructions during a match, 19-year-old Lorenzo Musetti reckons coaches steering on-court strategy could well be the future of tennis.

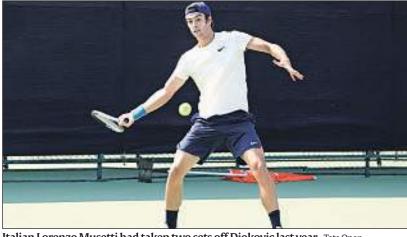
The Italian youngster, who nicked two sets off Novak Djokovic at the French Open last year and was dubbed a sensation after becoming one of the youngest to crack the Top 100, is at Pune's Balewadi courts for the Tata Open Maharashtra. He comes armed with a single-handed backhand and an equally strong conviction that on-court coaching is the way forward.

"As I always said, we got the chance to use it (on-court coaching) in the Next Gen (tournament). It's really helpful. It's gonna be the future for sure because every sport has it. In WTA, they use it already. In the future probably, (it'll be) used more. When you get a warning for coaching, it sounds like you don't accept (it) too much. To be able to speak to a coach is not a big fault. I'm 100 percent procoaching," Musetti asserted. Considered one of the upcoming stars of the sport, the Italian is following in sure strides and in the slipstream of compatriots Fabio Fognini, Matteo Berrettini and Jannick Sinner. Musetti has scalped Stan Wawrinka, Grigor Dimitrov, Diego Schwartzman, Kei Nishikori and David Goffin. In Pune, he arrives as a potential roadblock to defending champion Jiri Vesely. The tournament was last held in 2020 on the cusp of the pandemic wreckage sweeping the world, when the Czech player won.

Musetti went out to fellow Next-Genner Alex de Minaur at the Australian Open in the opening round, but is looking to go deep into the draw here. "I'm here to play good matches and get my confidence back," he stated, adding he was hoping to reach the same levels that helped him rattle Djokovic in Paris last summer. Russian Aslan Karatsev is the top seed in Pune.

#### Indians keep plodding on

Four Indians find themselves in the singles main draw, all facing steep challenges like the fort faces in this city - as opponents. Ramkumar Ramanathan meets a good friend and fierce rival in eighth seed Stefano Travaglia. For a while now - since Somdey Devvarman briefly sparked - expectations from Indians in singles have been massively tempered. Precious points to improve their



Italian Lorenzo Musetti had taken two sets off Djokovic last year. Tata Open

rankings, at best, is the expectation. "It's a good feeling to have tournaments back in India. Hopefully we'll have good matches, and get rankings up," Ramkumar said. "Hopefully, I serve well and get fired up," says the Indian ranked 184, who won his first ATP Challenger title at Manama in November. This was around the same time as the Next Genners were sprouting at Milan. At 27, that train of 'promise' is long gone, but the hardworking Chennai man continues to plod. The first five months of the pandemic, he even took some initiative to get going.

The break in March 2020 came as a blessing in disguise. "We did some fitness. Hadn't been home for years, because it's a different lifestyle living out of a suitcase, travelling and training a lot. Did some core sessions with friends. We had a group. Used it in a good way. To start with it was a Zoom call, just seven of us Chennai friends. Just planned to do core workouts through Zoom calls. For an hour. Then we started adding other tennis players from India. Sania (Mirza) came in. (Rohan) Bopanna came in. Purav Raja was there. 5-6 in the evening. One hour each day, one player as coach would lead us through a workout. Didn't miss even one of those 150 days," Ramkumar recalls. When the tour resumed, it was a pile of paperwork to travel -"More letters, fill more papers, visas were difficult. Still, we could get to do what we love - play matches." So, in the lead-up to Manama, Ramkumar strung together a few good weeks with quarterfinals and tidy runs in Challengers. "I paced it real well. In the quarters, I was 5-3 down in the third set. Somehow, I could turn things around. That match gave me a lot of confidence," he recalls. Yet the Indian interest - as the week slides on - will drift to doubles, where Ramkumar combines with Bopanna again, after their recent Adelaide title.

#### N-th comeback

Yuki Bhambri doesn't believe in luck determining his fate, never mind the myriad injuries. Having hinted that he'll tilt towards doubles more seriously now, though, the Delhi man - once India's top stroke-maker seems liberated. Forever jinxed by injuries in his staccato career, he has turned philosophical of late. "I definitely have to work harder than an average tennis player out there who doesn't get injured. Do a little bit more. Recover better to peak fitness. But having experience of doing it so many times, you know how to go about it, and that's kept me going. You don't take things for granted and have more gratitude. Coming here, playing matches - I won't say content - but I try playing tennis with a bit more smile, less frustration," he says. His umpteenth injury rehab blended with the onset of the pandemic, and that meant more outdoor runs than the gym training he'd have liked. He found kindred souls in some of Delhi's fast bowlers he's friends with, who had the same proclivities for breakdowns.

"I try and play other sports when not tennis, like cricket and soccer. I'm friends with fast bowlers because we had the same trainer. I'm a big lover of cricket and enjoy listening to stories. And there's always banter on who's fitter. They thrive off it. Navdeep Saini is a good friend. On fitness, in running it would probably be me better than him, but lifting, strength-wise it'd probably be him," he says. On the court though, the mileage is one slow step after another in goals for 2022. 'Get the ranking up, to be able to play Grand

Daniel Masur withdrew from the qualifying due to illness and was replaced on the updated ATP draw by the alternate, Borna Gojo. Strict guidelines are in place including a precondition of double vaccination.

# into U19 semis

**PRESSTRUSTOFINDIA** 

COOLIDGE (ANTIGUA), JANUARY 30

LEFT-ARM pacer Ravi Kumar bowled a sensational opening spell as India's 'class of 2022' exacted a sweet revenge on Bangladesh, knocking out the defending champions by five wickets to enter the semifinals of the U-19 World Cup here.

In the last edition of the tournament, India lost to Bangladesh in the title clash. Four-time champions India will meet Australia in their semifinal on February 2, having won an unprecedented seven out of their nine U-19 World Cup quarterfinals.

Ravi, who has followed in the footsteps of his illustrious state senior Mohammed Shami to ply his trade for Bengal, ended with excellent figures of 7-1-14-3 on a tacky track as Bangladesh were all out for 111 in 37.1 overs on Saturday.

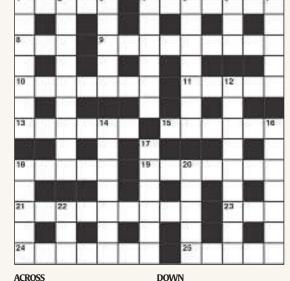
Bangladesh were 56 for seven at one stage before SM Mehrob (30) and Ashiqur Zaman (16) added 50 runs for the eighth wicket to take the team past 100-run mark. In reply, India chased down the target in 30.5 overs with opener Angkrish Raghuvanshi's 44 being the top score.

Skipper Yash Dhull made 20 not out and his deputy Shaik Rasheed contributed 26. The victory was even more satisfying considering the youngsters came back without any training post recovery from COVID-19.

It was a fitting reply from the 'Boys in Blue' to the 'Tiger Cubs' after their predecessors lost an ill-tempered final of the 2020 edition. For the current batch, the win was also necessary after they were beaten twice by this same side last year during a four-nation meet in Kolkata. India won a good toss and Ravi made full use of the moisture underneath, with initial movement in the air helping the team's cause. Ravi, who has the natural ability to bring the ball back into right-handers, had Mahfijul Islam (2) beaten all ends up with an inswinger in the second over. His opening partner Iftakher Hossain (1) was done in by the slowness of the track as he tried to square cut and was held at point by vice-captain Shaikh Rasheed. One drop batter Prantik Nawrose (7) was not at all comfortable during his stay and was late into the drive to a delivery that swung away, offering a catch to Kaushal Tamble in the slips.

Left-arm spinner Vicky Ostwal (9-1-25-2) was as consistent as ever, with his flight and dip causing problems for the opposition batters. However, if anyone deserves the credit for restricting Bangladesh to a paltry total, it is Ravi, who played for a Kolkata club cricket. Brief Scores: Bangladesh 111 all out (SM Meherob 30, Ravi Kumar 3/14) lost to India 117 for 5 (Angkrish Raghuvanshi 44, Ripon Mondol 4/31)

#### CROSSWORD 4651



#### 1 Dances in films (5) 4 One may itch to do it (7)

8 Part of play passed by Parliament 9 Not a scrap of bias (4,5) 10 House journal carrying debatable material (7) 11 Money - marks perhaps

13 As a golfer he doesn't need to keep to one side (6) 15 We get trained about the way tea's made (6)

18 Bear two letters for the personal assistant(5) 19 I may be scared about travelling beside a motorcycle

21 Youth employed to skin fish (9) 23 It's charged for half ration

24 Peak time before break

25 A good time going through

Berlin(5)

#### 1 Stretched and was in pain again

2 Longer period perhaps on the phone (9) 3 Capital piece of furniture envelops one (5) 4 Start an uproarious din inside resulting in a brawl (6)  $5\,A\,worker\,in\,oils\,perhaps\,(7)$ 6 Played by children at a loose end?(3) 7 He's at the middle which he doesn't like (5)

12 He called to give the news (4,5) $14\,An\,illustration\,no\,longer\,large$ enough(7) 16 Exploding grenade produces disorder(7)

17 Beast of burden given first aid

18 Law-abiding company? (5) 20 He painted pictures of French fuel(5) 22 Kind of bread found in every East German home (3)

Solutions Crossword 4650: Across: 1 Christened, 8 Putts, 9 Martine, 10 Sheathe, 11 Overt, 12 Induce, 14 Eskimo, 17 Never, 19 Rissole, 21 Testate, 22 Rides, 23 Takes part. Down: 2 Hothead, 3 Inset, 4 Temper, 5 Nervous, 6 Drive, 7 Destroyers, 8 Passionate, 13 Car park, 15 In order, 16 Preens, 18 Visit, 20 Scrap.

#### **OVER THE HEDGE** by Michael Fry & T Lewis







#### CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson









YOU DON'T?

FORGET IT

#### **MARVIN** by Tom Armstrong

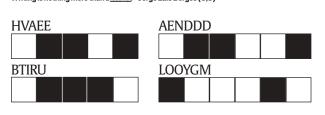






### **JUMBLED WORDS**

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. Jorge Luis Borges (6,5)



Answer: Writing is nothing more than a **guided dream.** - Jorge Luis Borges SOLUTION: HEAVE, BRUIT, ADDEND, GLOOMY

#### Instructions To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9

DOKU

SU

must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the

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

	9		2		1		
		6		9	8		
	4	1					
7	8						9 4
						3	7
			8	3		5	1.7
			4		9		3
		3		1			4

#### SOLUTION SUDOKU 4730 9 6 5 4 1 2 8 7 3 7 1 2 3 9 8 5 4 6 3 8 4 5 6 7 9 2 1 3 8 7 6 6 7 1 9 4 5 3 8 2 1 2 3 7 6 4 8 5 9 1 3 6 7 8 4 2 5 9 2 9 7 6 5 1 4 3 8 5 4 8 2 3 9 6 1 7

#### **DAY TODAY**

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Planetary aspects are hopeful, optimistic and inspired at the beginning of the week and you're likely to be in an expansive and extravagant mood. Friends will be urging you to experiment with new enterprises. It's all down to two planets. Mercury and Neptune which, between them, enhance your imagination.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21) The theme for this week must be reconciliation.

of you who feel that you have been the victim of quite undeserved criticism. It takes more courage to turn the other cheek than to seek revenge, so don't let other people pressurise you into doing what you know is wrong.

especially for those

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21) Your life is by its very nature complicated. which is why interpreting your planetary picture at the

moment is so difficult. The problem is that, while you are being urged to take a gamble. there is no absolute or ultimate guarantee of success. CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

must be your immediate environment, which doesn't only refer to family and repairs: you may also be

chores or domestic decorations getting more involved in some sort of community action: perhaps you're coming to see the wider world as a sort of extended part of your

#### LEO (July 24 - Aug 23) Daily trends are ruled mainly by the

Moon's rapid motion. Today issues close to home dominate your thinking. The obsessive planet Pluto will be turning your mind to what you can do to improve the situation, encouraging you to accept only the real thing; no imitations, please.

#### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23) Spending money



New Delhi

saving it. How is this? Are there perhaps items you can buy which will dramatically improve your of life? Luxury seems to be more important than necessity,

#### BY PETER VIDAL

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

The current planetary alignment

is ideal for those of

vou who are participating in a spiritual quest, but not of much help to those who are bogged down with practical cares or snowed under with chores. A word of advice, though, try and take whatever time off you need.

#### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22) Current transits

highlight the higher side of life, the human quest for Truth. The ideal way to express your planetary patterns

for the next few days is to willingly sacrifice your interests in the service of those who are genuinely in need of sympathy and support.

#### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22) The current celestial picture is highly



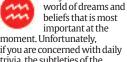
may yield a greater than expected return, but also that, over the next month, your spending may spiral out CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

#### If worldly ambitions seem to be meeting



plans: if you could wish for anything in the world, what would it be? World peace, perhaps? Or at least an end to a confrontation in your

#### AQUARIUS (Jan 21-Feb 19) It is your inner



if you are concerned with daily trivia, the subtleties of the present time may pass you by. Raise your sights as high as you can and look at the bigger picture.

#### PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20) This week's stellar



 $alignments\,are\,$ ideally suited to your imaginative and impractical nature. Press ahead with social, professional

and financial schemes, but not to go beyond the planning stage just yet. Give yourself at least until

Melbourne: Australia pacer Mitchell Starc has said that he opted out of the IPL auction at the last minute as he did not want to spend another 22 weeks in a bio-bubble. "I was a click of the button away from entering the auction but personally didn't want to spend 22 more weeks in a bubble," said Starc, who won Australia's men's cricketer of the year award on Saturday.

'ONE MONTH AND A HALF AGO, I DIDN'T KNOW IF I WOULD BE BACK ON THE TOUR PLAYING TENNIS AGAIN. TODAY, I AM HERE…'

—— RAFAEL NADAL —

# Nadal Majors in Greatness

Spaniard comes back from the dead against Medvedev for second Australian Open and record 21st Grand Slam title

**GAURAV BHATT** JANUARY 30

RAFAEL NADAL did it, in the most Rafael

For more than two sets and two hours in the Australian Open final, Nadal, 35, was outplayed by Daniil Medvedev, the higher-

ranked, 10-year-younger, in-form Russian. Nadal then tapped into his seemingly endless reservoir of self-belief, orchestrating a historic comeback to defeat Medvedev in 5-1/2 hours. With the 2-6, 6-7(5), 6-4, 6-4, 7-5 victory, the Spaniard became just the fourth man in history to win all four Majors at least twice. It was just the third comeback from two sets down at a Major for Nadal in his career and first since 2007. More importantly, he broke a threeway tie with Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer to scale Mount 21.

But before he could reach that summit, he had to climb out of a pit.

If the first set was frustrating, the second - lost from a lead of 4-1 - was crushing. Hammer, nails, coffin analogies from commentators flew faster than Medvedev's 190kmph serves. Nadal was 2-6, 6-7, 2-3 (0-40) down against the best hard-courter on the planet currently. A defeat, though bittersweet, would have come with no shame.

By Nadal's own admission during the tournament, "Just to compete and play tennis at the high level again, facing the most important players of the world, it's something unbelievable.'

A runner-up finish would have far exceeded all pre-tournament expectations. For the injury-ravaged veteran from Mallorca, 2021 was especially painful. He braved a back injury to compete at the French Open, where he suffered an unusual semi-final exit. Then a foot injury sidelined him for the majority of the season, and almost forced him through the door of retirement.

Finally fit, Nadal returned for exhibition games in Abu Dhabi and contracted Covid-19. "I was in bed for four days after contracting the virus, and three more days I was destroyed physically," he told reporters.

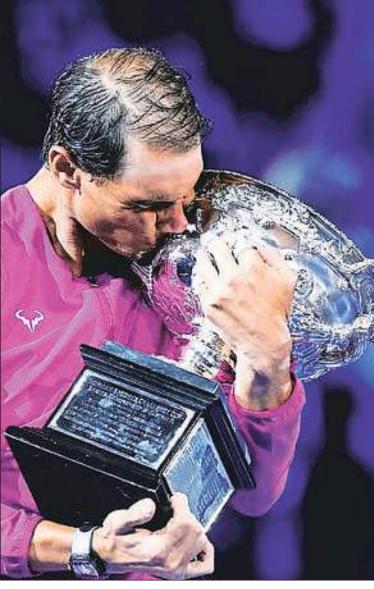
"I had a lot of conversations with the team, with the family about what is going to happen if things continue like this, thinking that maybe it is a chance to say goodbye," Nadal said after his semifinal win in Melbourne, explaining the uncharacteristically emotional outburst after making what was his 29th Grand Slam final. "To be able to be where I am now — I don't know, I really can't explain in words how important it is for me in terms of energy, in terms of personal satisfaction.'

Two months after pondering retirement, an Australian Open final would have been achievement enough for Nadal.

A win for Medvedev, meanwhile, would have furthered the new world order, and cemented his reputation as a spoiler. The Russian had dashed Novak Djokovic's calendar Grand Slam/21st title bid in New York last September. Such a habit Medvedev has made of razing dreams that it's almost surprising he didn't take the court for home favourite Ash Barty's drought-ending title match on Saturday.

How exactly, then, did Nadal thwart Medvedev? Well, how do you explain the unexplainable?

Sunday's instant classic was more about grit and less about serves and rallies. More about character, less about strokes. There were, however, moments that stood out



#### GOTCHA!

With the 2-6, 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-4, 7-5 victory, Rafael Nadal became just the fourth man in history to win all four Majors at least twice.

Congratulations to Rafael Nadal for 21st GS. Amazing achievement. Always impressive fighting spirit that prevailed another time. Enhorabuena!' (Congratulations in Spanish)

- NOVAK DJOKOVIC

from the melee in Melbourne.

#### Twist in the tale

Medvedev, known as the Octopus on the tour, is all limbs. The unorthodox Russian's loading into a shot is minimal, and the swings fluid. He twists and pivots in unnatural ways, imparting sensational spin and power from half-turns. His lanky 6'6 frame and superior movement cover the court effectively.

All that is to say, Medvedev is seldom wrong-footed. But Nadal almost brought great champ. Your incredible work ethic, dedication and fighting spirit are an inspiration to me & countless others..." - ROGER FEDERER

him to his knees.

During the 84-minute second set, Nadal secured a break at 5-3 with a drop shot, beautifully-disguised as a full-blooded forehand down the line.

A few months ago we

were joking about

both being on crutches.

Never underestimate a

Medvedev never saw it coming, stumbled and scampered. Nadal lost the set but regularly won the battle of drop shots, as Medvedev squandered chances with questionable execution and timing.

The momentum truly shifted at 4-4 in the third set. After a strong serve, Medvedev pinged a simple volley into the Actor Eric Bana may have been in the stands but Nadal was both Hector and Hulk on the night. He defended the court like it was Troy, and began smashing after taking enough punishment.

net, and mocked the cheering crowd. He conceded the break, and the red mist descended. To be fair, the majority of Rod Laver Arena audience interrupted Medvedev's serves and cheered for unforced errors and faults.

But Medvedev is used to being the villain. He was public enemy No.1 in the US Open final for the New York crowd, who had left Djokovic sobbing with their unprecedented support.

On Sunday, however, the Russian engaged with the hostilities. "They are idiots. No brains. Empty brains. Probably in their life it must be very bad," he chatted with the chair umpire during the changeover.

To make matters worse, he began conceding the physical battles to a man 10 years his senior. After losing his way in the third set, Medvedev found it tough to course-correct the contest.

But he refused to go away. With Nadal serving for the championship and the crowd squarely against him, Medvedev capitalised on an opening and made it 5-5 in the decider. But he couldn't go through. Nadal broke him again and served out the tournament.

#### Memorable contest

Actor Eric Bana may have been in the stands but Nadal was both Hector and Hulk on the night. He defended the court like it was Troy, and began smashing after taking enough punishment. It wasn't high-quality tennis. But the rough, error-strewn match was one for the ages

At the presentation ceremony, removed from the contest, the two rivals chatted, giggled and gesticulated. Two tennis fans amazed like the rest of the world, two artists beaming with pride at what they had accomplished.

"Tough to talk, after five hours-thirty, and losing ... I want to congratulate Rafa because what you did today, I was amazed,' Medvedev said. "During the match, I tried just to play tennis, but after the match, I just, you know, asked him - 'Are you

#### Nadal was speechless.

"I don't even know what to say, guys. For me, it's just amazing, being honest, one month and a half ago, I didn't know if I was going to be back on the tour playing tennis again. And today, I'm here in front of all of you with this trophy with me, and you don't know how much I've fought to be here."

Minutes later, Nadal was pedalling away on a bike, cooling down while still gushing over his triumph with coach Carlos Moya. He got off the bike to meet Aussie legend Rod Laver, then climbed back on. For now, Nadal has no plans of going

"One month and a half ago I said maybe there was a chance that's going to be my last Australian Open," he said. "But now that's plenty of energy to keep going, so thank you very much!

Scarier still for Nadal's rivals, the Grand Slam caravan moves to Paris next.

# From Down Under to 21st century

**GAURAV BHATT** 

JANUARY 30

IT'S FITTING that Melbourne Park was the venue for Rafael Nadal's record-breaking 21st Grand Slam title. The 2-6, 6-7(5), 6-4, 6-4, 7-5 over Daniil Medvedev also ended his long wait of winning all four Grand Slams at least twice.

Injuries and bad luck had put the 'hard' in 'hardcourts' for Nadal at the Australian Open — christened the 'Happy Slam' by Roger Federer for being the first Major of the season for the recharged, inspired players. After winning his first hardcourt Major at the Australian Open in 2009 — a five-set victory that reduced the Swiss great to tears - Nadal had had a horrid run of luck Down Under. The venue has witnessed two of the only three times that Nadal has retired midway into a match: the 2010 and 2018 quarterfinals.

In 2010, his knee gave out while he was down 0-3 in the third set against Andy Murray, while in 2018 Nadal had to retire 0-2 in the fifth set against Marin Cilic due to a hip injury.

In 2011, Nadal was gunning for a fourth straight Grand Slam triumph when a hamstring niggle and spirited compatriot David Ferrer ended his campaign in the quarterfinal. "For me, it's all about the Australian Open more than anything else, no?" Nadal had said ahead of Sunday's final. "It's just an amazing event. I have been a little bit unlucky during my career with some injuries and other times I played amazing finals with good chances against Novak (Djokovic) 2012, against Roger 2017. I was close a couple of times. I feel very lucky that I won once in my career."

Injuries and seven quarterfinal exits since winning the 2009 title would have stung, sure. But defeats in classic Australian Open finals would have hurt unbearably. Nadal has been part of epics in Melbourne, but only as the second lead.

#### **Bittersweet memories**

The 2012 final against Novak Djokovic, regularly cited as the greatest tennis match of all time, saw the two titans play their hearts out in a five-hour, 53-minute contest. Nadal was 4-2 up in the decider, before a regular backhand missed its mark. The Serb clawed back and shut the door. The presentation ceremony from 2012 is recalled as vividly as the match itself.

While the dignitaries talked, the two twenty-somethings stretched, bent over, rested their hands on their knees and even leaned up against the net for support... before a benevolent fellow retrieved two chairs. The 2014 final saw Stanislas Wawrinka win his first Grand Slam against a hobbling Nadal. He had suffered a back injury during the warm-up, competed for four sets while nursing a blister the size of a Rs 10 coin on his hand, and eventually lost to a player he had a 12-0 record against.

Then in 2017, Nadal and Federer turned back the clock. The former had the match under control before the 35-year-old Federer fought back from 1-3 down in the

New Delhi



in Melbourne, but only as the second lead until now.

fifth set to win five straight games, and spark a mini-renaissance for himself.

The final against Djokovic in 2019 was an epic of a different kind. Djokovic dismantled Nadal 6-3, 6-2, 6-3. 'Things started so quick," Nadal snapped his fingers to explain his heaviest final defeat. There was no chagrin. Only the cold, hard, 'you-got-me' acceptance of a gunslinger who had lost to a quicker draw.

He didn't fare much better against #GenNext. Last year, he lost to Stefanos Tsitsipas after being 2-0 sets up — only the second such Grand Slam loss for Nadal.

"I'm not at all feeling unlucky for me and I'm not at all complaining about my luck here in Australia. Everyone has what they deserve, tennis isn't a sport that is fair and I have what I deserve in my career," he told reporters. "Probably here in Australia, I've had chances but I was not able to convert it, so that's all. I didn't deserve more. We can find a lot of excuses and reasons but all the reason is I was not able to convert the opportunities I've had in my career."

#### Polite to a fault Nadal, of course, refused to cite bad luck.

But so painful was his record at the tournament that even tennis writers went into denial. Earlier this month, a veteran journalist quizzed Nadal: "You haven't reached the semifinals at the Australian Open since you won the title in 2009. I just wondered if there's anything you find difficult or challenging about the conditions compared to other Grand Slams."

Befuddled and bemused, the 35-yearold corrected the reporter, in signature Nadal politeness. "I am very sorry to tell you – I don't want to – but I have been in the final of 2012, '14, '17, '18. I got injured a couple of times here in my tennis career, so of course, it's been a great tournament for me, and of course, I had a lot of challenges in terms of injuries in this event.

"Sorry to correct you," he repeated with a grin. The monkey's off his back now. Another five-set epic, that too against a younger star, and this time Nadal was decidedly the star of the show.

"I am super, super-tired in all ways. I can't even celebrate. But was the day to give everything, no?" Nadal told reporters. "At the end, having this trophy with me means everything today, no?"

For Nadal, Melbourne Park is Heartbreak Hotel no more.

TIE-BREAKER

# How Rafa moved ahead of his great rivals in Grand Slam race

**TUSHAR BHADURI** 

HE TOOK the scenic route, but Rafael Nadal finally got to the magic number of 21, breaking the tie with his great contemporaries Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic. Their progress in this Grand Slam race over almost two decades has hooked tennis fans and prompted various arguments in the GOAT (Greatest of All Time) debate.

HERE'S A LOOK AT THE VARIOUS STAGES IN THIS INCREDIBLE **COMPETITION ACROSS TIME:** 

#### Federer era (2003-2007)

The Swiss was supreme during this period. He won at least one Grand Slam title each year, and on three occasions (2004, 2006 and 2007) three of the four. In fact, in 2006 and 2007, it was only losses to Nadal in the French Open finals that prevented Federer from completing the Calendar Grand Slam. He clinched 12 of his 20 titles during this period (3 Australian Opens, 5 Wimbledon crowns, 4 US Opens)

#### **Bipolar rivalry (2008-2010)**

Nadal broke on to the scene in 2005, winning Roland Garros in his first attempt. He won it four times in a row, but was often considered only a clay-court beast till he beat Federer in a memorable Wimbledon final in 2008. The two won 10 out of the 12 Grand Slam titles in the three-year period. The Swiss won four and the Spaniard six of

#### Three-way contest (2011-2018)

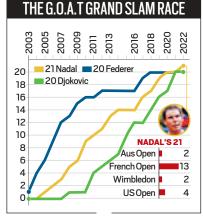
A few more contenders entered the fray (Stan Wawrinka, Andy Murray, Marin Cilic), this period saw Federer, Nadal and Djokovic monopolizing most of the big titles among them. The Serb's first Grand Slam title was the 2008 Australian Open, but it was the 2011 season when he turned into his dominant self, winning three of the four crowns. All three of them took turns

to be the top dog. Of the 32 Grand Slams played, 25 were taken by the Three Musketeers. Nadal won eight of those, but it was Djokovic who was the most prolific (13 Grand Slam titles). As far as Federer is concerned, when he was considered past his best having not won a big one for fourand-a-half years, he came back to win three of five, starting from the 2017 Australian

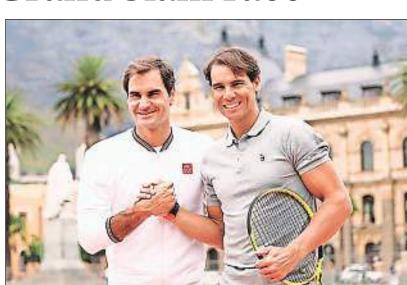
#### Djokovic era (2019-)

It is a period during which Federer, due to his advancing years and age, was not much of a factor at the Majors. In fact, apart from the great 2019 Wimbledon final, where he held two match points before succumbing to Djokovic, the Swiss never

The Serb won six of the Grand Slam titles during this period, while Nadal kept chipping away being the great survivor he is. He has always been the biggest contender at Roland Garros, but managed to make his presence felt on hard courts too.



Now, with the French Open next and a question mark on Djokovic's participation in big events due to his Covid vaccination status, Nadal may have an opportunity to put some daylight between him and the chasing pack, even though there are a host of young challengers on the prowl.



The golden age of men's tennis started with the rivalry between Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal before Novak Djokovic emerged and made it the Big 3.

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