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IN BRIEF



Nightlife boost for Capital ahead of New Year

NEW DELHI
Delhi L-G V.K. Saxena has allowed restaurants and cafeterias inside Siri Fort Sports Complex, Qutab Golf Course and Bhalswa Golf Course to remain open until 1 a.m. from Wednesday, a move aimed at boosting Delhi's nightlife and economy ahead of the New Year festivities, Raj Niwas officials said. "The same would also result in increased economic activities resulting in more revenue generation," an official said. » Page 2

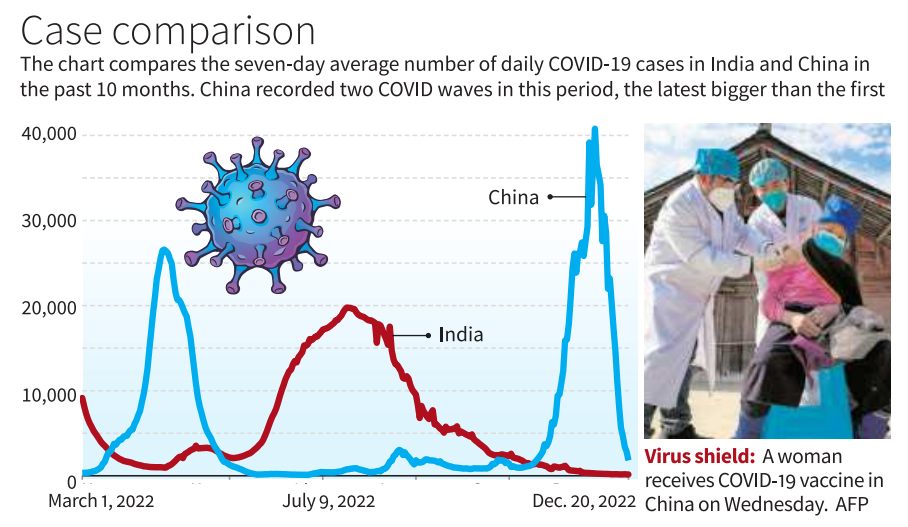
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Omicron variant linked to China spike sequenced in India in July

BF.7 identified in four cases in Gujarat and Odisha in the subsequent months, but it was not linked to increased severity or infectiousness, say officials; Health Minister directs strengthening of virus surveillance, urges people to get vaccinated

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The BF.7 variant of coronavirus, believed to be linked to the surge in COVID-19 cases in China, was identified in India as far back as July. Four instances of the Omicron subvariant were genome-sequenced in Gujarat and Odisha in the subsequent months, but it was not linked to increased severity or infectiousness in the two States, two officials who were part of a meeting convened by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday said. With the rise in cases in China triggering a global alarm, Mr. Mandaviya had convened a meeting of senior officials in the government and the National COVID-19 Task Force to assess



Virus shield: A woman receives COVID-19 vaccine in China on Wednesday. AFP

the situation in India. The officials said while the spike in China did not yet imply a grave threat for India, it was advisable that people follow COVID-appropriate behaviour and

get vaccinated and that States should increase genomic surveillance. Some States have said they will increase random testing of passengers at airports. "I have directed all con-

cerned to strengthen surveillance. I also urge people to get vaccinated," Mr. Mandaviya said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Follow COVID protocols or suspend yatra: Mandaviya

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A raging controversy has broken out between the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Union government and the Congress over Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya's letter to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying that he must either follow strict COVID-19 guidelines or suspend his Bharat Jodo Yatra in the "interest of the country".

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Unemployment and inflation hurting the country, says Rahul

Ashok Kumar
GURUGRAM

Unemployment and inflation are the biggest issues hurting the country, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said on Wednesday after his Bharat Jodo Yatra crossed into Haryana from Rajasthan. He added that the yatra was a fight against hatred. Addressing a gathering at Nuh, Mr. Gandhi said that during the course of the yatra, he had come across thousands of qualified youth who were unemployed. "I met engineers, doctors and a few who wanted to work in judiciary, but they did not have jobs. They were forced to drive taxis or do menial jobs," he said. The Congress leader attacked the BJP saying that while one ideology had given benefits to only a select few, another had been



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in Nuh district of Haryana on Wednesday. PTI

the voice of farmers and labourers. The fight between the two had been going on for thousands of years, he said. The yatra will pass through Nuh, Gurugram and Faridabad in Haryana over the next three days before entering Delhi on December 24.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

CM to review COVID-19 situation, no decision yet on increasing testing

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has convened an urgent meeting of health and other senior officials on Thursday to take stock of the COVID-19 situation, following a directive by the Union Health Ministry asking States to bolster genome sequencing of COVID-19 samples. "All COVID-19 positive samples with a CT value of less than 25 will be sent to the NCDC [National Centre for Disease Control] or ILBS [Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences] for genome sequencing. We are keeping a close watch on

the situation, but there is no decision yet on increasing testing," a Delhi government official said. On Tuesday, only seven new cases were reported in the city while 2,676 tests were done in 24 hours, according to an official bulletin. The COVID-19 positivity rate was recorded at 0.26% and there was no new death. "In view of the spurt in positive cases, it is essential to gear up genome sequencing of positive case samples. Such an exercise will enable timely detection of newer variants, if any," Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan had said on Tuesday.

Golden harvest



Villagers husk their harvested paddy in Sopeng Amkha village on the outskirts of Guwahati on Wednesday. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Forest buffer zone won't affect people, says Kerala CM Pinarayi

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday assured people living on the extremities of protected forests spread across 115 densely populated panchayats that they would not lose their land or livelihood to the Supreme Court-suggested one-kilometre buffer zone around ecologically sensitive localities (ESZ).

He accused "vested political interests" of misleading the public by falsely blaming the government for "arbitrarily ordering a satellite survey to demarcate the proposed no-human habitation zone to the detriment of thousands of settler farmers". He said the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) opposition, with a mischievous eye on turning the affected population against the LDF,

eclipsed that the Supreme Court ordered the contentious survey. Mr. Vijayan said the public genuinely worried the survey glossed over hundreds of spartan homes, large swathes of cultivated land, public and commercial buildings and subsistence structures, chiefly mud and thatched constructions.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Bengal village basks in the lustre of metal

Lalbazar, on the boundary with Jharkhand, is becoming a hub for dokra metalcraft, thanks to an artist from Kolkata who made this once nondescript village his second home four years ago

Bishwanath Ghosh
KOLKATA

Nestled in the forests with a population less than 100, Lalbazar was a nondescript village until not too long ago. Today, it is not only an art hub but also moving towards becoming a centre for dokra, a metalcraft popular in Bengal, all thanks to a Kolkata artist who made the place his second home four years ago. "Two places are famous in West Bengal for dokra work - Bikna in Bankura and Dariyapur in Bardhaman. But if you notice carefully, the quality of their products is deteriorating. We are trying to keep things original," said Mrinal Mandal, an alumnus of the Government Arts College who chanced upon Lalbazar, sitting on the boundary with Jharkhand, in 2018, while trying



Dokra figurines on display.

to document folk art. He is, at the moment, curating a dokra workshop in the village with the help of Kolkata's Chalchitra Academy. For the workshop, which began 45 days ago and in which 15 people from Lalbazar (from its total population 80) and five from surrounding villages are participating. Mr. Mandal has brought in six artisans from Bikna, including two master craftsmen - Amar Karmakar and Mahadeb Karmakar. "Dokra is an ancient tradition; its documented history is about 5,000 years old. Making dokra art is a difficult process. Each figure

takes about a month to make. There are many processes involved, for which seven or eight varieties of clay are required, apart from other raw material. What works in our favour is that the raw materials, including the metal, are easily available here [in Lalbazar]," he said. "The workshop will continue all of next year and production too will continue. The craftsmen have already created about 300 pieces of art so far, which have gone to shops in Kolkata and also abroad. Once the villagers pick up the art, they will substantially add to their income," Mr. Mandal said.

Weekly off in U.P. madrasas may change to Sunday

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Education Board is likely to discuss a proposal to change the weekly off in Uttar Pradesh madrasas from Friday to Sunday. In a separate meeting held on Tuesday to discuss service regulations, some madrasa representative put forth the idea which is likely to be discussed in the next Board meeting. The madrasa education system in U.P. has been making headlines for the past few months. Recently, the Board made it a must for teachers and students to recite the National Anthem before the start of the class.

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NEW GENERAL STUDIES BATCHES
STARTING FROM FEBRUARY 2023

IN BRIEF



Delhi to get ₹700 crore from Centre to repair its roads

The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways will provide ₹700 crore to Delhi from the Central Road Fund (CRF) for the construction, repair and maintenance, and beautification of roads in the national capital. The decision was taken by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari (in picture) at a meeting with Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena on Wednesday, officials at the Raj Niwas said. Mr. Gadkari also directed NHAI to bear the cost of repairing and beautifying all its roads in the city.

Delhi govt. schools to introduce 'mini snack break'

The Delhi government's Directorate of Education has asked schools to incorporate a 10-minute snack break in the timetable, in addition to a lunch break. In a circular issued to schools under its jurisdiction, the department said the mini break should take place two-and-a-half hours before the lunch break. In a bid to combat widespread malnutrition among children, schools have been asked to prepare a weekly planner of snacks, offering three food choices every day which may include food items such as seasonal fruits, sprouts, salad, etc.

Delhi wakes up to foggy morning, low visibility

Fog cloaked Delhi on Wednesday morning, lowering visibility to 400 metres and affecting road and rail traffic. A Railways spokesperson said around 18 trains are running late by one-and-a-half to five hours. Operations at the Delhi airport remained normal, an official said. On Tuesday night, three flights were returned or diverted to the Delhi airport due to bad weather in Chandigarh, Varanasi and Lucknow, he said. The Safdarjung Observatory, the primary weather station in Delhi, recorded a minimum temperature of 7.1 degrees Celsius, a notch below normal. The maximum temperature is likely to settle at 22 degrees Celsius, the IMD said. PTI

Hoax bomb threat at IGI Airport leads to security drills

A social media chat about "bombing and eliminating" Delhi's IGI Airport led to a brief panic and triggered a counter-terrorist security drill at the country's largest civil aviation facility on Wednesday, officials sources said. The threat was categorised as "non specific" or hoax around 6:30 a.m. after over an hour of conducting anti-sabotage checks at the facility even as normal passenger traffic continued, they said. Airport security officials, according to sources, were informed about a social media post, in reply to an another message, that the airport should be bombed. The chat posts, whose creators are being traced by the police, also talked about "eliminating" the airport, the sources said. PTI

Nightlife boost for Delhiites ahead of New Year festivities

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor has allowed restaurants and cafeterias inside Siri Fort Sports Complex, Qutab Golf Course and Bhalswa Golf Course to remain open until 1 a.m.; long-term goal is to push for a much robust night-time economy

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has allowed restaurants and cafeterias inside Siri Fort Sports Complex, Qutab Golf Course and Bhalswa Golf Course to remain open until 1 a.m. from Wednesday, a move aimed at boosting Delhi's nightlife and economy ahead of the New Year festivities, Raj Niwas officials said.

"Starting today [Wednesday] residents of the capital will be able to enjoy a richer nightlife at these premier locations. The same would also result in increased economic activities resulting in more revenue generation," an official said.

Revenue generation
They added that until now the food and beverage services at these Delhi Development Authority complexes, which have a daily footfall running into thou-



The NDMC has prepared a draft policy to allow restaurants at Connaught Place's inner circle to serve food in open spaces from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

sands, were only available till 9 p.m. or 11 p.m.

"A vibrant nightlife and robust night-time economy is also being envisaged proactively and strongly in the Master Plan for Delhi, 2041, being spearheaded by the L-G," an official said, adding that the DDA has directed authorities at the three complexes to ensure adequate security, lighting and parking.

Restaurant brand Pebble Street, the food and

beverages partner at the Qutab Golf Course, confirmed the development. "We have received a verbal communication about the order, but since the complex is closed on Wednesdays we will evaluate the impact of the order after we get the official letter on Thursday," said Vikram Singh, owner of Pebble Street.

A security guard at the Qutab Golf Course said the staff has been told that the

timings have been increased "till 12 a.m."

A senior DDA official said that the decision to extend the operational timings is also an attempt to observe the footfall at the establishments over the next three months. "We will see how it pans out during this period. This is more of a test run as well. But the long-term goal is to push for a better night-time economy," said the official.

This is more of a test run to observe the footfall at these establishments in the next three months

Meanwhile, in a related development, the New Delhi Municipal Council has prepared a draft policy to allow restaurants at Connaught Place's inner circle to serve food in open spaces from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Open spaces
While serving liquor or cooking is not allowed in the open spaces, traders in the market remain unsure about the policy's on-ground implementation. "The only open spaces adjacent to the restaurants are corridors and parking lots, so it will cause crowding. This will only cause hindrance on days when footfall is high," said Atul Bhargava, president, New Delhi Traders' Association.

Viral video: police deny violence at prayer meet

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Responding to claims made in a viral video, about a "church in Delhi being attacked" on the suspicion of forcible conversion, Delhi Police on Wednesday said that the event took place on Sunday at a private residence in Burari and no violence was reported in the area.

"An incident of protest took place outside private premises in the area. An adequate police force attended to the PCR call. No cognisable offence was made out and no conversion took place," DCP (North) Sagar Singh Kalsi said. "The house was used for meeting and singing carols between 10.30 a.m. and 12.30 p.m.," the DCP added.

A senior police officer said that the owner of the rented house, where the Sunday mass was being observed, made a PCR call, alleging that people were being converted to Christianity on the premises. The police have issued a notice to the social media user who shared the video of the incident.

A year on, students still waiting for bicycles; MCD says cost of project too high

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Close to a year after the erstwhile South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) passed a proposal to distribute 3,000 cycles to Class 4 students in its schools, students are yet to receive them.

The proposal was passed in January, before the merger of the three erstwhile municipal corporations – North, South and East – in May.

The distribution of cycles was to begin in February, according to the then standing committee chairperson B.K. Oberoi (BJP).

The execution was delayed multiple times over the following months, as senior MCD officials claimed that the tendering process had not been concluded.



Municipal Corporation of Delhi headquarters. FILE PHOTO

In August, senior officials at the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) said that the proposal would not be limited to the schools run by the erstwhile SDMC, instead, the cycles would be distributed among students in the civic body-run schools across all the 12 MCD zones in the city.

While multiple delays have left the project in lim-

bo, a senior MCD official said that the project has not been scrapped.

But, he added, there is no clarity over its timeline as of now.

The official added that the civic body has floated tenders for the project yet again.

No clarity over timeline

"The cost of the entire project was found to be on the higher side. This is why the process had to be repeated. It will take some time. A deadline cannot be fixed right now," said the official.

After the proposal was passed in January, Mr. Oberoi had said that the decision to provide the cycles was aimed at "motivating the students to come to school regularly".

He had estimated the cost of the project to be around ₹90 lakh.

Big haul



Crackdown: Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena looks at the narcotics and psychotropic substances seized as part of the 'Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan', under which the Delhi police destroyed over 2,800 kg of drugs. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

NORTHERN RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM
Ref: Tender Notice No. 64/2022-23 Dated: 23.11.2022
(I) Tender No. 07221167 due on 09.01.2023
In reference to above tender, the due date has been extended from 19.12.2022 to 09.01.2023. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged. More details are available on website.
The corrigendum has been published on website www.ireps.gov.in
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CORRIGENDUM
Kindly read circular issued by Chief Engineer Kashmir PHE Department Srinagar vide his No 35082-117 dated 16-12-2022 which is as under:-
"With a view to facilitate participation of contractors in the works being tendered out at the Divisional Level under JJM, all the concerned Executive Engineers are hereby advised to allow "Bid Securing Declaration" also as Earnest Money Deposit in these tenders, as per GFR rule 170 sub rule (iii).
In such case the bidder shall be asked to sign a bid securing declaration. In the said Declaration the bidder shall undertake and declare that in case the bidder withdraws or modifies the bid/s during the bid validity period or in case of award of contract, fails to sign the agreement or fails to submit performance security within the stipulated time period, then the bidder shall be liable for debarment from being eligible to submit the bids for contracts with the Department for the time period two years from the date of debarment"
S/d
Executive Engineer
Spl PHE Division Kulgam
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Bid Submission Start & End Date :	22/12/2022 to Date 16/01/2023 upto 2:30 PM
Pre Bid Meeting Date And Time :	05/01/2023 Time :- 11.00 AM
Technical Envelope Opening Date :	18/01/2023 upto 3:00 PM

Sr. No	Tender No	Name of Work	Cost of Tender Document (Rs.)	Estimated cost put to the Tender (Rs.)	EMD Amount Rs.	Work Period	Concern Contact Person
1	PMC/ROAD/2022/398	DEVELOPMENT OF 24M ROAD TILEKAR-NAGAR ROAD FROM KATRAJ KONDHAWA ROAD TO PANSARE NAGAR ROAD IN WARD NO 41 IN PMC LIMIT	29,679.00	18,29,20,815.00	10,97,500.00	24 Months	Mr. Vikas Molawade 9975295767

A) All details of Terms & Conditions of above works are incorporated in tender documents which is available on website www.mahatenders.gov.in Sale & acceptance is available by online system only. Tender needs to be submit in two envelope format.
B) If sales or submission not been available on last day also & it is not been submitted will be sole responsibility of tenderer.
C) Online tender process information will be available at Road Department, Pune Municipal Corporation.
D) As per office order No. 32, dated 22/04/2016 EMD deposit amount will be acceptable through ECS/RTGS/NEFT Online Banking only.

Sd/-
(Sahebrao Dandge)
Superintending Engineer (Road)
Pune Municipal Corporation
ADVT No: 3/1084, Date: 21/12/2022

Election for Mayor, Deputy Mayor to be held on January 6

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The elections to pick Delhi's next Mayor and the Deputy Mayor will be held on January 6, next year, when the corporation assembles for its first meeting. The newly elected councillors will be administered the oath on the same day, according to an official statement released by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Wednesday. The last date to file nominations for mayoral polls is December 27.

"The elections for the six members of the [MCD's] standing committee will also be held in the first meeting of the House," the civic body's statement also said.

Reacting to the development, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State unit chief Virendra Sachdeva said, "We

are yet to take a decision on whether we will contest the mayoral polls. The decision will be taken after a party meeting, which will be held soon."

In the recently held MCD polls, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), with 134 seats, ousted the BJP, which was in power at the erstwhile civic body (now unified) for 15 years. The Congress secured nine seats while the independents won three.

"As of now, AAP's councillors are working towards cleaning the city. Soon, Delhi will move towards a big change," AAP MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak said.

For the office of the Mayor, the first and the third year, in the municipality's five-year term, are reserved for women and Scheduled Caste (SC) members respectively.

Najafgarh drain pollution: Delhi L-G speaks to Haryana CM



In need of rejuvenation: Najafgarh drain contributes about 40% of the pollution in the Yamuna. FILE PHOTO

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Wednesday spoke to Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal and sought his help in tackling the pollution caused in the Najafgarh drain from sources in his State. Raj Niwas officials said the L-G wants to speed up efforts to rejuvenate and clean the drain.

According to the officials, Mr. Lal assured Mr. Saxena of "all possible help" from his end. "He said that the Haryana government will ensure steps to stop pollution from the feeder drains that flow into the Najafgarh drain from Haryana," an official said.

He added that during the telephonic conversation, the Haryana CM also proposed a joint meeting between officials to "comprehensively address" the issue in one go.

"[The] L-G along with officials from Delhi will be soon travelling to Chandigarh for the said meeting with Mr. Lal and Haryana

officials," he said.

The official said, "Najafgarh drain that contributes about 40% of the pollution to Yamuna, is in turn, polluted to the extent of 36% by three drains flowing into it from Haryana."

When the Yamuna enters Delhi from Haryana at Palla, the total faecal coliform is 1,100 MPN/100 ml, the official said. He, however, added that "when it reaches ISBT (Kashmere Gate), after absorbing the discharge from Najafgarh drain, its faecal coliform load is to the tune of 2,10,000 (MPN/100 ml)".

The official added that about 12 kilometre of the stretch from Timarpur to Basai Darapur out of the 57-km-long Najafgarh drain has been cleaned as the Delhi Jal Board has partially trapped 27 small drains and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi has fully trapped five small drains flowing into it and contributing 44% of its total pollution. He added that the L-G is "personally monitoring and supervising the rejuvenation of the drain".

We don't divide people in West Bengal but unite them, says CM Mamata

She inaugurated a Christmas event, and reviewed arrangements for Ganga Sagar Mela; the CM also announced disbursement of financial assistance directly into the bank accounts of farmers

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

In Bengal, we don't divide people but unite them, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Wednesday, while inaugurating a Christmas event at the city's Park Street.

Speaking at the Christmas Festival, the Chief Minister asked the gathering, including leaders of her party, to participate in the festivities. She said she attended midnight Christmas Mass every year and this year also she would participate in the festivities. Like every year, Christmas would be celebrated across the State from Jhargram to Bandel, she said.

Ganga Sagar Mela

Earlier in the day, she chaired a preparatory meeting on the Ganga Sagar Mela, which will be held between January 8 and 17.

She spoke to representatives of the Army, the Navy, the Coast Guard, and the Railways as well as Cabinet Ministers and said arrangements should be beefed up this year as the number of pilgrims had gone up.

"Ganga Sagar Mela is our pride. Even in times of COVID, the mela was organised. This year, about 30



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at the inauguration of Christmas Festival at Allen Park in Kolkata's Park Street area on Wednesday. DEBASISH BHADURI

lakh people are likely to participate in the festival," she said.

The Chief Minister also announced that the timing of *snan* (holy dip) during the mela would fall during January 14-15. Every year, lakhs of people take holy dip during Makar Sankranti at the confluence of river Ganga with the sea on the Sagar Island in the Sunderbans archipelago.

Ms. Banerjee urged the Eastern Railways to run more trains during the festival. She also directed Ministers to be stationed at crucial points during the

annual pilgrimage.

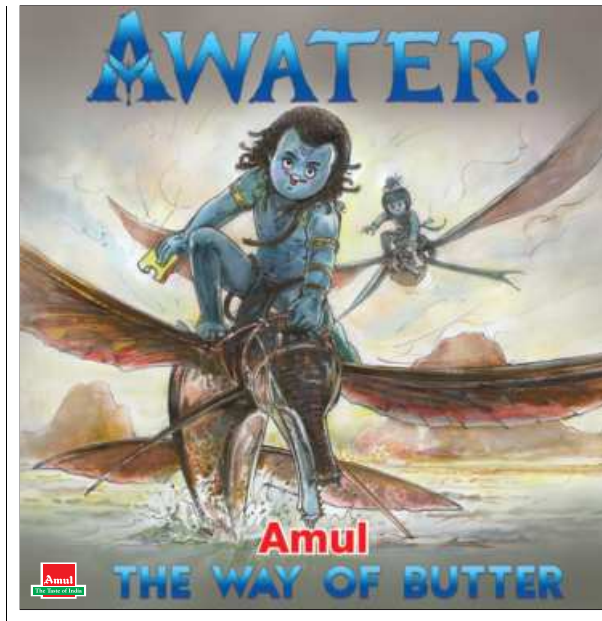
In another development, the Chief Minister announced the disbursement of financial assistance under the 'Krishak Bandhu (Natun)' scheme directly into the bank accounts of farmers of the State for the Rabi season.

'91 lakh beneficiaries'

"A total of 91.57 lakh beneficiary farmers, including *bargadars* (sharecroppers) will receive a total assistance of ₹2,555 crore for this season. During the Kharif season, ₹2,468 crore was disbursed to 89 lakh

farmers," a press statement from the State government said.

Under the revised 'Krishak Bandhu (Natun)' scheme, the financial assistance to farmers has been increased to ₹10,000 for cultivable lands of one acre and more, and proportionate amount for land area below one acre with a minimum of ₹4,000 per annum in two equal instalments. West Bengal is the only State that has not joined the Union government's 'PM-KISAN' scheme which provides cash endowments to farmers.



IN BRIEF

Drugs carrying drone shot by BSF, falls on Pakistan side

A Pakistan drone that reportedly dropped drugs into India along the International Border in Punjab was intercepted by BSF troops following which it fell on the other side, a senior officer said Wednesday. The drone was "downed" by Border Security Force (BSF) troops around 7.20 p.m. on Tuesday and it has been taken away by the Pakistan Rangers, he said. The incident took place near the Daoke border post in Amritsar. The drone was seen lying 20 metres inside the Pakistan territory opposite Indian border post Bharopal when the area was searched on Wednesday morning. PTI

Notice to actor Nagarjuna over 'illegal construction'

A panchayat in Goa on Wednesday issued a "stop work" notice to Telugu actor Nagarjuna over the alleged illegal construction and excavation work at Mandrem village in North Goa. Mandrem Panchayat sarpanch Amit Sawant has issued the notice under the Goa Panchayat Raj Act 1994. As per the notice, the respondent has been involved in alleged illegal activity in the village jurisdiction. The Panchayat warned of necessary action under the Goa Panchayat Raj Act if the work is not stopped immediately.

Stranded in cold



Passengers sleeping at Charbagh bus stand in Lucknow on Wednesday as all UPSRTC buses operating at night have been cancelled to reduce accidents caused by foggy conditions. SANDEEP SAXENA

Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, DEC. 22		
RISE	07:10	SET 17:30
RISE	05:51	SET 16:18
FRIDAY, DEC. 23		
RISE	07:11	SET 17:31
RISE	07:02	SET 17:19
SATURDAY, DEC. 24		
RISE	07:11	SET 17:31
RISE	08:10	SET 18:27

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	21	07
Safdarjang	21	07
Palam	19	10

Delhi Palam Today
23°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cold with dense fog and mist. Day will be pleasant with cool breeze. Night also will be cold & mist.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
22°C A dry weather to continue. Morning will be cold with dense fog and mist. Day will be pleasant with cool breeze. Night also will be cold.

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Morbi tragedy: HC issues notice to maintenance firm

Press Trust of India
AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court on Wednesday issued a notice to the company involved in the maintenance and operation of the Morbi suspension bridge, which collapsed in October killing 135 people, on a plea seeking the company be made a respondent in the suo motu proceedings initiated by the High Court.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice Ashutosh Shastri issued notice to Ajanta Manufacturing Limited on the plea which stated the "acts of malfea-

sance on its (the company's) part makes it liable for the payment of exemplary damages". The High Court said it had initiated suo motu proceedings after taking cognizance of news items on the death of 135 persons in the October 30 bridge collapse tragedy.

The Bench also dismissed an application filed by 46 councillors of the Morbi municipality seeking they be impleaded in the proceedings as they fear the civic body might be superseded going by the observations made by the High Court in its previous order.

The next hearing will be held on January 19.

Kashmiris celebrate with pherans to beat freezing 40 days of Chillai Kalan

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

In a first, the beginning of the 40-day harshest spell of winter, locally called *Chillai Kalan*, was celebrated as *Pheran* day in the Kashmir Valley on Wednesday, to popularise the loose-and-long woollen gown worn to fight the biting cold as the minimum temperature hovers below zero degrees Celsius here.

Scores of youth wearing *pherans* cat-walked near the Ghanta Ghar in Srinagar's main commercial centre, Lal Chowk, "to promote wearing of *pherans*".

Pheran as identity

"The event is an attempt to showcase our culture. We wanted to convey that the *pheran* is our identity. We should wear it with pride," one of the organisers of the event said.

A special ramp show, in which scores of youth, including women, participat-



Warm welcome: People wearing traditional *pheran* at the historic clock tower in Srinagar to celebrate *pheran* day and welcome the 40-day winter spell of *Chillai Kalan* on Wednesday. NISSAR AHMAD

ed, was organised at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre here by the Army.

"This event will send across a message of harmony and peace from J&K," said Nasir Khan, a city resident.

Hundreds of local people changed their display pictures on social media platforms to showcase the

pheran.

Worn for centuries in the Kashmir Valley, the garment easily accommodates a *kangri*, a firepot used to keep the body warm.

A cold wave gripped the Valley on the first day of *Chillai Kalan*. According to the India Meteorological Department, the minimum temperature in Sri-

nagar was minus-4.2 degrees Celsius.

The tourist favourite of Pahalgam recorded minus-6.2 degrees Celsius, while the minimum temperature in Gulmarg was minus-4.6 degree Celsius. A dry spell is also adding to the cold wave. Unlike in the past, there has been no spell of snowfall in the plains of the Kashmir Valley so far.

Ex-Mumbai police chief gets bail in graft case

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday granted bail to former Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Pandey in a corruption case related to National Stock Exchange (NSE) co-location scam and alleged phone tapping of the bourse employees.

Special Judge Sunena Sharma granted the relief to Mr. Pandey, noting that he was already on bail from the High Court in a related money laundering case. The CBI had arrested him in September.

"Considering the fact that the High Court has already granted bail to the accused in the connected ED matter, which in the light of Section 45 PMLA embodies far more stringent conditions for grant of bail, I find no reason to decline bail to the applicant in present case," the judge said.

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- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

Delhi court issues NBW against AAP leader, cancels it later

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday issued an arrest warrant against AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan for non-appearance in a criminal case related to alleged irregularities in the Waqf Board, but later withdrew it after the legislator turned up for the hearing along

with his lawyer. Special Judge M.K. Nagpal, while issuing the non-bailable warrants, noted that the counsel appearing for Mr. Khan moved an application seeking his exemption from personal appearance on medical grounds for the day but did not support it with any medical certificate. "Even on the previous

date, appearance of A-1 (Khan) was exempted on medical grounds. In view of the above, no reasonable or satisfactory ground has been made out for exempting the accused from appearance today. Hence, the application for exemption is dismissed and NBWs are directed to be issued for next date of hearing," the judge said.

Will work with all who stood by MGR and Jayalalithaa: OPS

The former Chief Minister holds a meeting of all 'district secretaries' appointed by him and slams AIADMK's interim general secretary Edappadi Palaniswami for changes in party by-laws. He also dismisses claims of him being soft towards the DMK

T. Ramakrishnan
CHENNAI

The AIADMK's deposed coordinator O. Panneerselvam on Wednesday said the general council of the organisation headed by him would be "convened properly".

Pointing out that an announcement would be made, Mr. Panneerselvam, who earlier took part in a meeting of his group's district secretaries and headquarters functionaries in Chennai, alluded to the question raised by supporters of AIADMK's interim general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami, on whether he [Mr. Panneerselvam]



The AIADMK's deposed coordinator O. Panneerselvam at the meeting of 'district secretaries and headquarters functionaries' in Chennai on Wednesday. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

would be able to appoint one party district secretary. "Now, 88 district secretaries have been appointed. Headquarters' office-bearers too have been posted. Today, a meeting of all the functionaries was held suc-

cessfully." Calling himself the AIADMK's coordinator, he replied in the affirmative to a question on whether he would work along with the party's former interim general secretary V.K. Sasikala.

"We will cooperate with all those who stood by P. V. Narayana Murthy [the party's founder M.G. Ramachandran] and Amma [Jayalalithaa]; those who had strengthened the party and who had protected the organisation in the last 50 years regardless of who they are," he said.

Answering the criticism that he was soft towards the ruling DMK regime, Mr. Panneerselvam said ever since the DMK came to power, he had been issuing statements daily, highlighting the shortcomings in the working of the State government. To a question on whether the BJP was seeking to "swallow" the

AIADMK, Mr. Panneerselvam said "no one can swallow the AIADMK". The group's political advisor, Panruti S. Ramachandran, who was beside him during the interaction with the media, said "small fishes cannot eat a whale."

Earlier, addressing the meeting, the deposed coordinator launched a broadside against Mr. Palaniswami and called him a "dictator". Deploping the repeal of a provision in the party's by-laws that Jayalalithaa was the "eternal general secretary", Mr. Panneerselvam said the State would not "forgive the sinners", who were responsible for it.

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NOTICE OF LOSS OF SHARES OF DCM SHRIRAM LTD

NOTICE is hereby given that the below mentioned share certificates of DCM SHRIRAM LTD, having their Registered Office at 2ND FLOOR, (WEST WING), WORLDMARK 1, AEROCITY, NEW DELHI, DELHI, 110037 are lost/misplaced and the Company is in the process of issuing duplicate share certificates in lieu thereof on request made by the Registered shareholder and on execution of documents required for issue of duplicate share certificates. Shareholder/Anupam Kaspera, Folio: 00003536, Certificate: 1483 with Distinctive: 145771 - 145956(Share: 95); Certificate: 1483 with Distinctive: 8697431 - 86997525(Share: 95); Certificate: 31543 with Distinctive: 32659276 - 32659585(Share: 310); Certificate: 31543 with Distinctive: 119510926 - 11951245(Share: 310). Any person who has a valid claim on the said shares may lodge such claim with the Company at their Corporate Office within 15 days hereof failing which the Company will issue duplicate share certificates and no claim will be thereafter.

ANUPAM KASERA

Place: New Delhi, Date: 19.12.2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

श्री अजितनाथ जैन इंटर कॉलेज (आयसंस्कृत संस्था) शेरपुर लुहारा (बागपत) ज.प्र.

चुनाव एजेंडा / चुनाव सूचना

दिनांक 20/12/2022

दिग्गज जैन शिक्षा प्रचारिणी सभा, शेरपुर लुहारा (बागपत) के समस्त मतदाताओंको सूचित किया जाता है कि दिग्गज जैन शिक्षा प्रचारिणी सभा, शेरपुर लुहारा (बागपत) तथा श्री अजितनाथ जैन इंटर कॉलेज शेरपुर लुहारा (बागपत) की कार्यकारिणी समिति एवं प्रबन्ध समिति का निर्वाचन निम्न कार्यक्रम अनुसार संभव होगा।

(1) वर्तमान अध्यक्ष एवं प्रबन्धक के हस्ताक्षर से प्रमाणित मतदाता सूची का प्रकाशन, दिनांक - 23-12-2022, अपराह्न 2:00 बजे तक (2) मतदाता सूची पर आपत्ति करना, दिनांक - 24-12-2022 प्रातः 10:00 बजे से अपराह्न 1:00 बजे तक (3) आपत्तियों का निस्तारण, दिनांक - 24-12-2022 अपराह्न 2:00 बजे तक (4) मतदाता सूची का अंतिम प्रकाशन, दिनांक - 24-12-2022 साय 4:00 बजे, (5) मतदाताओंको चुनाव एजेंडा/ चुनाव सूचना प्रेषित करना दिनांक - 25-12-2022 से 26-12-2022 तक, (6) प्रबन्ध समिति के पदाधिकारियों तथा सदस्य के पद हेतु नामांकन करना, दिनांक - 28-12-2022 प्रातः 10:00 बजे से अपराह्न 1:00 बजे तक (7) नामांकन पत्रों की जांच, दिनांक - 28-12-2022 साय 3:00 बजे तक, (8) वैध प्रत्याशियों की सूची का प्रकाशन, दिनांक - 28-12-2022 अपराह्न 4:00 बजे तक, (9) प्रत्याशियों द्वारा नाम वापस लेना, दिनांक - 29-12-2022 प्रातः 10:00 बजे से अपराह्न 12:00 बजे तक, (10) प्रत्याशियों को अंतिम सूची का प्रकाशन, दिनांक - 29-12-2022 अपराह्न 1:00 बजे तक, (11) प्रत्याशियोंको चुनाव चिह्न आवंटित करना (यदि आवश्यक हुआ) दिनांक 29-12-2022 अपराह्न 3:00 बजे, (12) प्रबन्ध समिति / समितियों के निर्वाचन हेतु गुप्त मतदान (यदि आवश्यक हुआ) दिनांक 02-01-2023 प्रातः 8:00 बजे से अपराह्न 3:00 बजे तक, (13) मंगलानुष्ठान, दिनांक 02-01-2023 निर्वाचन के तुरंत बाद (14) निर्वाचन परिणाम की घोषणा, दिनांक - 02-01-2023 मंगलानुष्ठान के तुरंत बाद।

(नोट - (1) यदि किसी मतदाता को मतदाता सूची की आवश्यकता है तो वह 200/- चुनाव कार्यालय में जमा करा कर मतदाता सूची प्राप्त कर सकता है एवं यदि किसी पद के लिए केवल एक ही नामांकन प्राप्त होता है तो ऐसी दशा में प्रबन्ध समिति / समितियों के निर्वाचन परिणाम की घोषणा प्रत्याशियों की अंतिम सूची के प्रकाशन की दिनांक 29-12-2022 में ही कर दी जाएगी तत्पश्चात् नवनिर्वाचित प्रबन्ध समिति के अनुमोदन हेतु पत्रावली जिला विद्यालय निरीक्षक बागपत एवं संबंधित अन्य को प्राप्त करा दी जाएगी। (2) छात्र-छात्राओं की शिक्षा को ध्यान में रखते हुए उपरोक्त सभी कार्यक्रम श्री अजितनाथ दिग्गज जैन इंटर, शेरपुर लुहारा (बागपत) के प्रांगण में संपन्न होंगे। (3) मतदाता फोटोयुक्त पहचान पत्र के साथ नामांकन करेंगे। (4) प्रत्येक मतदाता को मतदान के लिए फोटोयुक्त पहचान पत्र लाना आवश्यक है। (5) मतदान स्थल पर लाठी, अग्नेयशास्त्र अथवा किसी भी प्रकार का हथियार लाना वर्जित है। (6) नामांकन पत्र श्री अजितनाथ दिग्गज जैन इंटर शेरपुर लुहारा (बागपत) से रूप 100/- शुल्क देकर प्राप्त होंगे। (7) पदाधिकारियों के लिए नामांकन शुल्क रूप 5000/- व सदस्यों के लिए नामांकन शुल्क रूप 3000/- होगा। (8) चुनाव एजेंडा डाक से भेजा जाएगा। (9) नामांकन के दिन पदाधिकारी व सदस्य पद के प्रत्याशी तथा उनके प्रस्तावक एवं अनुमोदक अपना फोटो पहचान पत्र/ वोटर कार्ड अवश्य साथ लाएं।

(सुश्रुत पाठ सिंह साहिबानु चुनाव अधिकारी श्री अजितनाथ जैन इंटर कॉलेज, शेरपुर लुहारा (बागपत) (सोचानिबृत्त, गणित प्रवक्ता) जनता इंटर कॉलेज, सुबह (बागपत)

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE III SENIOR CIVIL JUDGE: RANGA REDDY COURTS AT: L.B.NAGAR, RANGA REDDY DISTRICT O.S. NO. 1268 OF 2019

Between: M/s. Lucas Technologies

A partnership firm having its Regd office at HMDA Techno Enclave Plot No. 19/2, Sector II, Madhapur, Hyderabad-50. Represented by its CEO

Plaintiff

AND

M/s Indus Exhibfab Represented by its Proprietor Mr. Varun Tyagi Having its office at T2, III Floor, Aditya Mega City, Vaibhav Khand, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, NCR, India

Defendant To,

M/s Indus Exhibfab Represented by its Proprietor Mr. Varun Tyagi Having its office at T2, III Floor, Aditya Mega City, Vaibhav Khand, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh NCR, India-201014

Whereas the plaintiff instituted the above suit against you for recovery of Rs. 7,00,000/- before the Hon'ble III Senior Civil Judge, L.B.Nagar Courts, Ranga Reddy Dist. Telangana. You are hereby summoned to appear in this court in person or by a pleader on 3-2-2023 at 10.30 A.M. Fore noon, and further you are hereby directed to file your defense and to produce the relevant documents, otherwise the above suit will be heard and determined in your absence.

(BY ORDER OF THIS COURT)

(M.SRINIVAS, Advocate

2-2-647/76, Legend Apartment, Flat NO. 502, C.E.Colony, Bagh Amberpet, Hyd-13

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GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE - SUNDARGARH AT/PO-SANKARA, SUNDARGARH-770020, E-mail address-serw_sundargarh@yahoo.com

No.Tender Online - RWCCESNG-23 of 2022-23, Letter No.3270 /Dtd.19.12.2022

e-Procurement NOTICE

1. Type of the Work : Road (Improvement of Existing R.D.roads)

2. Class of Contractor : As specified in the column-6 of the Annexure

3. Time of Completion : As specified in the column-5 of the Annexure

4. Detail Projects : As per Annexure attached

5. Estimated Cost : As specified in the column-4 of the Annexure

6. Other details:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of Seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh	RWCCESNG-23 of 2022-23	27.12.2022 10:00 AM	12.01.2023 5:00 PM	11.01.2023 5:00 PM	13.01.2023 10:00 AM	Will be intimated separately

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh. OIPR-25133/11/0030/2223

A-1486

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, EASTERN CIRCLE-I, CANTONMENT ROAD, CUTTACK. Email id - seecuttack@gmail.com

e Procurement Notice No.ACE, EC-I/MND 03 of 2022-23 (On-line)

1. Name of Work	Improvement to Mahanadi left embankment from Guali to Pimpur. Bid Identification No. ACE, EC-I MND 03 of 2022-23.					
2. Total No. of Package	01 No. Package.					
3. Tender Paper Cost (Non-refundable)	Rs.10,000.00 (On-line payment)					
4. Bid Security	"Bid Security Declaration" is to be furnished as per Finance Department Office Memorandum No.8484/F dtd.05.04.2022. The bids without "Bid Security Declaration" will be summarily rejected.					

5. Bid details are as follows.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Tender Amount(Rs. in Lakh) (Approx.)	Class of Contractor	Period of Completion	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding		Date of Opening of Technical Bid (Cover-I)
					From	To	
Additional Chief Engineer, Eastern Circle-I, Cuttack	ACE, EC-I MND 03 of 2022-23	499	'A'	06 (Six) Calendar months	27.12.2022 at 10.00 hrs.	10.01.2023 upto 17.30 hrs.	11.01.2023 at 11.30 hrs.

Other terms and conditions can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

All corrigendum / cancellation of tender if any, will only be uploaded in the above web site.

Additional Chief Engineer, Eastern Circle-I, Cuttack. OIPR-32370/11/0011/2223

A-905

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD

(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)

49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan Race Course Road Bengaluru - 560 001. website: www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-35/16229/2022-23 Date: 21.12.2022

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER

(Through GOK e - Procurement Portal Only)

Tender under two cover bid system is invited for the works mentioned below as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Contractors holding valid Class-I (Civil) issued from KPWD, Government of Karnataka who have got adequate financial resources & sufficient past experience for the following works of (1) Establishment of Plug & Play Infrastructure at Plot No.2/C-1 to 5, Belur Industrial Area, Dharwad District. (2) Formation of Industrial Layout Including Formation of 24M Wide Roads, 18M Wide Roads & 15M Wide Roads Including Asphalting, Construction of RCC Side Drains, RCC Cross Drainage Works, RCC Utility Ducts & Chambers, & HDPE Water supply Line at Kanivehalli Boundary Block of Bavanahalli Industrial Area, Malur Taluk, Kolar District. (3) Formation of Industrial Layout Including Formation of 30M, 24M & 18M Wide Roads Including Asphalting, Construction of RCC Side Drains, RCC Cross Drainage Works & HDPE Dual Water Supply Pipe Line at Phase-2 Boundary Block, 3rd Phase Mulwada Industrial Area in Kolhar Taluk (Earlier Basavanabagewadi Taluk), Vijayapura District.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : 11.01.2023 upto 04:00 pm.

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the E-Procurement Portal https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in.

Sd/-

Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/3658/Zen/2022-23

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5th Anniversary 03-11-2022

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Thiru. A. VADIVEL

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15-09-1912 - 03-11-2017

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Daughters-in-law, Grand Sons & Grand Daughters

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DEATH

DEATH

OBITUARY

Shri. S. Sarveswara Rau

(01-04-1936 - 18-12-2022)

Retd. Regional Field Mgr. ROCHE, Hyd. & Former in-Charge for Bharatiya Yog Sansthan (BYS) Chennai Chapter. With Profound Sorrow we inform the demise of our beloved father

With Reverence:

Son: Venkat - 98405 94564

Daughters: Sujatha - 97909 08109

Hema - 98407 44490

R.G.NANAVEL (68) Retired Senior Engineer - Printing, The Hindu, Chennai passed away on 21-12-2022. Address: Malles Akasha, Villa No:60, Nookampalayam Main Road, Perumbakkam, Ch-100. Ct: 9841567622

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IN BRIEF



Horatti is Chairman of the Karnataka Legislative Council

Basavaraj Horatti, an eight-time MLC, was on Wednesday unanimously chosen Chairman of the Legislative Council of Karnataka. The choice of Mr. Horatti, who joined the BJP recently, as the Chairman became unanimous after the Opposition Congress and JD(S) did not field any candidate for the post. Mr. Horatti was declared elected after a voice vote in the House.

Woman gives birth in front of hospital, baby in critical care

A eight-month pregnant woman was delivered of a baby in front of the Old Government General Hospital in Vijayawada on Tuesday night. While the relatives of Aruna were negotiating with the hospital staff for admission, she went into labour and the infant fell down in the course of delivery. The family members alleged that the infant fell down due to the negligence of the staff. GGH Resident Medical Officer denied the allegation. He said when the staff were trying to arrange a stretcher to shift Aruna to the maternity ward, she threw up and gave birth. The baby was subsequently kept in the ventilator in the special newborn care unit.

Kerala, Karnataka likely to go on renewed COVID alert

In the light of a spike in COVID-19 cases in China, South Korea, Japan, Brazil, and the United States, Karnataka is thinking of making COVID-appropriate behaviour compulsory again. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday said that given the trend of rising cases in other parts of the world, Kerala might also increase its vigil against COVID-19.

We will enter Karnataka like China entered India: Raut

Shiv Sena leader censures Maharashtra CM for not taking action on boundary row; Minister Desai says Maharashtra will have to rethink water supply to Karnataka if comments are not stopped

The Hindu Bureau
PUNE

The Maharashtra-Karnataka boundary cauldron was kept boiling with Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) leader Sanjay Raut on Wednesday censuring Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's alleged "failure" to take any stance on Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai's continuing "verbal aggression". He said the Opposition could enter Karnataka in the manner in which China has entered Indian territory.

"The BJP-led Central government in Delhi keeps saying that it will not cede an inch of land to China. But China keeps entering



Karnataka CM is deliberately stoking the fumes of boundary row because he is aware that Maharashtra has an extremely weak government

SANJAY RAUT
Shiv Sena leader

Indian territory. Like China, even we will enter the [disputed] areas of Karnataka...we do not need anyone's permission. But this is a united country and we want to keep peace. Karnataka CM is deliberately stoking the fumes of this controversy because he is aware that Maharashtra has an extremely weak government," alleged Mr.

Raut, a Rajya Sabha MP. His remarks came in the wake of the Bommai government's stance to pass a resolution in the Karnataka Legislature "that not even an inch of land" would be given to Maharashtra. Maharashtra Minister and Eknath Shinde faction leader Shambhuraj Desai warned that if Mr. Bommai did not refrain from mak-

ing "irresponsible statements", then Maharashtra would have to rethink about supplying water from its dams to the neighbouring State.

"When the case is *sub judice*, a Chief Minister should not use threatening language," Mr. Desai said. He warned that Mr. Bommai ought to keep in mind that Karnataka is dependent on water supply from the Koyna and Krishna dams during dry season of March and April.

Meanwhile in Bengaluru, Mr. Bommai took serious exception to Mr. Raut's statement that they would "attack Karnataka like China". The Chief Minister said he would take up the matter with Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

IUML disowns Wahab for praising BJP Ministers, seeks explanation



P.V. Abdul Wahab

The Hindu Bureau
MALAPPURAM

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) has disowned the statements made by P.V. Abdul Wahab, party's member in the Rajya Sabha, praising the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Ministers V. Muraleedharan and Rajeev Chandrasekhar.

IUML State president Syed Sadikali Shihab Thangal has sought an explanation from Mr. Wahab about the circumstances in which he praised Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan and Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Rajeev Chandrasekhar.

Mr. Wahab, while taking

part in a discussion in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, said Mr. Muraleedharan was Kerala's ambassador and that he was doing well. Mr. Wahab also contested a criticism levelled by CPI (M) MP John Brittas against Mr. Muraleedharan.

According to Mr. Wahab, Mr. Chandrasekhar too was doing good as Minister of State.

Dy. CM Fadnavis flags 'eco-system of paan shops, cafes' near schools in Maharashtra

Press Trust of India
NAGPUR

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday flagged a "growing eco-system" of paan shops, cafeterias and the presence of anti-social elements near schools and said remedial measures are being taken.

Mr. Fadnavis, who holds the Home portfolio, was responding to a calling attention motion moved by some BJP MLCs in the Legislative Council against the backdrop of the alleged sexual attack on a girl student in a civic-run school in Mumbai.

"Home and the Department of Education Secretaries would meet to chalk out a plan to inspect the growing eco-system of paan shops, cafeterias and the presence of anti-social elements near schools in the State," Mr. Fadnavis said in a written reply.

Among other measures, he reiterated the use of mobile phones is prohibited on the premises of schools and the respective management has been instructed.

Use of mobile phones
"A teenage girl student was sexually assaulted in the classroom by two students of Class 8 in a civic-run school in Matunga in the first week of December. Similarly, a nine-year-old girl was raped and her body thrown near Kalyan railway station," MLC Uma



Home and Education Department Secretaries would chalk out a plan, says Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

Khapse said. Ms. Khapse said the use of mobile phones is on the rise among teenagers. "They are accessing obscene videos on the Internet... getting attracted to violence and revenge," she said.

MLC Pravin Darekar said the number of shops selling paans and cigaretttes is growing where anti-social elements lure girls by offering chocolates.

Leader of the Opposition and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve spoke about mushrooming of cafeterias near schools in Akola and Beed districts.

"The government will also install CCTVs in each school in phases," Mr. Fadnavis said. He informed about measures being taken by the State government which include equipping cyber laboratories with the latest technology to effectively investigate cyber-related complaints.

Singareni Collieries in Telangana clocks highest production

The Hindu Bureau
PEDDAPALLI

The Telangana government-owned Singareni Collieries Company Ltd. (SCCL) clocked its highest daily coal production of 2.24 lakh tonnes on Tuesday in the current fiscal (2022-23).

Daily dispatches at the SCCL touched a new high of 2.35 lakh tonnes on Tuesday, which was also the highest single day dispatch in the present financial year, SCCL sources said.

The SCCL achieved the highest daily overburden removal of 15.4 lakh cubic meters earlier this month.

This has provided the much-needed momentum to the efforts of the government-owned coal company to achieve its annual production target of 70 million tonnes for 2022-23. The feat assumes significance as production was disrupted in heavy rain that pounded the State's coal belt region during the previous monsoon.

The SCCL has set in motion an action plan to make up for production losses and step-up coal production as well as dispatches in the remaining little over three months in the present financial year. The SCCL management has issued a slew of guidelines to the General Managers of all the coal mining areas to ensure daily coal production in the range of 2.3 lakh tonnes to meet the target in the stipulated time.

SCCL Chairman and Managing Director N. Sridhar on Wednesday congratulated the employees for achieving the feat.

Heralding festive season



In full bloom: People visiting 'Nagaravasantham', a flower show, in Thiruvananthapuram in the run-up to the Christmas and New Year celebrations. The show, which started on Wednesday, is being organised by the Kerala Rose Society, the Tourism Department and the District Tourism Promotion Council, in association with the City Corporation. S. MAHINSHA

CPI(M) State leadership meet begins on an optimistic note

G. Anand
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] commenced a two-day State leadership meeting with a palpable sense of optimism. The Left Democratic Front government appeared inching towards detente with the Church in the ecologically sensitive zone (ESZ) issue.

Thamarassery Bishop Remigose Inchananiyil signalled a positive note by stating that an anti-government agitation on the ESZ issue seemed superfluous. He said the government had taken convincing steps to rectify the anomalies in the satellite survey conducted to enumerate human habitations and artificial structures in the Supreme Court-proposed

one-kilometre buffer zone around protected forests.

The CPI(M) also appears subtly smug that it has taken the wind out of the sails of the Congress by stymieing the Opposition's move to capitalise on the ESZ issue. Earlier, it resolved the fishermen's agitation against the Vizhinjam port without losing much political ground to the Opposition.

Ties with IUML
The CPI(M) seems to keep the likelihood of the party finding common political ground with the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) beguilingly on the boil to keep the Opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) in disarray. It seems the CPI(M) wants to appear as if it is

tiptoeing towards the goal of consolidating minority votes with the IUML's "implicit" support for the LDF to disadvantage the BJP and the Congress at a stroke in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

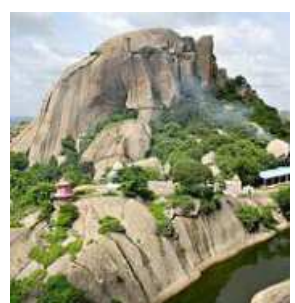
Positive light
Notably, the CPI(M) has highlighted the IUML's support for the Bill divesting the Governor's powers as Chancellor of State universities and completion of the Vizhinjam port in a positive light to keep the Congress guessing. The CPI(M) is walking a tightrope in the LDF on the League question. It has ruled out an "overnight" political alliance to ally the reservations of allies, chiefly the CPI, about accommodating the IUML in the LDF.

'Ramadevarabetta should be developed as Ayodhya of South'

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

Karnataka Higher Education Minister C.N. Ashwath Narayan, who is also in charge of Ramanagara district, has urged Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai to constitute a committee to build a temple at Ramadevarabetta in Ramanagara on the lines of the Ram temple at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh.

In a letter to Mr. Bommai and Muzrai Minister Shashikala Jolle, Mr. Narayan requested that Ramadevarabetta be developed as 'Ayodhya of South



Ramadevarabetta is located on the Bengaluru-Mysuru highway. FILE PHOTO

India'. Mr. Narayan said that a Ram temple should be built using 19 acres belonging to the Department of Muzrai at Ramadevarabetta.

Palm-leaf manuscript museum with audio-visual technology opens window to little-known history

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will inaugurate a palm-leaf manuscript museum with modern audio-visual technology at the renovated Central Archives, Fort, here on Thursday.

Set up by the Archives Department, the ₹3-crore museum has eight theme-based galleries where select manuscripts from one of the biggest palm-leaf collections in the country will be displayed.

As many as 187 old and rare manuscripts stored at Central Archives and the department's regional offices in Ernakulam and



All set: The palm-leaf manuscript museum at the Central Archives, Fort, in Thiruvananthapuram. S. MAHINSHA

Kozhikode will be housed in the 6,000-sq ft museum, arranged by the State government's nodal agency for museums Kerala-Mu-

seum of History and Heritage, in the over 300-year-old heritage structure in the heart of the city. The manuscripts in an-

cient scripts such as Vattezhuthu, Kolezhuthu, Malayanna, and ancient Tamil and Malayalam take visitors through the social, political, cultural, and economic history of Kerala.

Rarely accessible
The manuscripts which delve into aspects as diverse as tax, administration, and trade to education, prisons, and festivals in the erstwhile Travancore, Kochi, and Malabar provide a fascinating glimpse of history that is rarely accessible to the common man.

Besides palm-leaf manuscripts, scrolls, bamboo splints, and copper plates

are included in the collection. The first gallery 'History of Writing' is an introduction to the evolution of writing, particularly in Kerala, and introduces visitors to the Marayur cave paintings and engravings and the stamps and seals used in Harappa, through their replicas.

The other galleries are 'Land and people', 'Administration', 'War and peace', 'Education and health', 'Economy', 'Art and culture', amid the Mathilakom records (a collection of 3,000 cadjan manuscript rolls possessed by Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple).



Concerning sequence

India's vaccination strategy should accommodate for SARS-CoV-2 changes

The spurt in coronavirus cases reported out of China has triggered global alarm. India's Health Ministry has issued a directive to States to send positive samples to the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) to check for new, concerning strains. The Health Minister, too, has called for a review meeting of the coronavirus situation in India. India's official numbers suggest that, thus far, there is little to worry. There are only 3,408 active cases. Only one district has a test positivity rate of over 10% and only four between 5 and 10%, as per the latest available weekly data. India's COVID-19 vaccination coverage has exceeded 219.33 crore, and there are no signs of distress being reported out of hospitals. However, the experience of previous years is that it is usually many weeks after which a noticeable spike, let alone a wave, is confirmed by health authorities. There is scarce monitoring and mask mandates for public gatherings, airports and railway stations have been removed everywhere; so, low numbers do not necessarily mean new variants are not taking root.

In China, despite reports of crowded mortuaries, hospital admissions piling up and stocked-out pharmacies, weekly death counts are officially in the single digits. The prevalent opinion is that the lifting of curbs, after almost three years of some of the most restrictive containment measures, has now exposed a large swathe of people who lack 'natural immunity'. Some mathematical modelling projections calculate a million COVID-19 cases in the coming days in China. Given that much of the world has moved to normalcy in terms of travel, the concern is that this surge is likely to reverberate globally with many more infections, even in India, inevitable. There are two key lessons that can be derived from the Chinese experience: long lockdowns cannot eliminate the virus or prevent the development of new strains, and the only reasonable defence possible against severe disease is via vaccines. China has largely depended on home-grown vaccines such as CoronaVac and Sinopharm vaccines that rely on the inactivated virus technology. Despite 90% of the population receiving a single dose, and half, a second dose, the numbers in China suggest that waning immunity is a *fait accompli*. The big lesson for India is to not only establish the prevalent coronavirus variants but also whether the administered vaccines continue to be efficacious. While most of the vaccines administered in India are Covishield, and thus of the spike protein, it may be time to accommodate for changes in the virus. The sequencing of strains by INSACOG should not remain an academic exercise.

Ties with Taliban

India must curtail Afghan engagement as long as the repressive regime exists

In its latest outrageous decision, the Taliban regime has announced a ban on female students studying in universities. The "cabinet" meeting decision is one in a series that wipes out the many societal gains since 2001, the last time the Taliban was in power. These decrees include banning Afghan schoolgirls from studying above grade six, job restrictions and a ban on women at gyms and public parks, with public floggings for those travelling without male relatives chaperoning them. In effect, a regime that is growing crueller and less rational by the day, wants about half the country's population out of public sight. Making the decision publicly and officially is the regime's way of thumbing its nose at the international community by reneging on promises made during the Doha talks, including establishing an "inclusive" government. The international community must now review its current policy towards the Taliban 2.0 regime. While no country recognises the Taliban officially, many openly engage with the regime leaders; more than a dozen, including India, have diplomatic missions. The Government has sought to explain its decision to go back into Afghanistan and to even meet with Ministers such as Sirajuddin Haqqani who were responsible for attacks and killings at Indian missions as pragmatic policy to ensure India's security and the smooth delivery of aid. In fact, these policies have only made it more comfortable for the Taliban to continue to rule, while giving shelter to terrorist organisations, including those that target India. In addition, New Delhi's decision to cancel all visas to Afghans, hurt female students seeking an education in India the most.

Instead of pleading helplessness, there is much that the global community can do, acknowledging that women's rights are at the core of the issue with the Taliban, and not just a "desirable" outcome that is optional in Afghanistan's future. It must curtail engagement with the Taliban, which depends on external assistance to run its government structures. Leading nations should also create platforms outside Afghanistan for non-Taliban Afghan leaders, particularly women who had been elected in the past, to regroup, organise and voice an alternative vision to the dark one the Taliban seems set at thrusting the country into. India, as a regional leader, must review its "hands-off" approach to the people of Afghanistan who have clearly suffered many deprivations in the past year. Lofty words at the United Nations Security Council and other international fora have done very little to alleviate those hardships, and even less to further India's interests or goodwill amongst a people that it has historically been seen as a good friend to.

The subject of the spiralling costs of cancer medicines and their implications that have frequently been highlighted the world over were dwelled on in a recent report ("Cancer Care Plan and Management") by the Rajya Sabha's Standing Committee on Health (bit.ly/3jfmXLG). Alluding to the implications of the high cost of cancer care, the Committee noted that "about 40% of cancer hospitalization cases are financed mainly through borrowings, sale of assets and contributions from friends and relatives". This situation has arisen, according to the Committee, because "even average out of pocket spending on cancer care is too high" and that "spending for cancer care in private facilities is about three times that of public facilities". The Committee has, thus, highlighted the seriousness of problems concerning the treatment of cancer, the estimated incidence of which in India was nearly 1.4 million in 2020.

Impact on survival rates

The catastrophic treatment cost has seriously impacted survival rates in developing countries. In breast cancer, while the five-year survival rates in India and South Africa are estimated to be 65% and 45%, respectively, in contrast, in high-income countries, it is nearly 90%. In its explanation of this dismal situation, a World Health Organization (WHO) report on pricing of cancer medicines and its impacts had stated that the cost of a course of standard treatment for early stage HER2 (human epidermal growth factor receptor) positive breast cancer would be equivalent to about 10 years of average annual wages in India and South Africa and 1.7 years in the United States (bit.ly/3v0iRQm).

According to WHO, the costs associated with other medical care and interventions (such as surgical interventions and radiotherapy) and supportive care would make overall care even more unaffordable.

In the treatment protocol for breast cancer, CDK (cyclin-dependent kinase) inhibitors constitute a major therapeutic tool, especially for metastatic breast cancer. Three drugs, Ribociclib, Palbociclib and Abemaciclib, belong to this therapeutic class, which help in slowing the spread of cancer cells in the body. A month's treatment using these drugs could range between ₹48,000 and ₹95,000 and the patient is expected to take one of these medicines for the rest of her life.

If one can tabulate the use of cancer drugs and the approximate price for a month's treatment one has: Ribociclib (Novartis) ₹64,455; Palbociclib (Pfizer) ₹87,000; Abemaciclib (Eli Lilly) between



Biswajit Dhar

is Professor of Economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University



Chetali Rao

is Consultant, Third World Network

With the Rajya Sabha's Standing Committee on Health expressing concern over the high cost of cancer treatment, the Government invoking Section 100 of the Patents Act is a way forward

₹47,752 and ₹95,000 (Sources: www.lmg.com.pharmeasys.in/).

The justifications by pharma companies

Excessive costs of breast cancer medicines can be explained by the interplay of two related factors. The first is the argument advanced by the large pharmaceutical companies – that they spend over \$3 billion in bringing a new molecule to the market, which they must recoup in order to remain in the market for innovation. However, the WHO report mentioned above observed that spending on research and development may bear little or no relationship to how pharmaceutical companies set cancer medicine prices. Companies set prices with an eye to maximise profits, thus denying patients from taking advantage of medical breakthroughs.

A second factor that allows the companies to sustain their high profit margins is intellectual property protection. Over the past three decades, pharma companies in the developed world have successfully persuaded their governments to strengthen the rights that they derive from patents and other forms of intellectual property rights by which they can exercise monopoly control over their products. Moreover, the scope and the power of these monopolies can become nearly absolute due to several factors, of which two are as follows.

Ordinarily, patent rights over a medicine last until the expiry of its patent term, after which generic competition leads to a reduction in its price. However, in the case of several non-communicable diseases, including cancer, the situation could be quite different. Even before the generic producers enter the market, newer therapies could be introduced as standard care for treatment, replacing drugs of an earlier generation. Additionally, in the case of pharmaceutical patents, the leading firms in the industry often obtain patents on incremental innovations involving older medicines ("evergreening" of patents), thus extending their monopoly rights over the medicines.

The three breast cancer medicines mentioned above are currently under patent protection – implying that Indian companies cannot manufacture these medicines without the consent of the right holders. Pfizer's patent rights on Palbociclib will expire in 2023, while Novartis' rights on Ribociclib and Eli Lilly's rights on Abemaciclib would expire between 2027 and 2029, respectively. Therefore, high prices on these medicines will continue at least until 2029, and possibly beyond, if these drugs are subjected to "evergreening".

The lack of access to these critical medicines has not only pushed the life of patients and their families into deep financial stress but it has also jeopardised their right to live with dignity, a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court of India has interpreted right to life as the most precious human right, which forms the "ark of all other rights must therefore be interpreted in a broad and expansive spirit so as to invest it with significance and vitality which may endure for years to come and enhance the dignity of the individual and the worth of the human person" (bit.ly/3BKL6Gx). In this spirit, the Court has, in several judgments interpreted right to health as an extension of right to life under Article 21. Further, it must be mentioned that according to the WHO Constitution, "enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being" (bit.ly/3WpSvDg).

A way out

Thus, when all aforementioned considerations demand that cancer medicines must be provided to the suffering at affordable prices, what are the options before the Government? The most obvious option is to authorise Indian companies to domestically produce high-priced cancer medicines, including those mentioned above, by granting compulsory licences (CLs) in keeping with Sections 84 and 92 of the Patents Act. The CLs override patent rights, enabling domestic companies to manufacture generic alternatives when prices of patented medicines are high. Alternatively, the Government can invoke provisions of Section 100, which empowers it to authorise any entity to use a patented invention without the authorisation of the patent holder. Section 100 can be useful if no domestic company shows interest in obtaining a CL for any of the cancer medicines mentioned above. In view of the concerns expressed by the Rajya Sabha's Standing Committee on Health regarding the high prices of cancer medicines, invoking the provisions of Section 100 seems to be the best way forward.

In the recently concluded WTO Ministerial conference, there was an agreement that the CLs can be used for increasing domestic production of COVID-19 vaccines and medicines by developing countries. When the present situation looks propitious for the granting of CLs, why is the Indian government stepping aside from using this instrument to promote the domestic production of cancer medicines, and making them affordable?

The 'invincible originality' of Srinivasa Ramanujan

It was Shakespeare who said, "To hold as 'twere, the mirror up to nature".

The English computer scientist Alan Turing's "imitation game" or "Turing test" takes the stance that a machine successfully represents a human if it responds to a question like a human mind does. From Plato's *mimesis* (representation) as the principle of art, to the Turing test, and to recent progresses in artificial intelligence, "the key to artificial intelligence has always been the representation" (Jeff Hawkins).

Taking representation further, can a machine "create" new things? Latest advancements in technology have attempted to "create". The recent buzz around ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer), a software tool that can answer questions on almost any topic, carry on conversations with humans, write poems, computer programs and perform many more complex tasks that require intelligence, is testimony that artificial intelligence can "create". One can also mention here Google's product LaMDA (Language Model for Dialogue Applications) that is similar to ChatGPT and other sophisticated products (Dall E) that can create image from verbal descriptions. Broadly speaking, the products mentioned above learn to be creative from already existing information: human conversations and documents and pictures, to synthesise and create.

Research by a machine

Extending these capabilities, can a machine do research? In early 2021, a team of Israeli scientists announced a software tool called 'The Ramanujan Machine' that creates mathematical conjectures which are equations without proof. Mathematicians then prove or disprove these conjectures, thereby establishing theorems. Conjectures in mathematics shed light on newer frontiers that otherwise lurk in tenebrous corners. Srinivasa Ramanujan was famous for such conjectures. From 1904 till his passing in



S. Varahasimhan

is a senior professional developing software solutions with artificial intelligence

The contributions of the mathematical genius, whose birth anniversary falls today, are inimitable even in the age of artificial intelligence

1920, Ramanujan, recorded more than 3,000 equations that were mostly conjectures because he did not supply proof. The American mathematician Bruce C. Berndt, an expert on Ramanujan's works, says that most of Ramanujan's conjectures are correct as established by the proofs provided *pari passu* with their generalisation in the last 100 years.

'Unparalleled ability'

How does the Ramanujan Machine imitate Ramanujan? To understand this, one may consider Ramanujan's formulae on π ($22/7$ is only an approximation to π). In 1914, Ramanujan published multiple formulae to compute using modular equation which is, roughly speaking, an equation in x that equals the same equation in powers of x , i.e., x^k ; the solutions of the equation were manipulated to yield the decimals of to astonishing accuracy. The mathematicians J.M. Borwein and P.B. Borwein who computed to great accuracy in the 1980s said, "Ramanujan was unparalleled in his ability".

However, the Ramanujan Machine adopts a different approach to compute formulae for mathematical constants such as π , e , etc. It does so by taking a mathematical structure such as a continuous fraction on one side of an equation and the mathematical constant such as π on the other side, with the two sides yet to be matched. The software then employs high computing power and algorithms to iteratively match both sides and a conjecture is discovered. In the last couple of years, dozens of conjectures have been discovered this way.

Is this advancement a pronouncement that Ramanujan's creativity was held high solely by the stanchions of his calculating speed and memory? Mathematicians aver that Ramanujan's intuition, as seen in his works, was *non pareil*; Ramanujan could connect different mathematical domains deeply with "invincible originality" (G.H. Hardy). The ramifications of such

connections between mathematical abstractions that Ramanujan was prescient of have continued to unravel for over a century now, leading to remarkable technological applications. For example, elliptic curves are widely studied in number theory because of their properties that have applications in cryptography which make computer network communications secure. Ramanujan's contributions here are significant: he developed certain equations called class invariants which generate elliptic curves suitable for encryption and this led to Elliptic Curve Cryptography, an efficient cryptographic technique, in 1985, many decades after his demise.

A leap of genius

Another instance of his originality was his discovery of mock-theta functions, his swan song; working on it might have been a palliative to him in his painful last days. George Andrews, an American mathematician and an expert on mock theta function, elegantly surmised that Ramanujan might have discovered it by starting from hypergeometric series whose consecutive terms form ratios that follow a pattern. George Andrews adds that it is a plausible method to arrive at mock-theta functions "provided you had the genius to recognize".

In the light of such deep insights from Ramanujan, George Andrews remarked on the eponymous machine, "I expect its role to be that of an important auxiliary tool." Formulae involving fundamental constants such as π have been discovered only sporadically in mathematical history; and by making such discoveries automatic and more frequent, the machine can lead to more frequent mathematical advancements. In general, artificial intelligence tools are expected to make things happen faster because they now imitate cogitation.

As for Ramanujan, he is inimitable even in the age of artificial intelligence – as any genius is.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Political advertisements'

The Delhi Lieutenant Governor's 'orders' for the recovery of ₹97 crore from the ruling Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi, though tinted with a shade of political vendetta, involves the basic question of misuse of public money to serve party interests. Government-financed, election-oriented media advertisements, intended to advance the prospects of ruling parties and up the

images of party leaders, are a usual scenario in our democratic governance. The public perception is rightly included in the report of the N.R. Madhava Menon panel, set up by the top court, which highlighted that 'most government advertisements are misuse of public funds and are directed to gain political mileage for the ruling party and glorification of leaders'. In the Delhi case, the AAP has to elaborate on the

existence of a Committee on Content Regulation in Government Advertising and whether the committee had investigated the advertisements as in a High Court order. It is not enough to evade the question. The media too is very unlikely to highlight the issues involved, obviously for its own monetary interests in the advertisement charges. **P.R.V. Raja**, Pandalam, Kerala

Delineation is critical

The point is the Indian Army and People's Liberation Army of China have different perceptions of where the Line of Actual Control (LAC), between the territories of India and China lies, fuelling conflicts since 1962 between the troops posted in these high altitudes. With the LAC not having been delineated and demarcated adequately, the LAC is open to interpretations. This is also

creating conflict among the political class, in turn demoralising our jawans. With the latest technologies, is it not possible to delineate the borders, and identify the buffer zones? **J.R.D. Rajakumar**, Chennai

Conversion

Religion is a code of moral principles based on the teachings of god. People, therefore, have a right to adopt any religion. If

conversion is for money or by coercion, sincerity of heart is doubtful. But some politicians add colour to the issue by politicising it to suit their needs.

M.A. Sheriff, Chennai



Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address.

Benchmarks for ECs' appointments

The way India's constitutional and political structures have evolved over the years seems to have made elections almost a mechanistic and ritualistic exercise. The reason behind this is the setting up and functioning of the Election Commission of India (ECI). This has come into public discourse because of the hearings in the Supreme Court on the appointment of Election Commissioners (ECs).

While many issues related with the ECI have been discussed in court hearings and outside, a deeper look at the ECI may be useful, given its role in the preservation of democracy in the country.

Working of the Constitution
Article 324 of the Constitution is the fountainhead that creates the ECI. This brings to mind the larger issue of the working of the Constitution. For this, it is worth recalling what two stalwarts of Constitution-making (the President of the Constituent Assembly (CA) and the Chairman of the Drafting Committee for the Constitution) said in their final speeches in the CA when the Constitution was finally adopted.

While commending the adoption of the Constitution to the CA on November 25, 1949, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said, "However good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot. The working of a Constitution does not depend wholly upon the nature of the Constitution."

The next day, on November 26, 1949, almost echoing Dr. Ambedkar's words, Dr. Rajendra Prasad said, "Whatever the Constitution may or may not provide, the welfare of the country will depend upon the way in which the country is



Jagdeep S. Chhokar

is the Co-founder of election watchdog Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), which is a petitioner in the case in the Supreme Court

administered. That will depend upon the men who administer it... If the people who are elected are capable and men of character and integrity, they would be able to make the best even of a defective Constitution. If they are lacking in these, the Constitution cannot help the country. After all, a Constitution, like a machine, is a lifeless thing. It acquires life because of the men who control it and operate it, and India needs today nothing more than a set of honest men who will have the interest of the country before them."

If we take the above-mentioned views of the two luminaries as a guide for choosing who should be assigned the task of ensuring that the roots of democracy are kept appropriately watered and nourished, the answer is Election Commissioners (ECs).

All the arguments and proposals mentioned during the court hearings will, obviously, be an improvement over the existing system of appointment of ECs but if we want ECs to match the qualities stated by Dr. Ambedkar and Dr. Prasad, then we need to go beyond how Article 324 of the Constitution and the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991, have been operationalised so far.

Elevation of EC to CEC

One major weakness in the system(s) of appointments of the ECs proposed so far is that they all perpetuate the bureaucratisation of the ECI, which is not even hinted at in the Constitution anywhere. Two visible manifestations of this are the so-called elevation of ECs to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), and the tenures of ECs and CEC. The elevation is a clear violation of the principle of *primus inter pares*. Monopolisation of the positions of ECs and CEC by the administrative services is too obvious to need highlighting.

So, how do we find persons

who will come close to the expectation of Dr. Ambedkar and Dr. Prasad? For this, we need to go outside the existing frameworks. Marginal improvements are not going to be enough. Bold actions are called for.

For this, the following process is proposed. An existing committee of Parliament or a new committee formed for this purpose should propose the qualifications and requirements for persons to be appointed as ECs/CEC. The proposals of the committee should be put to Parliament and should be considered approved only if they are approved by two-thirds majority of the members of Parliament present and voting. Once the qualifications and requirements have been approved by Parliament, the same committee should be entrusted with the task of searching for and selecting individuals proposed to be appointed as ECs/CEC.

The committee should invite nominations and applications of individuals appropriate for or interested in being appointed as ECs/CEC.

The committee should send its recommendations to Parliament for consideration.

Recommendations of the committee should be considered approved by Parliament only if approved by two-thirds majority of the members of Parliament present and voting. Once Parliament approves the recommendations, they should be sent to the President for approving the appointments. Once appointed, such persons should stay in their positions for six years or the age of 75 years, whichever is earlier. Persons above the age of 69 years should not be appointed.

Obviously, the above will be seen to be a very cumbersome process, particularly given that Parliament is more or less dysfunctional today. Nonetheless, if the democracy in its real sense is to be preserved in the country, the importance of the ECI has to be recognised and accepted.

Monopolisation of the positions of ECs and Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) by the administrative services is too obvious these days

A shot in the arm for SP-RLD alliance

It defended its bastion in Mainpuri and wrested Khatauli from the BJP

STATE OF PLAY

Anuj Kumar
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The result of the keenly contested bypolls for two Assembly seats and one Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh has come as a shot in the arm for the beleaguered Samajwadi Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal alliance in the State.

The principal Opposition defended its bastion in Mainpuri Lok Sabha and wrested Khatauli from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by cementing ties that it could not stitch during the Assembly polls earlier this year. In Rampur Sadar, Azam Khan lost his citadel but the party secured a moral point. SP president Akhilesh Yadav learnt his lessons from the reverses of Azamgarh and Rampur Lok Sabha bypolls and canvased extensively for his wife Dimple Yadav in Mainpuri, where the party's prestige was at stake as the bypoll was necessitated because of the demise of SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav.

The margin of the victory swelled to almost three times that of the last polls, when the party fought in alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). It was fuelled by the return of Shivpal Yadav, the estranged uncle of Mr. Akhilesh, to the family fold with full force, ensuring lead in all five assembly constituencies of Mainpuri Lok Sabha. Earlier this year, the BJP won two of the segments. The biggest margin was registered in Jaswantnagar, the Assembly seat represented by Mr. Shivpal.

Mr. Shivpal was under the radar of the ruling party and when he gravitated towards the family, the frustration of the BJP was evident as Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath de-



scribed him as a pendulum.

In Khatauli, which the SP left for the RLD, the alliance went for the Muslim-Jat-Gurjar combination this time and also garnered some Dalit votes as it joined hands with Chanties that it could not stitch during the Assembly polls.

By fielding a Gurjar strongman, the RLD is pursuing an aggressive brand of politics in the region to take on the local BJP heavyweights from Jat and Saini communities. The victory has consolidated RLD president Jayant Singh's position as the foremost Jat leader despite the BJP's recent outreach towards the community that led the farmers' protest against the contentious farm laws and demand for a law against minimum support price (MSP).

Alongside the caste equation, by raising issues of hike in state approved price (SAP) of sugarcane, flaws in the Agri-veer Scheme, compensation for the deceased in the Lakhimpur Kheri case and moving a private member Bill to amend the age of candidature in Parliament and State legislatures to 21 years, Mr. Singh is addressing concerns of farmers and the youth.

In Rampur Sadar, the alliance lost its bastion to the BJP but gained the moral high ground as the voting percentage remained low at 33%, raising questions on the fairness of the poll. It busted the

BJP's claim that the Pasmandas in the Muslim majority seat would vote for the party.

Interestingly, with the Jat support, Muslims came out in large numbers to vote for the RLD in Khatauli, but the minority community could not find any such cover in Rampur to offset the administration, which seemed keen on a low turnout in Muslim pockets.

Being the first polls under the leadership of State president Bhupendra Chaudhary, the results have left the BJP with a lot to think about, particularly in the sugarcane belt — the epicentre of communal polarisation that brought the BJP to power in 2017.

It has now lost five of six seats in the Muzaffarnagar Lok Sabha seat, represented by Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan who harvested votes for the BJP after the communal riots of 2013. Out of the four seats that are with the SP-RLD alliance, two have Gurjar MLAs and two are represented by Jats. Observers indicate that giving the reins of the State unit in the hands of a Jat leader and appointing Dharmpal Saini as the organisation general secretary has not really shown the desired result so far.

The results will also force the BSP to rethink its strategy as Muslims do not seem to be ditching the SP and a section of Dalits is seeing in Mr. Azad the fighting spirit that Mayawati once espoused. Going forward, all eyes will be on how the SP-RLD accommodates Mr. Azad and what Mr. Akhilesh offers to Mr. Shivpal.

The next test is the elections for the urban local bodies in January. While Mr. Adityanath has described it as the third engine that the party needs, the Opposition would like to build on the stimulus that the bypoll results have provided.

With 11 million cases, infections surge globally in December

COVID-related deaths were higher even in nations with better coverage of booster shots

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

Over 11 million new COVID-19 cases were reported in December worldwide. The new infections were not confined to a region, but were spread across all continents, barring Africa.

A look at the top 15 countries which contributed the most cases in December shows that five were from Asia and Europe each, two from Oceania and South America each, and one from North America as shown in chart 1.

Chart 1 depicts the number of new cases recorded in the first 20 days of December for the top 15 countries. India's figure is also provided as a reference. Japan leads the list with 2.58 million infections followed by South Korea (1.23 million) and the United States (1.19 million). Meanwhile, India has recorded only about 3,600 cases in this period.

Chart 2 depicts the number of new deaths recorded in the first twenty days of December for the top 15 countries which had reported the most cases in this period. India's figure is also provided as a reference. The U.S. tops the list with over 7,500 deaths followed by Japan (4,086 deaths) and Brazil (2,615 deaths). India has recorded 58 deaths in the period.

Notably, the number of reported deaths in China in December was nine, the lowest among the countries considered. In fact, even lower than India's, which is not part of the top 15 list and where the cases have remained very low. However, reports from China are pointing otherwise. A crematorium worker in Chongqing, a city of 30 million in the south west, told the AFP that they had run out of space to keep bodies.

In the southern megapolis of Guangzhou, an employee at one crematorium in Zengcheng district said they were cremating more

than 30 bodies a day. In the north-eastern city of Shenyang, a staff member at a funeral services business said the bodies of the deceased were being left unburied for up to five days because crematoriums are "absolutely packed".

Surprisingly, deaths were also higher in countries which have made strides in vaccinations. More than 4,000 COVID-19 deaths have been recorded in Japan in December, despite 83% of the population completing the initial two doses. Moreover, 127 booster doses have been administered per 100 people in Japan — the highest among the countries listed in chart 1 and 2.

In South Korea and Taiwan too, over 500 deaths have been recorded despite at least 86% of the population receiving the first two doses and over 80 booster shots being administered per 100 people in both nations.

Chart 3 shows the % of population in the countries listed in chart 1 who took the first two doses till December 20, 2022. **Chart 4** shows the number of booster shots administered per 100 people across the same countries. However, the data on vaccination status of those who died in December will help gauge the impact of vaccines better.

The **charts 5 and 6** show COVID-related hospitalisations in the U.S. and number of patients in the ICU in France and Germany. The weekly hospitalisations in the U.S. is on a rising trend and was close to the 40,000 mark on December 18. The number of ICU patients in France and Germany were also on an increasing trend with over 1,000 such patients as of December 20.

While cases continue to be low in India, the share of people who received both the initial doses remained below 70% and only 15.7 booster shots have been administered per 100 people, which is among the lowest in the countries considered. But India also underwent three major COVID-19 waves with many infected.

Counting the cases and deaths

The graphs are sourced from ourworldindata. Cases are rising across all continents barring Africa. Deaths are increasing even in nations with better vaccination coverage

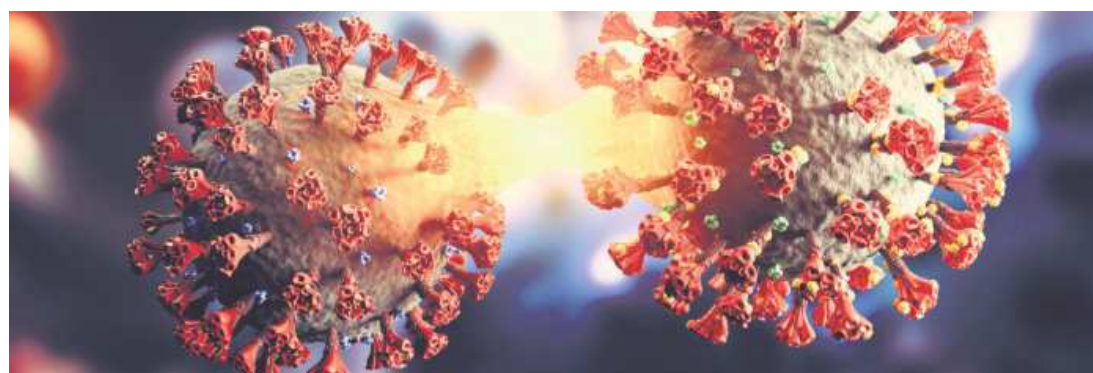


Chart 1: The chart shows the number of new cases recorded in the first 20 days of December in top 15 countries

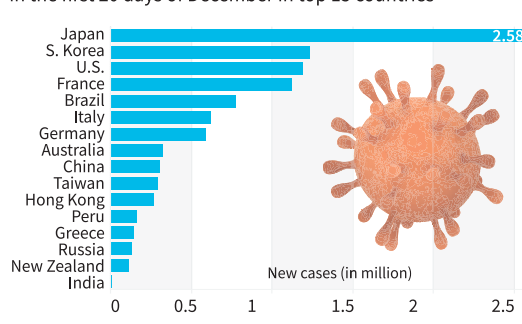


Chart 2: The chart shows the number of new deaths in the first 20 days of December in top 15 countries with most cases

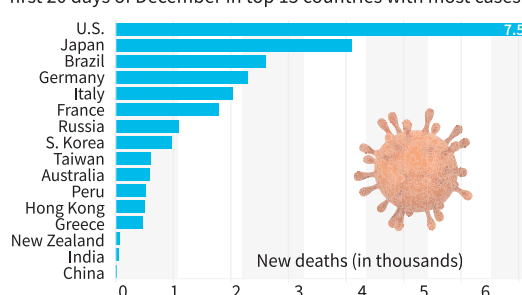


Chart 3: The chart shows the % of population who took the first two doses in the countries listed in chart 1

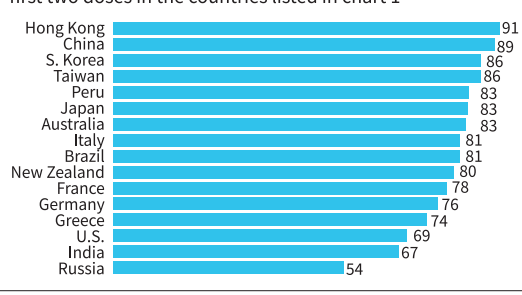


Chart 4: The chart shows the number of booster shots administered per 100 people in countries listed in chart 1

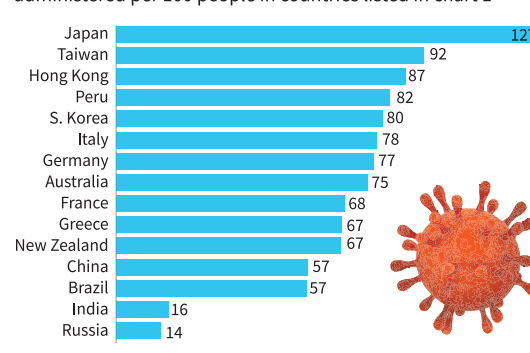


Chart 5: The chart shows the weekly hospitalisations in lakh in the United States

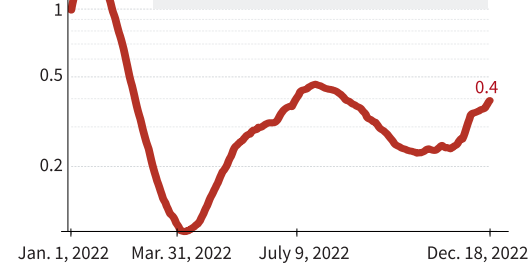
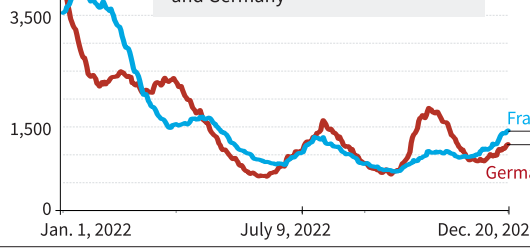


Chart 6: The chart shows the number of ICU patients in France and Germany



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 22, 1972

No political motive in textile mill takeover

New Delhi, Dec. 21: The Foreign Trade Minister, Mr. L.N. Mishra told the Rajya Sabha to-day that the Government proposed to take over those textile mills which had failed to carry out modernisation on their own. They would be taken over after declaring them as "sick" units, he said. He was replying to the debate on the Sick Textile Undertakings (taking over of management) Bill, authorising the take-over of 46 textile mills in various parts of the country, which the House later adopted. The House rejected among other things a marxist, communist amendment seeking to rest all sick textile units in the Central government. Mr. Mishra reiterated that the government did not contemplate nationalisation of the textile industry as such. The action taken under the Bill was purely aimed at "restoring the health" of one of the oldest Indian industries with a good record of service. Mr. Mishra said the government proposed to modernise the taken-over mills, improve production and the working conditions of the employees. He categorically denied that there were "political motives" behind the programme of selective take-over of mills. He said the government laid great stress on modernisation of mills as it was vital for "our survival in world markets". He said the government expected the textile mills to modernise themselves. If it could not be done, the management could declare them as sick or the government would itself declare them so and take them over.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 22, 1922

Silver market

London: Montagu's Silver Report states that the market has displayed a rather weak tendency, mainly on account of easier rates in China and appreciation of sterling in the United States. Indian bazaars have been buying for shipment but to a large extent, sales of silver have been made at the same time for two months' delivery. Bear covering has been carried out rather reluctantly in view of doubtful outlook ahead. The substantial discount at which price for forward delivery stands indicates little confidence obtaining regarding the future. The continent has sold and supplies are fairly free notwithstanding the lower level of prices.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Selecting UPSC, SSC and RRB candidates for government jobs

3.78 In lakh, the number of candidates who were selected for Central government jobs by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and Railway Recruitment Board (RRBs) in the last five years. The government has issued instructions to all departments for the timely filling up of vacant posts. PTI

Growth to ₹2.65 lakh crore in India's auto components industry

34.8 In percentage, the growth in India's auto components industry to ₹2.65 lakh crore in the first-half of 2022-23, riding on domestic demand, the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) informed. During this period, exports of components grew by 8.6% to ₹79.03 lakh crore, while imports climbed up to ₹79.8 lakh crore. PTI

Special trains for Kerala to cater to the Christmas rush

51 The number of special trains to Kerala announced by the Indian Railways to cater to the extra rush of passengers during the upcoming Christmas-New Year season. The Southern Railways announced 17 special train services to different places in Kerala for the festive season. These special trains will be operating from December 22, 2022, to January 2, 2023. PTI

Yet another massive military package for Ukraine from the U.S.

1.8 In \$ billion, the military aid to be sent by the U.S. to Ukraine in a massive package that will for the first time include a Patriot missile battery and precision-guided bombs for their fighter jets, according to U.S. officials. The package will include about \$1 billion in weapons from Pentagon stocks and \$800 million in funding through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative. AP

A record number of immigration applications processed

4.8 In million, the record number of immigration applications processed in Canada, till the end of November 2022, the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) informed. In a statement, the IRCC informed how immigration helped build the country and remained key to the country's success. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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The INS Mormugao and its capabilities

What are the features of the Visakhapatnam-class destroyers? How is the latest addition to the Indian Navy's fleet a shot in the arm for the nation's self-reliance efforts? How will the warship be a strategic advantage for the country in the Indian Ocean region where China is rapidly expanding its influence?

EXPLAINER

Sumeda

The story so far:

In a boost to the country's maritime capabilities, INS Mormugao has officially joined the Indian Navy's fleet, marking a significant milestone for indigenous military expedition. The warship 'Yard 12705', named after the Goan port city of Mormugao, is the second of the four Visakhapatnam-class destroyers being built under the Indian Navy Project 15B, or P15B. The destroyer has multi-dimensional combat capabilities which include surface-to-surface missiles, surface-to-air missiles and modern surveillance radar.

What is Project 15B?

Project 15 was launched in the 1990s to add guided missile destroyers to the inventory of the Indian Navy. The project was named 'Delhi class'. It was followed by Project 15A or Kolkata class which primarily focused on advanced technology and equipment in surface ships. Project 15B or the Visakhapatnam class is a follow-on class of weapon-intensive Project 15A destroyers. The project was launched in January 2011 to incorporate advanced design concepts such as state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, advanced stealth features and a high degree of automation for "improved survivability, sea keeping, stealth and manoeuvrability". The lead ship of Project 15B, INS Visakhapatnam, was the first of the class to be commissioned. Besides INS Mormugao, the other two destroyers are expected to be commissioned between 2023 and 2025.

What are the capabilities of INS Mormugao?

Regarded as "one of the most potent warships to have been constructed in the country", the destroyer is 163 metres long, 17 metres wide and displaces 7,400 tonnes when fully loaded. The ship is propelled by four gas turbines in a combined gas and gas (COGAG) configuration. The propulsion system allows the ship to achieve a speed of more than 30 knots (50km/h) and a maximum range of 4,000 nautical miles. It can accommodate a crew of about 300 personnel.



Into the waters: INS Mormugao docked at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai on the eve of its commissioning into the Indian Navy. AFP

INS Mormugao's firepower comprises BrahMos surface-to-surface missiles (SSM), Barak-8 surface-to-air (SAM) missiles for a long range of shore and sea-based targets and a 76mm super rapid gun mount. The ship is armed with RBU-6000 anti-submarine rocket launchers and 533mm torpedo launchers. It is also equipped to carry and operate multi-role helicopters. Its enhanced stealth features ensure a reduced Radar Cross Section or radar signature.

It is automated with sophisticated digital networks such as the Gigabyte Ethernet-based Ship Data Network (GESDN), the Combat Management System (CMS), Automatic Power Management System (APMS), Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS) and Ship Data Network (SDN). While the CMS performs threat evaluation and resource allocation based on the tactical picture compiled and ammunition available onboard, APMS controls power

management. IPMS is used to control and monitor machinery and auxiliaries and the SDN is the 'information highway for data' from sensors and weapons. The ship has multiple fire zones, battle damage control systems, distributional power systems to enhance survivability in emergencies and a total atmospheric control system to protect the crew against nuclear, biological and chemical threats.

Built with over 75% indigenous content, the commissioning of INS Mormugao is a shot in the arm for India's self-reliance efforts and crucial for the 15-year Indian Naval Indigenisation Plan (INIP) 2015-2030 implemented in 2014 for indigenous development of its resources, equipment and to make the nation self-reliant in defence technology.

What is the strategic importance?

While India's interests are closely tied to the Indian Ocean, China has been rapidly expanding its naval footprint in the region.

Amid growing Chinese strategic interests, India renewed its focus on bolstering its maritime capabilities in the region to counter the threat.

counter the threat.

During the commissioning ceremony of INS Mormugao, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reiterated the government's resolve to prepare the nation to deal with any situation arising due to the changing global scenario. "Economic, political and trade relations between countries are constantly evolving. The COVID-19 pandemic, the situation in the Middle East, Afghanistan and now Ukraine. It directly or indirectly impacts every country in one way or another. In this era of globalisation, almost all nations are dependent on each other in the field of trade. Hence, rule-based freedom of navigation, security of sea lanes etc. have become more important than ever for stability and economic progress of the world," he said.

The addition of a technologically advanced stealth warship to the naval inventory provides a strategic advantage to India and adds to the combat capabilities of the armed forces. Besides surface operations, guided missile destroyers are capable of engaging in anti-aircraft and anti-submarine warfare.

THE GIST

INS Mormugao has officially joined the Indian Navy's fleet, marking a significant milestone for indigenous military expedition. The warship 'Yard 12705', named after the Goan port city of Mormugao, is the second of the four Visakhapatnam-class destroyers being built under Project 15B.

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What is the latest clash between AAP and the Delhi L-G?

Why did the Supreme Court mandate the institution of a Committee on Content Regulation in Government Advertising? How has the Aam Aadmi Party reacted to allegations of excessive spending on advertisements?

Mehul Malpani

The story so far:

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) Vinai Kumar Saxena has directed Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to implement a 2016 order of the Committee on Content Regulation in Government Advertising (CCRGA). The order calls for recovering ₹97.14 crore plus interest from the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for "political advertisements" published or telecast as government advertisements in 2015 and 2016. The move added to the long list of escalations between the AAP-led Delhi government and the L-G.

What is the CCRGA?

A three-member body, the CCRGA was formed by the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in April, 2016, on the directions of the Supreme

Court in its judgment in the *Common Cause vs. Union of India* case in May, 2015. The body is set up to regulate the content of Central and State government advertisements in all media platforms.

The SC had also mandated States to constitute their own respective bodies. While some States have set up committees to regulate public advertising content, some have given consent to the CCRGA to monitor their advertisements.

The SC, in its order had also issued a set of guidelines for public-funded advertising by governments. Some of the guidelines mentioned include that government advertising should maintain political neutrality and avoid glorification of political personalities or projecting a positive impression of the party in power or a negative impression of parties critical of the government. They also should not be used at patronising media houses.

What is the CCRGA's 2016 order?

Months after its formation, the CCRGA, following a complaint from Congress leader Ajay Maken, issued notices to the Delhi government on allegations of violation of the SC-mandated guidelines in publishing advertisements.

In its response, the Delhi government informed the CCRGA that it was going to form a committee of its own as per the 2015 order of the SC, which mandated that States have to set up their own respective bodies to regulate government advertisements' content. Mr. Maken meanwhile had also approached the Delhi High Court in the matter, which ruled in August, 2016, that Union Territories are not authorised to constitute their own committees and will therefore, come under the jurisdiction of the CCRGA. The CCRGA, after its investigation, passed an order on September 16, 2016, ruling that a

number of Delhi government advertisements had violated the guidelines on various fronts such as publishing false/misleading ads, mentioning the party in power by name, self-glorification and targeting political opponents. The committee also directed the Delhi government's Directorate of Information and Publicity (DIP), which issues government campaigns, to identify specific advertisements, quantify the money spent on them, and recover it from the AAP.

After quantifying an amount of ₹97,14,69,137 spent on these advertisements, the DIP on March 30, 2017, directed AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal to pay ₹42,26,81,265 to the State exchequer immediately, and to release the remaining amount directly to the agencies/publications which ran the advertisements within 30 days.

What has been the AAP's response?

The AAP has been at the receiving end of political criticism, with rival parties accusing it of spending huge sums of money on government advertising campaigns and publicity. However, the party, since forming the government in 2015, has been defending its spending on advertisements stating that it is for public knowledge of different government schemes and various awareness campaigns.

THE GIST

The Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has directed the implementation of a 2016 order of the Committee on Content Regulation in Government Advertising. The order calls for recovering ₹97.14 crore plus interest from the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for "political advertisements".

The AAP party however, has been defending its spending on advertisements stating that it is for the public knowledge of different government schemes and various awareness campaigns.

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Good news for all: A Kashmiri artisan paints a Christmas bauble made of paper mache at a workshop ahead of Christmas in Srinagar on December 21. AP



'Tis' the season to be jolly: books which bring tidings of comfort and joy

As Christmas is celebrated with its own regional flair across the country, there are numerous novels, stories and murder mysteries to dip into; the pages are bound to bring you plenty of holiday cheer, festival warmth and some thrills

Joan Sony Cherian

The season of red and green tinsels, plum cakes and snowmen (in our case figures made out of cotton balls and ample amount of glitter) is here. Christmas, while being primarily a religious festival, is celebrated culturally by people from all walks of life across the world. The happiness of the 'good news' announced to the shepherds and the Magi from the East all those years ago has transmuted now to sentiments of forgiveness and good-cheer, an aura we associate particularly with Christmas. Cakes, carols and Christmas movies are some of the trademark ways through which Christmas is celebrated. A humble category we often fail to include are Christmas stories and novels. From classics to mystery to tear-jerkers, books are also a way through which one can get right into the Christmas spirit.

A trip down memory lane
"Oh! but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone. Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!". No list of Christmas books is complete or even begins without mentioning *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. The novella was first published in London by Chapman & Hall in 1843, with illustrations by John Leech. The story revolves around Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserly old man who is visited by three ghosts, the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. The ghosts take old Scrooge through his life, trying to make him understand what Christmas is about and how it will all be too late if he doesn't open his hand and more importantly his heart. Tiny Tim, a crippled toddler, the son of Scrooge's clerk, is an especially moving figure in the novel. It is his

resilience and optimism in the face of his disability and poverty which breaks Scrooge. The story emphasises how Christmas is much beyond a decorated tree, roast-chicken and wine; it is a time of family, friendship and renewal. "Why, for fifty-three years I've put up with it now, I MUST stop Christmas from coming... But HOW?", the Grinch wonders in *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* by Theodor "Dr. Seuss" Geisel written in rhymed verse with illustrations. Set in the town of Who-ville, the Grinch hates Christmas. As he makes plans to sabotage the festival, he realises that whatever he may say or do won't stop Christmas from coming. This small story is yet another classic which makes us look beyond the increasing commercialisation of Christmas to what its true spirit entails.

A dose of mystery and sentiment
Peace and goodwill with a whole lot of blood. These seemed to be the overarching themes in mind when Agatha Christie wrote *Hercule Poirot's Christmas* in 1938. If stories of Christmas cheer and joy turn too saccharine, a gory Christmas murder would be the right avenue to turn to. In the novel, we are introduced to Simeon Lee, an invalid old man who invites his entire family to spend Christmas together, under one roof. The drama is centred around him and his sons – Alfred Lee, the ever-devoted son, and his wife Lydia, George Lee, the miserly parliamentarian, and his young wife, mama's boy David Lee, and his sensible wife Hilda and the black sheep cum prodigal son Harry Lee. Simeon Lee wishes to mend bridges and let bygones be bygones in the spirit of 'peace and goodwill'. Or so he says. But all is not what it seems when the patriarch is found brutally murdered leaving everyone in shock. Everyone but of course, the bearer of grand moustaches, Hercule Poirot. If a murder mystery seems rather

unconventional, a heart-wrenching tale of a father who does not have much time to live, looking back at his life might seal the deal. In *The Deal of a Lifetime*, Fredrik Backman tells the story of a father and his son and the 'women in the grey sweater and folder' who comes every other night to the cancer ward. The father ponders about his relationship with his son one lonely Christmas. He also looks upon his legacy, having achieved the lengths and depths which one could only dream of, especially when one is from an obscure small town like Helsingborg situated in the southernmost part of Sweden. All this until he is offered the deal of a lifetime. 'A life for a life'.

The Indian connect
"O the white dust on the highway! O the stanches in the byway!
O the clammy fog that hovers over earth!
And at Home they're making merry 'neath the white and scarlet berry
What part have India's exiles in their mirth?"
– writes Rudyard Kipling in his poem *Christmas in India*. Kipling laments about celebrating Christmas in an unfamiliar landscape among strangers. One wonders what Mr. Kipling would say if he saw Christmas in India now. But which Christmas shall we show him? In a nation as diverse as India, is there ever just one Christmas?
In *Indian Christmas*, an anthology of essays, hymns and memories edited and contributed to by Jerry Pinto and Madhulika Liddle, this very question is addressed in detail through authors who remember their own Christmases and how the region they occupied informed their celebrations, right from the ingredients used in the cake to the church they attended. Pinto and Liddle start off the collection by fondly talking about their childhood memories of Christmas in

Bombay and Uttar Pradesh respectively. Pinto recollects the rather emaciated Santa Claus and Jim Reeves records and ponders on the birth of the baby, the reason for the season, a refugee in a foreign land who was turned away from everywhere, while Liddle elaborates on Christmas at her ancestral home (*dua ka ghar*, the house of prayer).
In the subsequent plethora of essays, different authors describe their experience of the festivities in their respective hometowns – Kerala, Goa, Calcutta, Chennai, Shillong, Chandigarh and so on. The geographical location and social context added its own flair to the Christmases celebrated across India.
India's pluralist history has a direct bearing on these multi-cultural experiences within Christmas. Manimugdha S. Sharma in his essay titled 'How India's Pluralistic Past Shows the Way Forward' explains how India has always embraced different cultures and ways of life. While in 1581, Jesuit priests were being hanged by Queen Elizabeth Tudor in her mission to get rid of the Catholics, in the court of Mughal emperor Akbar, Jesuit priests were welcomed and their faith celebrated. Over the years Christianity has flourished alongside Islam and Hinduism and other religions, borrowing and giving from one and another, building up for itself a syncretic character. He ends the essay on a word of caution wherein he refers to the attack on Christmas by vigilante forces and hate groups who denounce the 'foreign festival' in the name of God and country. But as Liddle writes, "Indians adopted Christianity, but made it their own".
Similarly, Christmas, often celebrated on a warm summer morning in the south or in sweater weather up-north (dreams of a White Christmas unfortunately often stay as dreams), is 'Indian' precisely because of its cultural variations and will hopefully remain so for years to come.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

"Mr. T. S. Vasantha Kumar of Bangalore wants to know which of the following is correct (a) We look forward to receive your letter (b) We look forward to receiving your letter."
"We look forward to receiving your letter" is correct.
We look forward to seeing you next week.
We don't look forward to the Minister's visit to this place.
We look forward to your participation in the function.
'Look forward to' is followed by a noun or a gerund. It is not followed by a verb."
"Mr. Sanjeeva Reddy of Chamapet wants to know which of the two is correct: (a) fill up the blanks (b) fill in the blanks. Both are correct. You can choose what you like."
"Mr. N. Vaidyanathan of Palani wants to know the difference between 'inflict' and afflict."
"Afflict" is from Latin *ad*, to plus *Higere*, 'to strike to the ground'. You are generally afflicted with or by something.
He is afflicted with heart disease.
He is afflicted with blindness.
He is afflicted with incurable cancer.
He was afflicted by the news of his friend's death.
'Afflict' means 'to distress so severely as to cause persistent suffering'. 'Inflict' means 'to force or impose' something painful or damaging'. You inflict an injury on someone.
He inflicted a heavy blow on the thief.
You inflict something on another but you are afflicted with or by something."
"Mr. D. Thirupalaiah of Cuddappah wants to know the pronunciation of 'debut'.
"De' is pronounced like 'day', 'but' rhymes with 'two' and 'who'. The final 't' is silent. The stress is on the first syllable 'de'. 'Debut' means 'a first appearance in society, or on stage, in sport, etc. as a performer'.
She made her debut as a dancer yesterday.
He made his debut as a magician last week.
His debut in the Lok Sabha was a failure."

THE DAILY QUIZ

National Mathematics Day is celebrated on December 22 every year in honour of the birth anniversary of legendary mathematician, Srinivasa Ramanujan. Here's a quiz on all things numbers

Venkataraman Srinivasan

- QUESTION 1**
What award is given every four years to one or more mathematicians under the age of 40 in recognition of "outstanding mathematical achievement for existing work and for the promise of future achievement"?
- QUESTION 2**
Considered as the first pure mathematician, this Greek taught us that the square of the hypotenuse of a right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of two of its other sides.
- QUESTION 3**
Any one who solves any of the following six problems in mathematics – the Birch and

- Swinnerton-Dyer conjecture, the Hodge conjecture, the Navier-Stokes existence and smoothness, the P versus NP problem, the Riemann hypothesis, and the Yang-Mills existence and mass gap – will be awarded a prize of \$1 million by the Clay Institute. By what name are these problems, along with the already-solved Poincare Conjecture problem, known as?
- QUESTION 4**
Srinivasa Ramanujan at a very early age of 15 had his interest in mathematics unlocked by the book *A Synopsis of Elementary Results in Pure and Applied Mathematics*. Who was the author of this book?
- QUESTION 5**
Which is the only number that cannot be represented in roman numerals?

For all integers $n > 2$, the equation

$$a^n + b^n = c^n$$

cannot be solved with positive integers a, b , and c .

Visual question: Identify this famous theorem in mathematics.

- Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:** 1. Name the teenager who became the youngest to score at the World Cup since Pelé. **Ans: Gavi**
2. The prize money Argentina received. **Ans: \$42 million**
3. The first player to score in five different editions of the World Cup. **Ans: Cristiano Ronaldo**
4. This team has been eliminated from the quarter-final stages of the World Cup for the most number of times. **Ans: England**
5. This team finished third in 1978. **Ans: Brazil**
6. Kylian Mbappe emulated this person in the summit clash. **Ans: Geoff Hurst**
7. Messi has become the record holder for most games played at the World Cup overtaking this player. **Ans: Germany's Lothar Matthaus**
8. The longest game in World Cup history. **Ans: IR Iran versus England.**
9. Vittorio Pozzo (1934, 1938), Carlos Bilardo (1986, 1990), Franz Beckenbauer (1986, 1990) and this person completes this series. **Ans: France Didier Deschamps**
10. Every World Cup final since 1982 has featured at least one player from these two European clubs. **Ans: Bayern Munich and Inter Milan**
Visual: Identify this official. **Ans: Stephanie Frappart**
Early Birds: Sayanti Sarkar| Devjeet Laishram| Abhigya Singh| Pranav Pranjali

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Word of the day

Bombinate: make a buzzing sound
Synonyms: buzz, bombilate
Usage: *The office will be bombinating after the coffee-break.*
Pronunciation: bit.ly/bombinatepro
International Phonetic Alphabet: /bɒmbɪnɪt/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context'

From Page One

Variant linked to China spike first found in July

India has been reporting a “steady decline” in cases, with average numbers around 158 every day in the week ending December 19. Globally however, there has been a rise in daily average cases in the last six weeks, with about 6 lakh instances reported weekly as of December 19, the Health Ministry said in a statement. The dominant variant in India currently is Omicron AB.5, (which is linked to BF.7) although this is based on extremely limited numbers.

“Whether BF.7 behaves differently in a population that has been minimally exposed to the coronavirus as opposed to Indians who have hybrid immunity (multiple doses of the vaccine along with exposure to several variants of the virus) is being investigated by the Indian Council of Medical Research,” one of the officials told *The Hindu*.

An expert told *The Hindu* that India’s real worry was not BF.7 but XBB, a recombinant variant that is a combination of two lineages (BJ.1 and BA.2.75). It is “highly infectious” and had the potential to evade antibodies from existing vaccines. (With inputs from Satyasundar Barik)

‘Follow COVID protocols or suspend yatra’

“Follow the COVID guidelines strictly during Bharat Jodo Yatra. Use of masks-sanitiser should be implemented. Only vaccinated people should participate,” Mr. Mandaviya said in a letter to Mr. Gandhi and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Tuesday. The Health Minister said that BJP MPs from Rajasthan P.P. Chaudhary and Nihal Chand had written to him, expressing concerns over the guidelines not being followed.

Reacting to the letter, Congress’s communications chief Jairam Ramesh said in a statement, “Parliament is meeting normally. Masks are no longer compulsory anywhere, including on flights. BJP has taken out yatras in Rajasthan and Karnataka. There has been no advisory from the Centre to States of late except the one issued yesterday on genome sequencing.” “Public health is far too serious an issue on which to play party politics. If there is a protocol for gatherings, Bharat Jodo Yatra will abide by it undoubtedly,” he added.

Mr. Gehlot said the BJP was upset with the popularity of the long march and wanted to disturb it. “Two days ago, the Prime Minister addressed a rally in Tripura, where no COVID protocol was followed. If the Health Minister is really concerned [about COVID infection] and his intent is not political, then he should have written the first letter to the Prime Minister,” Mr. Gehlot said.

‘Unemployment and inflation hurting India’

Attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi over price rise, Mr. Gandhi said that while Mr. Modi used to talk about inflation earlier, the prices of cooking gas cylinder and petrol had increased several fold during the present regime.

“A cooking gas cylinder cost ₹400 during the UPA rule, but now it is priced at ₹1,200. Similarly, petrol price has crossed ₹100 per litre mark now, while it cost only ₹60 during the UPA regime,” he said.

Mr. Gandhi, without naming anyone, said there was an attempt to hand over the country’s entire wealth to a few big corporate houses. He added that demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax were not “policies”, but “weapons” to kill small and medium traders.

He also made a suggestion to Congress party president Mallikarjun Kharge to ensure that wherever the Congress is in power, the party’s Ministers and MLAs must hit the road once a month to connect with the masses.

Congress’s communications chief Jairam Ramesh, at a press conference, said the yatra was a “historic step” for the Congress and also a “moment of change” for Indian politics.

Forest buffer zone won’t affect people: Pinarayi

He said the government published the survey report so the affected families could flag the anomalies in the survey and help the government incorporate the overlooked details in its final report to the court to bolster the State’s case for a total exemption of human habitats from the intended ESZ. Mr. Vijayan deflected the blame on the Congress for precipitating the situation. He said Congress leader and former Union Minister for Forests and Environment Jairam Ramesh was bullish about establishing a 10-km wide ESZ around forests. Several Congress persons, including Opposition Leader V.D. Satheeshan, backed the “thoughtless” move.

He said the previous government proposed extending the buffer zone to 12 km. In 2019, the LDF government whittled it down to “zero to one km”, with a total exemption for human habitats, given mounting public anxiety.

Mr. Vijayan said Kerala and other like-minded States convinced the Central government to withdraw the unworkable stipulation that the National Board For Wildlife permission was mandatory for any construction within a 10-km radius of the boundary of protected forests.

Delhi excise case: court takes cognisance of chargesheet

ED alleges that all the five named accused were found to have indulged in activities related to the generation of the proceeds of crime or associated offences, either directly or indirectly

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A special court has taken cognisance of a chargesheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against Indospirit Group managing director Sameer Mahendru and four others in connection with the Delhi excise policy case. The agency has so far detected ₹2,873 crore as alleged proceeds of crime.

Taking cognisance of the chargesheet, Special Judge M.K. Nagpal on Tuesday said that based on the contents of the complaint, statements of witnesses and other documentary evidence provided by the ED, it appeared that all the five named accused were found to have either directly or indirectly indulged in the activities related to the generation of the proceeds of crime or associated offences.

Among those named as accused in the chargesheet are Mr. Mahendru, Khao Gali Restaurants Private Ltd., Bubbly Beverages Private Ltd., Indo Spirits and Indospirit Distribution



Legal hook: Abhishek Boinpally and Vijay Nair, accused in the excise policy case, being produced before a court in November. PTI

Ltd. The ED’s money laundering investigation is based on a case registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation on August 17 against Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and others. It has carried out 171 searches in several States and arrested Mr. Mahendru, P. Sarath Chandra Reddy, Benoy Babu, Vijay Nair and Abhishek Boinpally in connection with the case.

Based on the findings, the agency has alleged that the Expect Committee’s recommendations for the excise policy 2021-22 were modified as part of a con-

spiracy to “generate illegal funds”.

‘Meticulously planned’
“The policy was formulated with deliberate loopholes, inbuilt mechanism to facilitate illegal activities and is marred with inconsistencies. It promoted cartel formations through back door, awarded exorbitant wholesale (12%) and huge retail profit margin of 185% and incentivised other illegal activities. The 12% profit margin to wholesalers was devised to extract a portion of it (about 6%) as a kickback to AAP leaders,” it alleged. The purported

kickbacks were paid in advance. According to the ED, the then AAP media promotion in-charge Vijay Nair, on behalf of the party leaders, received kickbacks to the tune of ₹100 crore from the “South Group” whose prominent persons were Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy, Raghav Magunta, Sarath Reddy and K. Kavitha.

In order to recover the money paid by the group, its partners were allegedly given 65% stakes in wholesale license Indo Spirits in collusion with Mr. Mahendru, as directed by Mr. Nair, the agency said in the chargesheet. It alleged that the group directly and indirectly controlled nine retail zones.

It also alleged that at least 36 accused persons/suspects destroyed or used 170 phones in order to evade detection. “The magnitude of the destruction is such that most accused, liquor barons, senior government officials, Excise Minister of Delhi and other suspects have changed their phones multiple times...,” the agency said.

J&K, Ladakh to showcase cultural heritage on sidelines of G-20 meetings to be held in 2023

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

The Union Territories (UT) of J&K and Ladakh have started preparations for the G-20 meetings, as India is set to host 43 heads of delegations in September next year.

“One G-20 meeting is being held in Srinagar. We have requested that one meeting is also held in Jammu,” J&K Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha said at a press conference in Jammu on Wednesday.

Mr. Sinha chaired a high-level meeting on Tuesday to take stock of the preparations made for the upcoming G-20 sum-



In the spotlight: The Shankaracharya temple in Srinagar lit up with the G-20 logo. NISSAR AHMAD

mit meetings, a government spokesman said.

“The meetings under India’s presidency is also an opportunity to share Jammu and Kashmir’s achieve-

ments and to showcase its rich cultural heritage. We want people’s participation from J&K,” Mr. Sinha said. He said security was not a concern any more as

Security not a concern any more as ‘the backs of those who create hurdles have been broken’, says L-G Manoj Sinha

“the backs of those who create hurdles have been broken”.

The L-G administration has called for the “involvement of students and educational institutions to make the meetings a grand success”. Seminars on the G-20 in educational institutions across the UT are being held. Billboards on India hosting the G-20 meetings have been erect-

Centre withholding Bengal’s MGNREGS funds: Trinamool

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Withholding funds due to West Bengal under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is “political discrimination” by the Union government, the Trinamool Congress said in the Rajya Sabha, as the two sides sparred on the issue in the Upper House on Wednesday.

Invoking Section 27 of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Centre has blocked payment of over ₹7,500 crore of funds to West Bengal for “non-compliance of directives of the Central government”. Of this amount, the wage liability is ₹2,744 crore. With panchayat polls scheduled just months away in March 2023, the Trinamool is arguing that the Union government had willfully denied wages to the poor, who had not been paid over a year for the work they did under the scheme.

During the Question Hour in the House, Trinamool MP Jawahar Sircar asked the Rural Development Ministry for details on the States that had not

Ministry says that funds were frozen after the State failed to send a response to the questions

received any funds in the ongoing financial year under the MGNREGS.

In response, the Minister of State for Rural Development, Sadhvi Niranjani Jyoti, said only West Bengal fell under this category. Mr. Sircar alleged “gross injustice” against the State, in spite of the fact that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had ordered verification of every job card.

‘No discrimination’
Ms. Jyoti said the Centre did not “discriminate” against any State. “But there are a few guidelines under the MGNREGA that all States have to follow. She added that the funds were frozen after the State government failed to send in a detailed response to the questions raised by a Central team that investigated the implementation of the scheme in 2019.

“This is political discrimination before our panchayat elections,” Mr. Sircar claimed.

‘Four States occupy 82,751 hectares of Assam land’

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Four neighbouring States are occupying a total of 82,751.85127 hectares of land belonging to Assam, show data presented in the Assembly.

To a question from AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam, Assam’s Border Protection and Development Minister Atul Bora said Nagaland topped the list of encroachers by grabbing 59,490.21 hectares, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (16,144.00117 hectares), Mizoram (3,675.78 hectares) and Meghalaya (3,441.8601 hectares).

Watch | What does the G-20 presidency mean for India
bit.ly/indiag20

Chinmayanand gets interim anticipatory bail in rape case

Press Trust of India
PRAYAGRAJ (U.P.)

The Allahabad High Court has granted interim anticipatory bail to former Union Minister Swami Chinmayanand in a rape case till the next date of hearing and directed the victim and the State government to file their replies within four weeks.

Justice Samit Gopal passed the order after hearing Senior Advocate Anoop Trivedi, counsel for petitioner Swami Chinmayanand.

He submitted that Chinmayanand is a 75-year-old man and has been falsely implicated in the case. “Chinmayanand does not have any criminal history. The former MP is also running several medical and educational institutions and is a person of high political and spiritual value,” Mr. Trivedi said.

The Additional Advocate General and the Additional Government Advocate opposed the application.

Chinmayanand is accused of raping the victim in the year 2011.

New land rules bring J&K on a par with rest of India; old law was regressive: L-G

The Hindu Bureau
JAMMU

Toughening the stand on newly introduced land rules that has ended lease holders’ rights for extension in the Union Territory (UT), Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday said the land laws were “regressive” and “property worth ₹100 crore property was enjoyed at a paltry ₹5”.

“No poor will be impacted by the amendments to the land laws. Rule of law outside has to be implemented here too. J&K’s land laws were regressive and amendments were made. There were properties worth ₹100 crore being enjoyed for ₹5 as payment. Only such people are worried by the amendments,” Mr. Sinha said in Jammu.

The Land Grants Rules, 2022 has paved the way to auction all commercial buildings on lease and land on lease in J&K. The Lieutenant-Governor said the fresh rules “have brought



Pushing through: Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha addressing presspersons in Jammu on Wednesday. PTI

J&K at par with the rest of the country”. As many as 55 of the 59 hotels at the tourist spot Gulmarg in the Valley are likely to be auctioned afresh as their leases have ended.

‘Back to work’
Meanwhile, Mr. Sinha asked protesting Pandits and other minority members from Jammu to resume duties in Kashmir.

Hundreds of Pandit employees, who had opted for Kashmir for their postings under the special employment package for migrant Pandits, left the Valley in

May this year after a spree of killings of Pandits and employees from the minority community by militants.

Listing the measures taken for safety and security of Pandits, Mr. Sinha said, “Safe postings to district headquarters were done. Those in tehsils and rural departments were posted closer to cities. Two or three Pandits were posted together. A district-level officer was appointed to address grievances,” he said. A total of 1,700 additional accommodations would be provided to Pandits.

SC stands up for a retired sweeper’s right to pension

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court stood up for the little man against the power of the State by putting an end to “frivolous” rounds of litigation waged by the School Education Department of the Tamil Nadu government against a sweeper-sanitary worker who wanted his pension after putting in 20 years of work for a starting wage of ₹150 a month.

A Bench led by Justice Dinesh Maheshwari backed the cause of K. Lakshmanan’s right to pension and directed the department to cough up exemplary costs of ₹1 lakh for “dragging on” the litigation for years, even at one point filing the rare review petition in the Madras High Court, which ordered the State to pay him the pension. The costs have to be deposited in the welfare fund of the Supreme Court Employees Welfare Association.

The court further gave Mr. Lakshmanan liberty to

Order is in tune with CJI’s statements that the SC exists to hear every little cry of the common man

“recover the amount of costs from the persons/officers responsible for protracting this litigation and sanctioning such frivolous petitions without sufficient cause and without any justification”.

Protector of rights
The order is in tune with Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud’s recent statements that the Supreme Court exists to hear every little cry of despair of the common man. The court’s role is inherently that of the protector of citizens’ rights.

The Bench also noted that the State had moved the top court through its Principal Secretary after a delay of 156 days, excluding the COVID-19 period. A party has to appeal a High Court decision within a time frame of up to 90 days.

There is a calculated bid to delegitimise judiciary, says Sonia

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Sonia Gandhi

There is a calculated attempt to delegitimise the judiciary, Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) chairperson Sonia Gandhi said on Wednesday. She also attacked the Narendra Modi government for refusing to discuss the India-China border issue in Parliament.

She made these remarks at the general body meeting of the CPP at Parliament's Central Hall.

In a scathing attack, Ms. Gandhi said the Modi government's refusal to a parliamentary debate showed "disrespect to democracy and poorly reflected the government's intentions".

"Ministers and even a high constitutional authority have been enlisted to make speeches attacking the judiciary on various grounds. It is quite clear that this is not an effort to provide reasonable suggestions for improvement. Rather, it is an effort to reduce the standing of the judiciary in the eyes of the public," she alleged.

But the focus of Ms. Gandhi's speech was the government's handling of the border issue with China. "The continuing incursions by China on our border are a matter of serious concern. The whole nation stands with our vigilant soldiers who repelled these attacks under difficult conditions. The government, however, stubbornly refus-

es to allow a discussion on the issue in Parliament. As a result, Parliament, political parties and the people remain ignorant of the true situation on the ground," she said.

Economic response

"What is the government's policy to deter China from future incursions? Given that we continue to have a severe trade deficit with China, importing far more than we export, why is there no economic response to China's military hostility? What is the government's diplomatic outreach to the global community," Ms. Gandhi asked.

On Wednesday, the Congress-led Opposition MPs stepped up their demand for a discussion on China by protesting in front of the Parliament House and later staged a walkout in the Lok Sabha.

Talking about the recent elections, Ms. Gandhi said the Congress had formed its government in Himachal Pradesh but termed the results in Gujarat and Delhi "unfortunate".

'Targeted relief given during the pandemic staved off recession'

Revenue buoyancy will be enough to take care of additional expenses of ₹3.25 lakh crore this financial year, says Nirmala Sitharaman

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Path to growth: Nirmala Sitharaman says the country is on the safe course of revival. PTI

The country did not slip into an economic recession because of the targeted approach taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to give relief to people during the COVID-19 pandemic, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Wednesday.

She was replying to a debate on two Appropriation Bills seeking House approval for additional funds to be used during this financial year. Both the Bills were returned by the Rajya Sabha after her reply.

Responding to former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, who spearheaded the Opposition by initiating the debate on Monday, Ms. Sitharaman said the countries which went by the advice of "borrow and spend and even print money to reboot the economy" had to face recession. "Thankfully, the targeted way in which the Prime Minister decided to give relief during COVID-19 and address the concerns - that were taken as inputs from various stakeholders - has kept us on the safe course of helping revival, and not getting into recession," she said.

She said both the IMF and the World Bank had said on several occasions that India was the brightest spot in the global economy and was an island of hope for global growth.

Food security

On questions about an additional expenditure of ₹3.25 lakh crore in 2022-23, she said the Centre had come up with the Supplementary Demand for Grants essentially to ensure food security and subsidy for fertilizers, which is critical for farmers.

On the revenues for this additional expenditure, she said, "In September itself, the Government of India had made it very clear that we are not changing our borrowing schedule." The Minister said the Centre would ensure that the revenue generated would be sufficient to take

care of the addition, emphasising that there was enough buoyancy that gave her confidence.

On cutting corporate tax, Ms. Sitharaman recalled that in 1991, then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh cut it to 40% from 45%.

"Then in 1997, the then Finance Minister P. Chidambaram brought the corporate tax down to 35% from 40%, after abolishing the surcharge also. Then, from 2000, surcharges were back, raising the total corporate tax again to about 36-38% which continued for the next five years after that. But, then, it was Mr. Chidambaram again, who reduced the corporate tax to 30% in 2005, although along with the surcharge, the actual rate was about 33%. Were they also a bonanza to corporates," she asked.

Maritime Anti-Piracy Bill passed in Rajya Sabha

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday passed the Maritime Anti-Piracy Bill on Wednesday, two days after the Lok Sabha cleared it.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said the Bill would fulfil all the expectations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which India is a signatory to, for cooperation and repression of piracy in high seas.

Addressing the concerns raised by the Standing Committee on Transport and Shipping, the Centre has dropped the provision for trial in absentia through amendments brought in the Lok Sabha. The Bill also addresses the issue of death penalty "as an exceptional case". The quantum of punishments envisaged are in line with the gravity of offences.

Mr. Jaishankar, replying to a brief debate, said that between 2008 and 2011, there were 27 maritime incidents where 288 Indian nationals were involved. "Between 2014 and 2022, there were 19 piracy cases in which 155 Indian crew members were involved and the numbers show why the country needs this Bill so badly," he added.

"It will strengthen our maritime security, including the safety of our maritime trade routes and the well-being of Indian seafarers in international waters," Mr. Jaishankar said.

IN BRIEF



Bihar CM lashes out at Centre for 'raising' COVID-19 scare

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar took a dig at BJP-led Central government on Wednesday for raising an alarm over a COVID-19 spike at a time when Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra was gaining momentum. "First of all it should be known why they [the ruling BJP at the Centre] had become laid-back over COVID-19 and why they have become vigilant when the Congress people are taking out Bharat Jodo Yatra which is gaining momentum now," Mr. Kumar asked. "Why do these people [the BJP] have an objection to the yatra and why do they themselves keep taking out processions?" he asked. He also lashed out at a NHRC team visiting Bihar in the wake of the Saran hooch tragedy, asking whether such teams had visited other States where similar tragedies had taken place.

RJD seeks apology from Goyal for comments on Bihar

The RJD, on Wednesday sought an apology from Union Minister Piyush Goyal for his alleged "demeaning" remarks against Bihar. In a letter to Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, party MP Manoj K. Jha said that Mr. Goyal's comments are "representative of the contemptuous and condescending attitude of the Government of India towards Bihar". On Tuesday, during Mr. Jha intervention in a debate on the Appropriation Bill, Mr. Goyal interjected and said "If they have their way, they will turn the country into Bihar." Objecting to the comments, Mr. Jha in a letter to Mr. Dhankhar said, that such a "demeaning" statement was not expected from a person of Mr. Goyal's rank. It is deeply problematic, he said, that the government is singling out one State and terming it a "failure".

No plan to revise age of consent, Centre informs Rajya Sabha

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government does not yet have a plan to revise the age of consent under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 despite appeals from the judiciary to lower it from the current 18 to 16.

In response to a question from CPI member Binoy Vishwam in the Rajya Sabha on whether the Centre was considering any proposal to lower the age of consent in order to prevent the criminalisation of consensual relationships between adolescents, Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani replied, "does not arise."

"The Act clearly defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years. The POCSO Act provides punishment as per the gravity of offence. The Act was further amended in 2019 to introduce more stringent punishment including death penalty for committing sexual crimes on children, with a view to deter the perpetrators & prevent such crimes against children," she said.

Ms. Irani also said that the Majority Act, 1875 provided 18 years as the age for attainment of majority. She said that where an offence listed under the POCSO Act was committed by a child, Section 34 provided procedures for determining the age of the juvenile accused.

NGOs flouting FCRA rules will not be tolerated: Amit Shah

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Wednesday said that certain non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were trying to "change the demography" of the country through foreign funding and this would not be allowed.

Replying to a short discussion in the Lok Sabha on the drug abuse crisis in the country, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said

some NGOs and civil society organisations were working with the government to create awareness of the drug menace.

But NGOs who did not follow FCRA rules will not be tolerated. "We will not allow any foreign funds to destroy the country," Mr. Shah said.

Participating in a debate, Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi had earlier said that the government was not allowing civil society organisations to work properly by

He said that the Modi government was committed to rooting out the drug menace from the country

subjecting them to investigation under the Foreign Contribution (Regulatory) Act. The government had cancelled the FCRA registration of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation in October.

The Home Minister said that the Modi government

was committed to rooting out the drug menace from the country. He added that drugs worth ₹97,000 crore were destroyed between 2014 and 2022, while the seizure between 2006 and 2013 was valued at ₹23,000 crore.

"We have mapped the drug network across the States. No matter how big the criminal is, in the next two years there will be a situation that they will be behind bars," he said. He said that the Modi govern-

ment has zero tolerance policy towards money from the drug trade being used to fund terrorism.

The government has empowered the Border Security Force, SSB and Assam Rifles to register cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, (NDPS).

"Powers have been given to security forces, but some States have said that their powers have been taken away... If we do not give powers to our agen-

cies, how will they be able to work? We must have faith in our security forces, those politicising the issue are supporting drug trafficking," Mr. Shah said.

He said that drugs network chart had been sent to the States after mapping the routes of drugs and its network in 472 districts.

The government was also setting up six regional labs so that there was no delay in the testing of samples and criminals cannot escape.

Human Rights panel seeks report on evictions in Assam

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Assam Human Rights Commission (AHRC) on Wednesday asked the district administration of Nagaon in central Assam to submit a report on the eviction of about 300 families who had allegedly occupied government land.

The deadline for the submission has been set as January 18, 2023.

The eviction drive around the birthplace of 15-16th century Vaishnav saint-reformer Srimanta Sankaradeva in Batadrava began on December 19. The encroachers had built permanent houses and fish breeding farms on the occupied land, officials said.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma justified the eviction drive and said a similar drive would soon take place in Goalpara district. "There is no point talking about such eviction exercises, which will continue until all the forest and government lands across the State are cleared," he said.

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Thrissur Corporation, Thrissur
Date: 20.12.2022
PDS : 2104/22
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Sd/-
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Last Date and Time for receipt of tender 10.01.2023 upto 11.00 AM
Date and time of opening 10.01.2023 at 11.30 AM
The tender document can be downloaded from the websites of www.tnmsc.tn.gov.in and www.tenders.tn.gov.in on free of cost.
DIPR/5657/TENDER/2022 Manager (Purchase)
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भारतीय वन्यजीव संस्थान Wildlife Institute of India
(An Autonomous Institution of Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Govt. of India)
Chandrabani, Dehra Dun-248 001 (Uttarakhand)
EPBAXL +91 -135-2640114 to 2640115, 2646100, FAX:2640117
E-MAIL: registrar@wii.gov.in, Web Site : www.wii.gov.in
Advertisement No. WII/ADM/2022/49
Appointment on deputation of IFS officers for the post of Scientist-D, E and Scientist F
Applications are invited from IFS officers for filling up the posts of the level of Scientist - D, E & F in the Pay Matrix Level 12, 13 & 13-A respectively for appointment on deputation basis in Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun.
The detailed advertisement, terms and conditions can be seen on Institute's website: www.wii.gov.in. The last date of receipt of application is 28.02.2023.
The Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, reserves the right to reject any or all applications without assigning any reason.
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BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through e-procurement portal)
BESCOM invites tender through e-procurement for the following enquiry Nos:

Enquiry No.	Zone	Particulars
BESCOM/ GM(M&C)/106 /EM2ES/BRAZ /2022-23	BRAZ	BESCOM invites tender for "Providing, Releasing, fixing, wiring and replacement of Existing Electromechanical meters by DLMS Compliant LT AC Single phase 2 wire 5-30A and LT AC Three phase 4 Wire 5-30A Electrostatic meters of class-1.0 accuracy on total turnkey basis.
BESCOM/ GM(M&C)/107 /EM2ES/CTZ /2022-23	CTZ	BESCOM invites tender for "Providing, Releasing, fixing, wiring and replacement of Existing Electromechanical meters by DLMS Compliant LT AC Single phase 2 wire 5-30A and LT AC Three phase 4 Wire 5-30A Electrostatic meters of class-1.0 accuracy on total turnkey basis.

The Tender documents can be obtained through e-procurement portal from the tendering Website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> on or after 23.12.2022. Aspiring bidders need to register on e-procurement portal. Further, bidders can take assistance with e-procurement helpdesk at 080-25501216, 080-25501227.
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IN BRIEF

907 naxal sympathisers
surrender in Odisha

As many as 907 sympathisers, including 467 active militias of the CPI(Maoist), have surrendered before the Odisha police and the Border Security Force in Swabhiman Anchal of Malkangiri district, once a hotbed of left wing extremists in the State. These individuals belonged to villages which used to be the stronghold of the CPI(Maoist) where security forces were finding it difficult to venture into. "All these villages are located on the Odisha-Andhra Pradesh boundary. These Maoist supporters used to assist extremists in violent activities and were involved in the killing of security forces and civilians," Nitesh Wadhvani, Superintendent of Police, Malkangiri, said.

NCW asks SpiceJet to take
down tweet on its cabin crew

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has asked SpiceJet chairman and managing director Ajay Singh to take down a post on social media that refers to the airline's cabin crew as "red-hot girls". Meanwhile, the airline has asserted that the reference was part of its tagline used often for "product promotions". On December 19, SpiceJet, on its Twitter timeline, posted a picture of its women cabin crew posing with Bollywood actor Dharmendra along with the caption "Garam Dharam with our red-hot girls". A passenger complained about the "sexist remark" that he said was antithetical to "Indian culture" and tagged the NCW.

U.P. targets to make Ganga
clean before 'Kumbh 2025'

Before the commencement of 'Prayagraj Kumbh 2025', the Uttar Pradesh government has vowed to make the Ganga clean through the 'Namami Gange' mission. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday gave guidelines for it while reviewing the implementation of the 'Namami Gange' project. Mr. Adityanath directed officials to expedite the process of installation of sewage treatment plants (STPs) to save the rivers from sewage, dirt and toxic water, and called for more efforts for urban solid waste management in order to ensure uninterrupted and clean flow of all the rivers, including the Ganga.

Bombay HC extends stay on
bail granted to NCP leader

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday granted extension on the stay of former Home Minister of Maharashtra Anil Deshmukh's bail to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) till December 27. A Single Bench of Justice M.S. Karnik granted time to the CBI to challenge Mr. Deshmukh's bail order in the Supreme Court. Though the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader was granted bail by the High Court on December 12, the same Bench had stayed it for 10 days. Mr. Deshmukh, 73, is currently lodged at the Arthur Road Jail and was arrested by the CBI in 2021 in a corruption case involving ₹100 crore. He was granted bail by the Bombay High Court on medical grounds.

'Only 30% reserved vacancies at IITs,
Central universities filled in a year'

Of the 1,439 vacancies identified in the year to September 2022, only 449 were filled from the categories, show Education Ministry data; 12 Central universities conducted almost no recruitment during the mission-mode hiring drive

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

Despite a year-long mission-mode recruitment drive to hire faculty for reserved category positions at the elite Indian Institutes of Technology and Central universities, just over 30% of identified vacancies were filled, the Education Ministry told Parliament this week.

In the year to September 5, 2022, 23 IITs and 45 Central universities across the country were directed to conduct the drive to fill vacancies in teaching positions reserved for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.

During this period, 1,439 vacancies were identified, against which just 449 recruitments were made.

Of the 45 Central universities, 33 had identified a

Unfilled vacancies

Only 18% of the ST vacancies identified during the mission mode recruitment drive across IITs and Central Universities were filled in the one year period after September 5, 2021

Type	Backlog vacancies*	Backlog vacancies filled*	% of vacancies filled
SC	522	170	32.6
ST	317	57	18.0
OBC	564	222	39.4
All	1,439 [^]	449 [^]	31.2

*As on Sept. 5, 2021 | # Between Sept. 5, 2021 and Sept. 5, 2022

[^]Community split was not provided for some institutions

total of 1,097 vacancies in these categories, of which just 212 were filled.

Even among these 33 universities, the data revealed that 18 of them had recruited no SC, ST or OBC teaching faculty at all, despite having identified vacancies.

Top universities too

Among these 18 Central universities, Jawaharlal Nehru University had iden-



Parliament showed that Central universities had a combined backlog of over 920 positions in the SC/ST/OBC categories for teaching faculty.

Low recruitment

Of the 23 IITs, only 10 were able to identify 342 vacancies in these categories for positions of Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor.

A total of 237 positions in these categories were filled at 19 IITs. An analysis of the raw data by the Ambedkar Periyar Phule Study Circle (APPSC) of the IIT, Bombay showed that 13 IITs were unable to identify vacancies to be filled in this recruitment drive because they follow a "flexible cadre structure for faculty positions".

However, despite this, except for three (the IITs in Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar), the others did recruit a small number

of SC/ST/OBC faculty in this time. The analysis further showed that 358 vacancies remained at 14 IITs

Of the recruitments done in this time period, the APPSC found that no ST candidates were recruited at the IITs in Kharagpur, Roorkee, Tirupati, Goa and Dharwad and the IIT ISM Dhanbad.

Further, no SC candidate was recruited in the IIT Roorkee.

It was found that most IITs did not recruit SC/ST/OBC candidates at the Professor and Associate Professor levels.

While presenting the data in the Lok Sabha, in response to a question from S. Venkatesan of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Minister of State for Education Annapurna Devi said, "Filling up of vacancies, including backlog vacancies, is a continuous process."

ED withholds
production
warrant for
Mondal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday assured the Delhi High Court that it will withhold till January 9 the execution of a warrant to produce Trinamool Congress leader Anubrata Mondal before a local court here in connection with a money laundering case. Mr. Mondal is currently lodged in an Asansol jail in a cattle smuggling case in West Bengal.

A Delhi court on Monday issued a production warrant against Mr. Mondal after the ED approached the court seeking that the Birbhum district president of the Trinamool Congress be summoned to Delhi for questioning.

He was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on August 11 and has remained behind bars since. The ED is looking into the money laundering aspect of the alleged scam.

11 fishermen
from T.N.
arrested by Sri
Lankan Navy

The Hindu Bureau
KARAIKAL

Eleven fishermen belonging to Karaikalmedu in Karaikal and nearby coastal habitations of Mayiladuthurai district in Tamil Nadu, were held by Sri Lankan Navy. The operation was held in the northeast of Veththalakerni in Sri Lankan waters on Wednesday.

A naval team attached to Northern Naval Command intercepted the trawler with the 11 fishers on board and took them, along with the confiscated vessel, to the Kankesanthurai Fisheries Harbour.

Their custody was reportedly entrusted with Mailadi Fisheries Inspector.

The arrested fishermen were the trawler owner S. Rajkumar, Thangavelu, Arumugam, Prabu, Madhan and Manickavel of Karaikalmedu fishing hamlet, and Dhandapani, Senthil, Muthuvel, Selvamani, and Kannadasan belonging to Mayiladuthurai district. They had reportedly ventured into the sea on December 18 from the Karaikal Harbour.

PM2 elephant acclimatising
to habitat in MTR, positive
behavioural changes noticed

Rohan Premkumar
CHENNAI

Almost two weeks since its capture and relocation to the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR), the elephant PM2 is acclimatising to the new habitat and has exhibited key behavioural changes indicating that negative interactions with humans could be a thing of the past, officials said.

Since its release into the Congress Mattam in the MTR, PM2 has spent the last 12 days exploring the place. Radio signals and direct sightings indicate its exploration of Thengumrahada, Mangalapatti, Chemmanatham, Moyar, Theppakadu and even Bandipur.

The elephant was darted in Gudalur division earlier this month after it damaged a number of houses over the last few years in the region.

MTR Field Director D. Venkatesh said it was normal for an elephant to walk anywhere between 10-15 kms each day, and that since its release, PM2, oth-



Since its release into the Congress Mattam in the MTR, PM2 has spent the last 12 days exploring the place. M. SATHYAMOORTHY

erwise called 'Arisi Raja' by Gudalur residents, has been busy exploring its new surroundings.

In the weeks since its release, PM2 has also been socialising with other elephants in the region, associating with five tuskers, another "maknha" or tuskless elephant like itself as well as a herd of three elephants.

"It is to be expected that Pandalur Makhna-2 (PM2) is trying to establish a niche for itself in its new habitat. PM2 is eating well, resting and has adequate access to water within the reserve," added Mr. Venkatesh.

Forest department officials and staff have also noticed behavioural changes that indicate that PM2's days of raiding homes for food could be a thing of the past. According to officials, the previously "habituated" animal that showed no fear towards humans, has become extremely wary of people and forest staff since its capture and release. "Every time PM2 sees people or forest staff, its first inclination now is to turn away and flee into the forest, which is a good sign that there are fundamental behavioural changes with the animal," said Mr. Venkatesh.

Bill to amend ST list
of Chhattisgarh
passed in Lok Sabha

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Amid a face-off between Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda and Congress MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, the Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Fifth Amendment) Bill, 2022 to include the Binjhia community and synonyms for several other tribes on the Scheduled Tribes (ST) list of Chhattisgarh.

During the discussion, where over 25 MPs spoke, all supporting the inclusion, Mr. Chowdhury attacked the government over welfare measures for the country's tribal populations, and also made a case for the inclusion of the Kurmi community on the ST list. The Congress leader went on to call for a comprehensive Bill to settle the issues of all such communities that have been demanding ST status.

In his reply to the discussion, Mr. Munda attacked the Congress, alleging that the party had never cared about the wel-

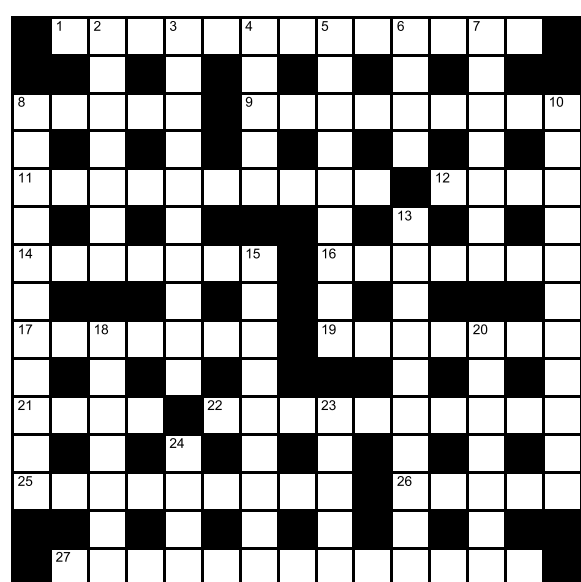
The Bill will include
Binjhia community
and synonyms for
several other tribes
on the State's ST list

fare of tribal communities, saying that the country had to wait for Atal Bihari Vajpayee to become Prime Minister before getting a Ministry for Tribal Affairs.

"Mr. Chowdhury spoke of the Kurmi community and we are cognisant of their demands and are working towards it as per procedure," the Minister said. Responding to the demands from MPs on the inclusion of more communities, he added, "Tribal communities are defined not by their caste but by their characteristic traits, traits that were set out by the Lokur Committee in 1965."

Explainer
The process of inclusion or exclusion from the Scheduled Tribes list
» bit.ly/listst

THE CROSSWORD+ 13743
(set by Dr. X)



- 14 Old boy is controlling government forces (7)
16 Keen about going around wide and smooth track beside canal (7)
17 Interrupt popular model getting abusive (7)
19 Continues to conduct primarily hilarious comic routines (7)
21 Unpleasant and fussy president removed (4)
22 Rogue sadhu beaten up in prison (10)
25 Restricts crackers, chips and pizza finally (9)
26 Runs into bar for spirit (5)
27 Turned randy and vile after consuming wine by mistake (13)
- Down**
2 Face of officer in Calais, terribly unfriendly (7)
3 Reprimanding extremely horrible group in bar right away (7,3)
4 Await sonography to check about openings in body part (5)
5 Transported cases filled with fresh mushrooms (9)
6 Small slam in bridge (4)
7 Carnal literature arousing reaction endlessly (7)
8 Injured hip, shin and foot in extremely close competition (5,6)
10 What stagehands do to describe background (3,3,5)
13 Hag overwhelmed by lumps around hip (8,2)
15 Guess clue incorrectly in rush (9)
18 Swindled money to acquire a field (5,2)
20 Key spies captured by ruthless leader of Eritrea killed (7)
23 Readjust prop, holding base (5)
24 Bland starter of lamb in gloomy retreat (4)

- Across**
1 Look out and see woman with hot pants exercising outside club (5,4,4)
8 Examine rifle in case of patricide (5)
9 Holding a gardening tool, gathers edible rootstocks (9)
11 First love meeting to have one drink (10)
12 Knock for six, wielding long handle (4)

SUDOKU



Solution to previous puzzle

B	I	S	C	O	R	E	T	U
E	R	H	I	N	E	H		
C	O	N	T	A	C	T	M	E
O	A	M	O	P	U	R	G	A
M	E	T	R	E	P	E	R	I
E	L	E	S	E	V	E	R	A
P	E	R	S	E	R	V	A	N
P	U	T	O	N	T	H	E	S
T	O	I	N	T	A	O	B	E
G	O	S	E	R	T	O	B	E
R	O	R	T	I	L	O	R	
A	V	O	C	A	D	O	K	I
P	U	S	N	N	T	U	C	
H	O	T	T	E	R	A	S	E

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

The essence of penance

Penance is good for our spiritual well being, said Malayaman, in a discourse. Thayumanavar said that our five senses are like hunters, dominating our lives, and keeping us from thinking beyond this world. Controlling the sense organs, living in forests and hills, exposing oneself to the elements and eating dry leaves are components of penance, he says.

Asiriya Maalai says that bathing in jungle streams, wearing garments made of tree bark, performing yagas, living in forests and hills, bringing the five senses under control – these constitute penance. Pattinathar's definition of penance is similar to this. Thirumurugatturppadai shows us the importance of penance and the traits of those who do penance. Nalladanar, in his Thirikadugam, says that having a pure heart, always speaking the truth, not wanting to harm anyone through thoughts, words or deeds – these are the characteristics of those involved in penance. Living as one pleases, and yielding to temptations, is not penance. Think of a shining nail which sits tightly in its slot in the yoke of a bullock cart. Our thoughts must have the same focus as the unmoving nail in the yoke, says poet Munduray Araiyanar.

Poet Kari Asan says that not harming others, forgetting one's own problems, keeping one's temper in check, giving up desires – if a man has these qualities, then his penance will be successful. Kanimedhaiyar authored a work called Eladi, in which he says being unattached to family life is penance. Bearing one's misfortune uncomplainingly, and abstaining from harming others – these two qualities are the very essence of penance, says Thiruvalluvar.

INBRIEF



IndiGrid, G R Infra ally for power transmission projects

India Grid Trust and G R Infra projects joined hands to bid for identified power transmission projects worth ₹5,000 crore. An agreement has been signed to jointly bid for identified tariff based competitive bidding transmission projects aggregating to about ₹5,000 crore, IndiGrid said. The Power Ministry has recently unveiled a plan for investment of ₹2,50,000 crore in building transmission infrastructure. PTI

ADNOC arm, AG&P sign deal for India LNG terminal

The maritime logistics arm of state oil firm Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and Singapore-based Atlantic, Gulf and Pacific (AG&P) have signed a charter agreement to use a liquefied natural gas (LNG) carrier as a floating storage unit in India. The LNG carrier is owned by ADNOC Logistics & Services. The pact is valid for 11 years with the option of a four-year extension, and is the third agreement signed between the two companies for a floating storage unit lease in India and the Philippines. REUTERS

Torrent is highest bidder for Reliance Capital at ₹8,640 cr.

Torrent Group on Wednesday emerged as the highest bidder for debt-ridden Reliance Capital in the auction conducted as part of its resolution process. Ahmedabad-based Torrent Group submitted a bid of ₹8,640 crore for acquiring the NBFC firm set up by the Anil Ambani Group, sources said. Hinduja Group was the second highest bidder, they said, adding Oaktree did not participate in the auction. PTI

India said to plan stabilisation fund to bolster carbon market

Reuters
NEW DELHI

India is planning a stabilisation fund to keep prices of credits in its planned carbon market above a certain threshold, ensuring that they remain attractive for investors and that the market succeeds in cutting emissions, two government sources said.

Money in the fund would be used by a market regulator to buy carbon credits if prices fell too low, one of the officials said.

Consistent investor interest in credits and a floor under the price would be



needed as sharp falls in the market could discourage industries from reducing carbon dioxide emissions, that official added.

Operational in 2026
Planning envisages the market becoming fully operational in 2026, covering

37% of the country's emissions, according to slides, seen by Reuters, that the Power Ministry has shown to stakeholders.

Details would be announced next year, said Samrat Sengupta, vice-president for new businesses and market strategy at carbon off-setter EKI Energy Ltd., which has been briefed by the government.

In creating a carbon market, a country sets limit on emissions and then allocates a corresponding quantity of tradable permits, or credits, to the emitters. The quantity reduces over time.

NATL. WRESTLING

Y.B. Sarangi
VISAKHAPATNAM

World under-23 champion Aman Sehrawat fought back to win his semifinal and final bouts to retain the men's freestyle 57kg title on the opening day of the National Wrestling Championships at the Rajiv Gandhi Indoor Stadium here on Wednesday.

The gritty Aman, hailing from the Chhatrasal *akhara* in Delhi, showcased his attacking game to wriggle out of tough situations.

Against Atish Todkar, who took the lead who thrice, Aman relied on his superb endurance and engaging skills to manage an 11-7 victory in the semi-



On top: Sujeeet (blue) trounced Utkarsh to win his maiden crown in 65kg category. K.R. DEEPAK

nals. He rallied from 5-6 to effect three takedowns against Udit in the final while posting a 11-6 win.

Sahil stuns Satyawart Punjab wrestler Sahil upset Commonwealth

Games and multiple Asian championships medallist Satyawart Kadian.

Sahil fought back to take a 4-3 lead with two minutes to go and showed his strong defence and swift

India may lead in digital tech in 2023, says Tech M

Mini Tejaswi
BENGALURU

Year 2023 has the potential to provide the impetus needed for India to become digitally ready and lead technological advancements for the world, Tech Mahindra said.

"I believe in [year] 2023, we will see significant progress in autonomous systems, 5G and green technology," Jagdish Mitra, Chief Strategy Officer and Head of Growth at the technology services provider said on Wednesday.

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India could ill afford to opt for a "premature pause in monetary policy action" as it would prove costly at a time when there was 'stickiness in core inflation', Governor Shaktikanta Das stressed at the Monetary Policy Committee's meeting earlier this month, the minutes show. On the other hand, fellow MPC member Jayanth Varma, who opposed raising interest rates yet again, asserted that "economic growth is

Contested decision

MPC minutes show while majority was focussed on inflation, the lone opponent to a rate increase flagged growth's fragility



- Given uncertain outlook, MPC may have to play catch-up to ward-off accentuated inflationary pressures: Das
- At 6.25%, repo rate very likely overshoots level needed to achieve price stability, poses an unwarranted risk to growth: Varma
- Varma cites lag of 3-4 quarters for policy to impact real economy

now extremely fragile and definitely not robust enough to withstand excessive monetary tightening". "A premature pause in monetary policy action

would be a costly policy error at this juncture," Mr. Das had said in voting to raise the repo rate, the minutes released on Wednesday show. "Given the un-

Private cryptos can hasten next financial crisis, says Das

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das warned that allowing private cryptocurrencies to grow can precipitate the next financial crisis.

Speaking at an event, Mr. Das also said the government and the central bank have been working in a coordinated manner to tame inflation and the Centre is 'equally serious' about curbing price rise.

On private cryptocur-



rencies such as Bitcoin, Mr. Das reiterated the RBI's demand for a complete ban, saying such instruments do not have any underlying value and are speculative. "It's a 100% speculative activity, and I would still

hold the view that it should be prohibited," he said.

"If you try to regulate it and allow it to grow, please mark my words, the next financial crisis will come from private cryptocurrencies," Mr. Das added.

"Cryptocurrencies have huge inherent risks from macroeconomic and financial stability (perspective) and we have been pointing it out," he said.

Mr. Das added that private cryptocurrencies' valuation has shrunk from \$190 billion to \$140 billion.

Private cryptos can hasten next financial crisis, says Das

Musk says he'll exit as Twitter CEO after finding replacement

Reuters

Elon Musk said on Tuesday he will step down as chief executive of Twitter after finding a replacement.

"I will resign as CEO as soon as I find someone foolish enough to take the job! After that, I will just run the software & servers teams," Mr. Musk tweeted.

This is the first time Mr. Musk has mentioned stepping down as chief of the social media platform,

after Twitter users voted decisively in a poll for him to step down, which the billionaire launched on Sunday evening.

Wall Street calls for Mr. Musk to step down had been growing for weeks and recently even Tesla Inc. bulls have questioned his focus on the social media platform and whether that is distracting him from properly steering the electric vehicle business.

Sport

Gritty Aman rallies twice to keep the 57kg title

Preeti stuns Worlds bronze medallist Jamuna

BOXING

Sports Bureau

Haryana's Preeti stunned World championships bronze medallist Jamuna Boro in a 54kg preliminary round bout on the second day of the National women's boxing championships in Bhopal on Wednesday. Preeti came up with a superb performance to defeat Jamuna. The referee had to stop the contest in the third and declare Preeti the winner.

Punjab's Suvidha Bhagat and Madhya Pradesh's Radha Patidar put up fine performances to reach the pre-quarterfinals. While



Preeti.

Suvidha outsmarted Jharkhand's Chandu 5-0 in a 48kg bout, local favourite Radha gave a dominant display to record a comfortable victory by an identical margin against Himachals Ritu in 52kg.

Important results (preliminary rounds): 48kg: Suvidha Bhagat (Pun) bt Chandu

'Auto-parts trade grew 35% in H1 FY23 to ₹2.65 lakh cr.'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

India's auto components sector grew by 34.8% to ₹2.65 lakh crore in first-half of 2022-23, riding on domestic demand, particularly from the passenger vehicles segment, the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) said.

Component exports grew by 8.6% to \$10.1 billion (\$79.03 lakh crore), while imports climbed 17.2% to \$10.1 billion, ACMA said.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	WEDNESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	61,067	-1.03
US Dollar	82.84	-0.17
Gold	55,261	0.95
Brent oil	81.76	3.00

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	3901.95	-263.35
Adani Ports	857.65	-26.60
Apollo Hosp	4766.20	169.55
Asian Paints	3069.65	-12.50
Axis Bank	932.30	-17.45
Bajaj Auto	3611.05	-2.55
Bajaj Finserv	1581.80	-33.85
Bajaj Finance	6526.70	-116.15
Bharti Airtel	814.00	-14.95
BPCCL	334.10	-6.15
Britannia Ind	4418.85	-90.20
Cipla	1128.00	36.85
Coal India	223.85	-2.25
Divis Lab	3518.75	167.20
Dr Reddys Lab	4407.55	37.80
Eicher Motors	3373.25	-40.20
Grasim Ind	1732.90	-26.05
HCL Tech	1040.35	10.65
HDFC	2656.85	-43.45
HDFC Bank	1617.60	-15.80
HDFC Life	575.40	-4.40
Hero MotoCorp	2757.45	-15.10
Hindalco	457.15	0.10
Hind Unilever	2666.20	-8.35
ICI Bank	892.25	-17.45
Indusind Bank	1201.80	-26.85
Infosys	1509.55	2.25
ITC	335.15	-5.00
JSW Steel	743.10	-2.70
Kotak Bank	1814.60	-32.50
L&T	2146.30	-16.95
M&M	1265.70	-9.55
Maruti Suzuki	8350.40	-173.95
NestleIndia	20314.20	178.65
NTPC	167.95	-1.80
ONGC	143.50	-2.35
PowerGrid Corp	216.05	-1.25
Reliance Ind	2584.50	-37.30
SBI Life	1234.35	3.10
State Bank	593.40	-11.05
Sun Pharma	1005.60	17.25
TataConsumerProduct	802.60	-5.70
Tata Motors	402.60	-7.90
Tata Steel	109.40	-1.55
TCS	3268.55	24.60
Tech Mahindra	1026.05	8.10
Titan	2489.60	-18.55
UltraTech Cement	6950.70	-147.30
UPL	754.90	-0.05
Wipro	389.50	0.55

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on December 21

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	82.61	82.93
Euro	87.69	88.04
British Pound	100.11	100.54
Japanese Yen (100)	62.61	62.87
Chinese Yuan	11.85	11.89
Swiss Franc	89.19	89.54
Singapore Dollar	61.09	61.33
Canadian Dollar	60.62	60.88
Malaysian Ringgit	18.61	18.70
Australian Dollar	55.17	55.43

Source: Indian Bank

PRIDE AND JOY

Morocco World Cup team arrives home to cheerful welcome



Tens of thousands of Moroccans thronged the capital on Tuesday to welcome home the national football team, the first Arab or African squad ever to reach the semifinals of a World Cup. The team and coach Walid Regragui waved from an open-topped bus as they were driven from the airport and around central Rabat.

FLYING HIGH

Argentina players ditch bus for chopper ride over Buenos Aires



Argentina's World Cup winners were forced to abandon their open-top bus parade around the city due to massive crowds, the presidency said on Tuesday. "The World Champions are flying over the parade route in helicopters because it was impossible to continue on the ground," presidential spokeswoman Gabriela Cerruti said.

BACK IN ACTION

Mbappe returns to training days after World Cup disappointment



France star Kylian Mbappe returned to training with PSG on Wednesday just three days after he ended up on the losing side despite scoring a hat-trick in the World Cup final. Although PSG players have been given 10 days off, Mbappe was pictured at the French champion's training ground.

BIG LEAP

Axar climbs to 18th, Kuldeep jumps 19 spots to 49th in ICC rankings



India all-rounder Axar Patel jumped 20 spots to reach a career-best 18th position while spinner Kuldeep Yadav catapulted 19 places to 49th in the latest ICC Test rankings released on Wednesday. Meanwhile, the injured Jasprit Bumrah (4th) and R. Ashwin (5th) continued their stay in top five.

Spin trial awaits India as Bangladesh hopes to avoid a clean sweep

Shakib, fit to resume all-rounder duties, will look to combine with Taijul on what is expected to be a more spin-friendly surface than the one in Chattogram; hosts bolstered by the return of Taskin; visitors sweat on Rahul's fitness after he injures his hand during training

INDIA IN BANGLADESH

N. Sudarshan
MIRPUR

Not all matches are won in the first innings. But very many are lost. It is this threat that Bangladesh has to guard against to prevent a clean sweep when it welcomes India to the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium for the second and final Test from Thursday.

In Chattogram, the visitors were 48 for three in the first innings, only to be let off the hook. Bangladesh then collapsed for 150 in its opening essay to hand India the initiative, which K.L. Rahul & Co. capitalised on to record a thumping 188-run victory.

In contrast to the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium wicket, which eased up for batting after a tricky first day, the one in Mirpur is expected to be more spin-friendly.

South African legend Allan Donald, who is the hosts' fast-bowling coach, confirmed the same on match-eve, and even glad-

dened a few local hearts with the news that skipper Shakib Al Hasan was fit to resume his all-rounder duties.

The 35-year-old bowled just 12 overs of his left-arm spin in the first Test because of a rib injury, and the hope is for him to combine well with the in-form Taijul Islam. The Indian nets, predictably, had a fair share of left-arm spin, with Kuldeep Yadav and a local net bowler feeding the batters enough.

Strong batting line-up But regardless of the strength of the Bangladesh bowling - which will also be bolstered by speedster Taskin Ahmed's return - the Indian batting line-up remains formidable.

That it managed to win the first Test without two of its best batters in Rahul and Virat Kohli getting big runs is enough evidence that there are higher gears it can shift into.

Rohit Sharma's unavailability means Shubman Gill will get a chance to build on his hugely satisfying century, albeit on what is expected to be a more



Doing the hard yards: Kohli will be keen to blow away the Bangladesh bowlers, especially spinners. AP

testing wicket. That Shreyas Iyer, arguably India's best player of spin, is in fine fettle after an excellent, match-turning 86 should give confidence.

Skipper Rahul had a scare when he had to stop batting during Wednesday's training after being

hit on his right hand off a throwdown. He winced in pain, dropped the bat and shook his hand vigorously and was soon attended to by the medical staff. But batting coach Vikram Rathour, in his pre-match media briefing, said that it didn't "look serious."

Abhimanyu Easwaran is the reserve opener should Rahul not be able to play, and the Bengal batter was active in the nets, under the watchful eyes of both Rahul Dravid and Paras Mhambrey.

The bowling will pick itself, with the spin trio of R.

Ashwin, Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav expected to do a bulk of the heavy lifting as India seeks vital World Test Championship points. Bangladesh can ill-afford the kind of impatience it displayed in the first innings of the opening Test.

It can take a leaf out of Zakir Hasan's notebook, whose century on debut was a top-draw performance. But Zakir himself will be a pursued man now and a sophomore's test is the toughest there is.

The teams (from):

India: K.L. Rahul (Capt.), Cheteshwar Pujara (Vice-Capt.), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant, K.S. Bharat, R. Ashwin, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Shardul Thakur, Mohd. Siraj, Umesh Yadav, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Saurabh Kumar and Jaydev Unadkat.

Bangladesh: Shakib Al Hasan (Capt.), Litton Das (Vice-Capt.), Mahmudul Hasan, Najmul Hossain, Mominul Haque, Yasir Ali, Mushfiqur Rahim, Nurul Hasan, Mehidy Hasan, Taijul Islam, Khaled Ahmed, Taskin Ahmed, Zakir Hasan, Rejaur Rahman Raja and Nasum Ahmed.

Umpires: Chris Brown & SIS Saikat.
Match starts at 9 a.m. IST.

A good performance at Chattogram overall: Rathour

N. Sudarshan
MIRPUR

India's batting coach Vikram Rathour stated that the visitors' all-round effort in the opening Test in Chattogram will stand them in good stead as it prepares to encounter a more spin-friendly wicket here.

"They [Bangladesh] are a decent bowling unit without any a doubt," Rathour said, on Wednesday. "[But] we are really confident with the way our batters have been batting. It was a good Test as a team. We batted well definitely, but we bowled well too."

"It was a tough surface to get 20 wickets. It was slow and low, especially in the second innings. It was good to see [Cheteshwar] Pujara and [Shubman] Gill get hundreds. It was a good performance overall."

Give it all

Bangladesh is set to welcome its best fast bowler Taskin Ahmed, who was rested for the opening Test. Fast-bowling coach Allan Donald said that the dry conditions shouldn't be a deterrent.

"I have always used the reference of the England

fast bowlers' mindset in Pakistan, how they get themselves involved in the contest." Donald said. "Despite three spinners, you have a free ride to be a bit more expansive as a quick. You can put everything on the table for [say] four overs."

"If you saw how [Mohd.] Siraj or Umesh [Yadav] bowled, they either went very short or attacking. It is not easy to duck on these pitches. So if you have a bit of pace, you can be a little more expansive and aggressive."

It has been a year of struggle for Bangladesh - just one win from nine outings - and the South African said his side was desperate for a win.

"We want to win. It doesn't matter where you play India, you put that in your highest order of achievements. The second innings batting [in the first Test] is a blueprint for us. The young man [Zakir Hasan] has surprised many. He showed that he can take on the very best bowlers and has been a terrific breath of fresh air."

"A lot of people including me want to go home for a delayed Christmas with a win under our belt."

India showed it can give Australia a fight and a fright

P.K. Ajith Kumar
MUMBAI

The five-match women's T20I series between India and Australia, which concluded at the Brabourne Stadium on Tuesday, proved several points.

That the current Australian women's team just is too good for the rest of the world, regardless of the format. The Women in Yellow are too dominant with bat and ball and there is an aura of invincibility about them. They resemble Clive Lloyd's West Indies team of the 1980s. In the final match, they were reduced to 67 for four in 9.4 overs but ended up with a total of 196 for four.

That India is one side that could give the Australian women a strong fight. The Women in Blue chased a tall total and took the second match to a Super Over, which they won to end the visitors' unbeaten run that had stretched for over a year.

Deserve more attention That India's fringe players deserve more attention from the selectors. For instance, leg-spinning all-rounder Devika Vaidya who performed well on her return to the T20I side after eight years, or the



Harleen... driving the game forward. EMMANUAL YOGINI

way left-arm seamer Anjali Sarvani bowled on batting-friendly tracks in what was her maiden international series; she had been playing domestic cricket for close to a decade.

That Richa Ghosh's power-hitting could add another dimension to India's middle-order. The wicket-keeper is turning into a finisher who could deliver some mighty blows when the team badly needs them. A six off the first ball provided India a perfect start in the Super Over.

That Grace Harris could send shivers down the spine of bowlers in women's cricket around the

globe. She doesn't hit a cricket ball, she clobbers it.

That Harleen Deol, who can also bowl leg spin, is an interesting option for India. In the only innings she got to bat in the series, she made 24 off 16 balls before getting run out.

The would-be owners of the women's IPL franchises would have realised that there is an appetite for women's cricket when more than 45,000 spectators turned up to watch India stun Australia in the Super Over finish at Navi Mumbai's D.Y. Patil Stadium in the second game of the series.

'I felt hunger for the first time in my life'

Associated Press
BERLIN

Tennis great Boris Becker tearfully recounted the moment the door of his single-occupancy cell at Britain's notorious Wandsworth prison closed for the first time, speaking publicly after serving eight months for bankruptcy offences.

"It was the loneliest moment I've ever had in life," Becker said in an interview with German broadcaster SAT.1 that aired Tuesday, recalling how hours earlier he had been unable to say farewell to his loved ones before being led downstairs to the courtroom jail.

The three-time Wimbledon champion was sentenced to 30 months in prison in April for illicitly transferring large amounts of money and hiding assets after he was declared bankrupt. Becker would normally have had to serve half of his sentence before being eligible for release, but was released early under a fast-track deportation program for foreign nationals.

Arriving in Wandsworth, the 55-year-old Becker said he feared attacks by other inmates.

"The many films I saw beforehand didn't help," he said. Becker said prison auth-



Boris Becker. AFP

orities appeared to have tried to ensure his safety, allocating him a single cell and getting three experienced inmates - or "listeners" - to guide him in his new life behind bars.

That included coping with the lack of food, Becker said, as prison fare was largely restricted to rice, potatoes and sauce. "Sunday roasts" consisted of a chicken drumstick, he said.

"I felt hunger for the first time in my life," said Becker.

Violence was a problem, he said, recounting instances at Wandsworth and later at HMP Huntercombe where inmates threatened to harm him until others stepped in.

In November, fellow prisoners organised several cakes for his birthday, Becker said.

"I've never experienced such solidarity in the free world," he said.

Poor treatment meted out to hockey legends at World Cup Trophy tour

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
CHENNAI

The hockey World Cup Trophy tour event at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Hockey Stadium here on Wednesday witnessed an unpleasant incident as hockey legends V. Baskaran, B.P. Govinda, Leslie Fernandez and V.J. Philips were denied access to the guests' podium.

After an exhibition match, the trophy was showcased and handed over to Kerala Hockey by Udhayanidhi Stalin, the Tamil Nadu Minister for youth welfare & sports development.

While the politicians, hockey administrators and Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu (SDAT) officials were escorted to the podium, the former players were sidelined.

It was then that Baskaran appealed for a dignified treatment. He said that the hockey players felt insulted for being invited and then ignored.

"Is this a hockey function or what?" he fumed. He demanded that they, especially the World Cup winners (Govinda, Leslie and Philips), be seated in



Fighting his case: Baskaran brings to the attention of the sports minister the sidelining of the hockey players. K.V. SRINIVASAN

the front row on the podium. Baskaran, captain of India's 1980 Moscow Olympics gold-winning team, then took the matter to the sports minister. The latter ensured that seats were arranged for the hockey players on the dais.

Philips dismayed

Philips, in his speech, said: "They (the organisers) forgot how to honour the World Cup winners! I'm extremely distressed. From among the eight crore population of Tamil Nadu, only three of us have won the World Cup and not many

have even played in it.

"I've played three World Cups, I wasn't even recognised and they don't even find me worthy of respect. From playing barefoot on this very ground, I've donned the India colours for around 12 years and represented the country in two Olympics apart from the World Cups. If people from our State don't respect us, where else will we get respect? It's very disturbing."

Udhayanidhi assured the hockey heroes that such an incident won't happen in the future.

IN BRIEF



Fury, Usyk agree unification bout, says promoter Arum

Tyson Fury and Oleksandr Usyk have agreed to fight each other next in a world heavyweight boxing title unification bout, promoter Bob Arum said. Fury defeated Derek Chisora for the third time in his career to retain his WBC title earlier this month. "The two have agreed to fight each other next," 91-year-old Arum said on Tuesday.

FIA forbids F1 drivers from issuing political statements

Formula One drivers will need permission from the sport's governing body to display political or religious statements starting in 2023. The FIA's international sporting code, which governs the running of motorsport competitions, has been updated with new clauses under "breach of rules".

Sreenidi, RoundGlass post narrow wins in I-League

A 47th minute goal from Ramhlunchunga helped Sreenidi Deccan hand NEROCA FC its sixth defeat of the season in an I-League match in Imphal on Wednesday. In another match at Panchkula, host RoundGlass Punjab beat Gokulam Kerala 1-0. Luka Majcen netted the winner in the 75th minute.

LIVE TELECAST

Bangladesh vs India: 2nd Test, day 1, Sony Sports Ten 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 9 a.m.
Ranji Trophy: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 9.30 a.m.
I-League: Eurosport (SD & HD), 2 & 4.30 p.m.
ISL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 7.30 p.m.

Shorey carries his bat for Delhi

His unbeaten 252 powers the side to 439 against Assam; Shahbaz's five-for puts Bengal in a commanding position versus Himachal



Monumental effort: The Shorey show helped Delhi take control of its Group B game in Guwahati. PTI

RANJI TROPHY

Sports Bureau

Opener Dhruv Shorey carried his bat with a sensational unbeaten 252 (317b, 34x4) to power Delhi to 439 against Assam on the second day of the Ranji Trophy (Elite Group B) at the ACA Stadium in Guwahati on Wednesday.

Resuming the day at 271 for seven, Shorey guided the Delhi lower-order.

Productive phase

He stitched together an 87-run stand for the eighth wicket with Vikas Mishra before adding 91 for the last wicket with Harshit Rana.

In reply, Assam ended the day on 158 for four with Rishav Das batting on 71.

At Kolkata, Shahbaz Ahmed's five-wicket haul helped Bengal tighten its grip over Himachal Pradesh in its Group A match

at the Eden Gardens.

Resuming at 310 for nine, Bengal lost centurion Anustup Majumdar's wicket in the second delivery of the day without adding anything to its total.

The host bundled out Himachal Pradesh for 130 and posted 89 for one in its second innings to enjoy a sizeable lead of 269 runs at the close of the second day's play.

Bengal captain Manjot Tiwary surprised the opposition by introducing Shahbaz as a new ball bowler. It worked wonders as Himachal batters tried to attack the left-arm spinner.

Immediate success

Shahbaz tasted success in his first over by removing Raghav Dhawan. Soon, Ishan Porel had southpaw Ankit Kalsi caught behind. Before Himachal could settle down, Shahbaz had taken the wickets of Amit Kumar and Akash Vashisht.

Akash Deep and Sayan

Shekhar Mandal joined the party to reduce the tourists to 64 for six.

Opener Prashant Chopra, who held one end resolutely, added 35 with Mayank Dagar before Ishan again took the help of his younger brother Abhishek to break the stand.

Shahbaz returned to dismiss Vaibhav Arora and K.D. Singh to complete his five-for. Akash Deep secured another wicket even as Chopra (71 n.o., 149b, 8x4) displayed lone resistance till the end.

Contrasting knocks

Bengal openers, Abhishek Das (35, 20b, 5x4, 2x6) and Koushik Ghosh (21 n.o., 60b, 2x4), played contrasting knocks to gather 36. While Das scored at a faster rate, dealing mostly in big hits on either side, Koushik valued his wicket.

After Das was trapped lbw by Vaibhav, Koushik and Sudip Gharami (32, 34b, 5x4) inflated Bengal's lead.

RANJI TROPHY SCORES (ROUND TWO, DAY TWO)

Elite: Group-A: At Sovima: Uttar Pradesh 551/4 decl. in 117 overs (Dhruv Jurel 249, Rinku Singh 127 n.o.) vs. Nagaland 136 in 42.4 overs (Shivam Sharma 7/59) & 44/6 in 14 overs.

At Kolkata: Bengal 310 in 78.2 overs & 89/1 in 19 overs vs. Himachal Pradesh 130 in 46.5 overs (Prashant Chopra 71 n.o., Shahbaz Ahmed 5/32).

At Dehradun: Odisha 213 vs. Uttarakhand 308/3 in 94 overs (Jivanjot Singh 174 batting, Swapnil Singh 60 batting).

At Vadodra: Baroda 615 in 158 overs (Jyotsnail Singh 195, Vishnu Solanki 64, Priyanshu Moliya 144 n.o.) vs. Haryana 70/1 in 22 overs.

Group-B: At Guwahati: Delhi 439 in 110.1 overs (Dhruv Shorey 252 n.o.) vs. Assam 158/4 in 44 overs (Rishav Das 71 batting).

At Rajkot: Maharashtra 472/7 in 173 overs (Naushad Shaikh 101, Ankit Bawne 96, Saurabh Nawale 72, Akshay Palkar 51 batting) vs. Saurashtra.

At Coimbatore: Andhra 297 in 100.1 overs (Karan Shinde 55) vs. Tamil Nadu (TN) 273/4 in 77 overs (Sai Sudharsan 113, B. Aparajith 88).

At Mumbai: Mumbai 651/6 decl. in 127.2 overs (Ajinkya Rahane 204, Sarfaraz Khan 126 n.o.) vs. Hyderabad 173/6 in 50 overs (Tanmay Agarwal 40, Rohit Rayudu 72 batting, Shams Mulani 5/76).

Group-C: At Jamshedpur: Jharkhand 386 in 128.1 overs (Saurabh Tiwary 65, Kumar Kushagra 96, Darshan Misal 4/68) vs. Goa 99/4 in 48 overs (Sumiran Amonkar 41, Amogh Sunil Desai 41).

At Delhi: Services 213 vs. Chhattisgarh 280/5 in 86.5 overs (Amandeep Khare 66 batting, Ajay Mandal 101 batting).

At Bengaluru: Pondicherry 170 & 58/3 in 27 overs vs. Karnataka 304 in 93.2 overs (R. Samarth 137, Manish Pandey 45, Ankit Sharma 6/60).

At Jaipur: Rajasthan 337 in 97.1 overs (Salman Khan 74) vs. Kerala 268/8 in 73 overs (Sachin Baby 109 batting, Sanju Samson 82).

Group-D: At Indore: Madhya Pradesh 309 in 95.2 overs (Akshat Raghuvanshi 77, Sandeep Sharma 7/93) bt Chandigarh 57 in 24 overs (Kumar Kartikeya 6/20)

& 127 in 44.3 overs (Ankit Kaushik 69, Saransh Jain 5/37, Kumar Kartikeya 4/44). **Points: M.P. 7 (14), Chandigarh 0 (1).**

At Ahmedabad: Gujarat 307 in 104.3 overs (Chintan Gaja 41, Abid Mushtaq 4/104) vs. Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) 135 in 43.5 overs (Fazil Rashid 51 n.o., Siddharth Desai 6/38) & 83/3 in 29 overs.

At Nagpur: Vidarbha 264 vs. Tripura 290/7 in 92 overs (Bishal Ghosh 48, Sridam Paul 47, Sudip Chatterjee 83, Wriddhiman Saha 66, Yash Thakur 4/39).

Plate: At Shillong: Sikkim 140 & 90 in 34.1 overs (Dippu Sangma 4/26, Rajesh Bishnoi 5/19) lost to Meghalaya 153 in 45.4 overs (Palzor Tamang 5/43) & 78/0 in 8 overs (Raj Biswa 56 n.o.); **Points: Meghalaya 7 (13), Sikkim 0 (6).**

At Anand: Arunachal Pradesh 63 & 157 in 48.4 overs (Kumar Nyompu 64 n.o., Avinash Yadav 4/42) lost to Mizoram 338 in 90 overs (Tarunwar Kohli 203, Nabam Abo 4/75). **Points: Mizoram 7 (7), Arunachal 0 (0).**

At Ahmedabad: Bihar 311 in 97.4 overs (Rex Rajkumar 4/62) vs. Manipur 229/6 in 81 overs (Prafullomani Singh 75).

It would be great if Rehan is picked in IPL auction: McCullum

Press Trust of India
KARACHI

England red-ball coach Brendon McCullum says it would be "awesome" if leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed bags an IPL deal following his stellar Test debut and he would want the teenager to play as much franchise cricket as possible.

Rehan, who already has a deal to play in the inaugural ILT20 in the UAE, has entered the IPL auction, to be held in Kochi on Friday, with a base price of ₹40 lakh.

"It would be great if he got picked up at the IPL. It



Special talent: McCullum feels Rehan should be encouraged to play franchise cricket to hone his skills. GETTY IMAGES

would be awesome if he did," McCullum said.

"Why not give him that opportunity to rub shoulders with other players

and pick up those experiences?

What other 18-year-old is going to get those chances?"

Manu confident of bright time ahead after a strong finish to the season

SHOOTING

Kamesh Srinivasan
NEW DELHI

It had been a hectic season but Olympian Manu Bhaker was happy to finish it on a strong note in the National championship in Bhopal.

Quite relaxed during a media interaction on Wednesday, Manu said that she was "not really flattered" by her performances, but was proud about her "brilliant" fare in the final of 25-metre sports pistol and the "world class" qualification score in air pistol, in the Nationals.

Manu won gold in both the women's and junior events of sports pistol, but



Manu. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

had to be content only with the junior gold in air pistol.

Conceding that the season was "up and down", the 20-year-old said that she was happy to have managed to make the finals and win medals.

She was particularly pleased to be among the elite in the country, despite the massive growth of shooting sport.

"When I shot my first National championship, I remember the overall number was 430 girls including all categories. This time it was 12,000 in pistol alone", said Manu, nodding her agreement about it being relatively easy to win the Olympic quota than making the National team.

"We are among the elite in the world. We will get the Olympic quota places", said Manu, expressing confidence that it would be a mere matter of time before the National team secured all possible Olympic quota for the Paris 2024 Games.

India has already won three Olympic quota through Bhowneesh Mendiratta (trap), Rudranksh Patil (air rifle) and Swapnil Kusale (rifle 3-position) in the World Championships.

Looking at the world-class infrastructure set up by the Madhya Pradesh Academy in Bhopal, Manu was excited about having the next World Cup there in March, instead of Delhi.

There will be two World Cups in Jakarta and Cairo for rifle and pistol in January and February next year offering Olympic quota places.

Categorically stating that she enjoyed shooting and did not feel it as a burden, Manu said that she was taking days off whenever required.

Sethuraman begins as the rating favourite in National chess championship

Rakesh Rao
NEW DELHI

The National championship makes a return in the same calendar year. Nine months after Arjun Erigaisi and D. Gukesh began their march from Kanpur to stardom, the same platform will offer a similar opportunity to a number of established names, all ready for the challenges from the young brigade.

The 11-round flagship event opens at the Indira Gandhi Stadium here on Thursday, with S.P. Sethuraman being the rating favourite among around 200 players.

With local boy Vaibhav Suri pulling out, the 2011 champion Abhijeet Gupta will be the second seed.

As compared to the field



Sethuraman. FILE PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

seen in the previous edition, the number of Grandmasters has fallen from 22 to 17, International Masters from 30 to 26, the number of titled players from 70 to 63 but overall, the field is marginally bigger.

Till late evening on Wednesday, there was uncertainty over the participa-

tion of Grandmaster Vishnu Prasanna, better known these days as the coach of Gukesh. Moreover, it is a matter of concern that Only three players — Sethuraman (ranked 9th), Abhijeet (19th) and Leon Mendonca (24th) — from the country's top-25 list are around for the country's richest Nationals, offering ₹30 lakh as prize-money.

Fear of losing points

Some players have prior commitments to play in overseas events but several others are wary of the hidden playing strength of some of the lower-rated names in the field. The fear of losing their carefully-collected rating points from comparatively weaker fields in overseas Open events, is seen as the main

reason for the large number of notable absentees.

At the same time, it allows some others to hog the limelight, much like what Arjun, Gukesh and P. Iniyar did in March. In fact, Arjun and Gukesh did not look back and went on to temporarily break into the top-20 of the world.

With the All India Chess Federation continuing to host the women's National championship concurrently, this time at Kolhapur, no leading woman player is in the fray here.

Top-10 seeds: 1. S.P. Sethuraman (2642), 2. Abhijeet Gupta (2601), 3. Leon Mendonca (2566), 4. N. R. Visakh (2544), 5. M. Shyam Sundar (2526), 6. Aronyak Ghosh (2521), 7. Koustav Chatterjee (2508), 8. P. Iniyar (2507), 9. Karthik Venkataraman (2503), 10. Swapnil Dhopade (2499).

Manas loses in the first round

Sports Bureau

Manas Dhamne was beaten 6-2, 6-3 by qualifier Mehdi Sadaoui of France in the first round of the \$15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament in Monastir, Tunisia, on Wednesday.

In the \$25,000 women's event in Tauranga, Ashmitha Easwaramurthi and Yuka Hosoki of Japan made the doubles semifinals.

The results:
\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir, Tunisia: First round: Mehdi Sadaoui (Fra) bt Manas Dhamne 6-2, 6-3.
\$25,000 ITF women, Tauranga, New Zealand: Quarterfinals: Yuka Hosoki (Jpn) & Ashmitha Easwaramurthi bt Monique Adamczak & Sophie McDonald 6-3, 7-5.

ICC CEO pitches for more Test-playing nations to tour Pakistan

Press Trust of India
KARACHI

International Cricket Council (ICC) CEO Geoff Allardice is keen to see more Test cricket being played in Pakistan following the successful completion of the three-match series against the Ben Stokes-led England.

The three matches, played in Rawalpindi, Multan and Karachi, saw spectators give a huge thumbs up to Test cricket, even though the hosts lost the series 0-3.

Australia also toured Pakistan earlier this year, with packed stadiums for

the three-Test series indicating the fans' craze for the longest format of the game in the country.

"The fans in Pakistan are passionate about the game and passionate about their team, but most importantly they are welcoming of visitors," Allardice told Pakistan Cricket.

"I have always had great experiences when I have travelled to Pakistan and I have been to see a few series over the last few years and the welcome is always very warm." Pakistan will host reigning World Test champions New Zealand for a two-Test series beginning in Karachi on Dec. 26.

World No. 1 Swiatek leads Australian Open entry list

ANI
MELBOURNE

World No. 1 Iga Swiatek leads the entry list for next year's Australian Open, which is based on the WTA rankings of the week beginning December 5, WTA announced on Wednesday.

Reigning French Open and US Open champion Swiatek is one of 13 current or former Grand Slam winners who have entered the first Major of 2023, which begins on January 16 in Melbourne.

The Pole, who reached her first Australian Open semifinal this year, will be bidding to add a fourth Grand Slam title to her



In the fray: French and US Open champ Swiatek is one of 13 current or former Slam winners who have entered 2023's first Major. GETTY IMAGES

haul so far.

Victoria Azarenka (2012-13), Naomi Osaka (2019, 2021), and Sofia Kenin (2020) are among the former Australian Open champions, as are three former Australian Open

runners-up, Petra Kvitova (2019), Garbie Muguruza (2020), and Danielle Collins (2022).

Venus Williams will compete as a wild card. Nineteen of the world's top twenty are competing.

Hasan Ali returns to squad for NZ Tests

Press Trust of India
KARACHI

Pakistan has recalled pace bowler Hasan Ali and named uncapped batsman Kamran Ghulam in its 16-member squad for the two-Test series against New Zealand, beginning here on Monday.

Kamran, who was earlier named in Pakistan's Test squad but did not get a chance to make his debut, replaces the veteran Azhar Ali.

Hasan, who last played a Test against Sri Lanka in Galle in July, has appeared in 21 Tests for his country taking 77 wickets.

The selectors also didn't

include fast bowlers, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf in the squad as both are still recovering from respective injuries.

The national selectors have also released pace bowler Muhammad Ali and all-rounder Faheem Ashraf from the Pakistan squad following its 3-0 whitewash against England on Monday.

The squad:

Babar Azam (Capt.), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Naseem Shah, Noman Ali, Sarfaraz Ahmed, Salman Ali Agha, Saud Shakeel, Shan Masood, and Zahid Mehmood.