

# Kashmir Tone

Published from Srinagar | Volume : 01 | Issue No: 123

Pages: 08 | Price Rs 10/-

## Coronavirus: JK reports two deaths, 181 new cases

Srinagar, Dec 3: Jammu and Kashmir Friday reported two deaths and 181 fresh positive cases taking the number of total active cases in the Union Territory to 1,708.

With two more deaths, the death toll in the UT stands at 4,479 and 181 fresh positive cases reported on Friday have pushed the tally of positive cases to 337,444.

Of the exact number of 337,444 cases, 212,187 are from Kashmir division and 125,257 from Jammu division. Officials said that among 181 new cases, 124 belong to Kashmir division while 56 are from Jammu division, adding that the total number of positive cases in Kashmir division have reached to 212,187 including 208,588 recoveries and 2,294 deaths while as total number of positive cases in Jammu division have reached to 125,257 including 122,669 recoveries and 2,185 deaths.

The officials said that the total number of active cases in Jammu and Kashmir are 1,708 including 1,305 from Kashmir division and 403 from Jammu division.

With 168 more recoveries, the tally of total recoveries in Jammu and Kashmir has reached 331,257 which is 98.17 percent of the total cases.

"Cases tested positive in J&K include 56 from Srinagar, 41 from Baramulla, 11



### RT-PCR test mandatory for all international arrivals

Srinagar, Dec 3: Amid the threat of a new Covid variant, authorities have made the RT-PCR test mandatory for all international arrivals at Srinagar International Airport and samples of positive cases must be sent for genome sequencing. Moreover, authorities have asked the people arriving from "At-Risk" nations to remain in home quarantine for seven days after testing negative for Covid-19, besides persons coming from not at risk nations after testing negative must monitor themselves for at least two weeks carefully.

An order issued by State Executive Committee under section 24 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, reads that rigorous screening and conduct of Covid-19 RT-PCR test shall be made mandatory at the Srinagar International Airport for International arrivals as per the guidelines issued from time to time by MoHFW. "Any person found Covid19 positive shall be

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## PDP sought votes to keep BJP away, joined hands with same party later: Azad

Jammu, Dec 3: Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad Friday said that PDP sought votes from people of Jammu and Kashmir to keep BJP away but later the same party entered into an alliance with the BJP in 2018 and the results are well before the masses.

He said perhaps J&K is the only place that has been under Governor and Lieutenant Governor's rule most of the time in India. Addressing a gathering at Rajour, Azad said that almost all the political leaders have deceived people of J&K by raising hollow slogans and breaking the promises made to the people.

"Today, we have reached a stage where a common citizen of J&K is totally unhappy with the political leaders and is angry as well," he said.

He said that it was because majority



of the political leaders while playing the politics of deceit to become Chief Minister, MP, MLAs mislead people.

"When we are witnessing LG rule, the political leaders who cheated people are silent," he said. He said that PDP sought votes from people to keep BJP away from

political arena but later joined the hands with the same party to form the government in 2018. "Results are well before people of J&K," Azad said.

He said that during Governor and LG rule, it is the bureaucracy that rules the people actually. "But in a democracy, there is no place for bureaucracy to rule people," Azad said.

He said there is inflation across J&K and the example was during Congress rule cooking gas cylinder would cost Rs 450 but today the same is sold at Rs 1100. "Petrol, diesel, vegetables, fruit, oil prices are touching new heights," Azad said, adding that unemployment is rising each day.

He said termination of government employees should stop, eviction of people from forest and state land should also

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## Cold wave grips Kashmir amid snowfall forecast

Srinagar, Dec 2: Kashmir Valley and Ladakh continued to reel under freezing temperatures with Srinagar recording the second night on Friday.

A meteorological department official here said that Srinagar recorded minus 2.4°C against previous night's minus 1.8°C. It was second coldest night after December 1 when mercury fell to 2.5°C, lowest temperature recorded this season.

Qazigund recorded minimum temperature of minus 1.8°C against minus 1.5°C on the previous night, he said. It was minus 0.8°C below normal for the



gateway town of Kashmir for this time of the year, the official said.

Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 4.1°C against minus 4.2°C on

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## Will involve Panchayat Raj Institutions for monitoring of primary schools: SED

Srinagar, Dec 3: The School Education Department has said that it will involve Panchayat Raj Institutions for the improvisation of different interventions in education and monitoring of primary schools will be done by Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs).

A top official at Directorate of School Education Kashmir (DSEK) in an official communiqué to Chief Education

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## Suspicious object found, destroyed in Kupwara

Kupwara, Dec 3: A suspicious object found lying along a road in Kupwara on Thursday afternoon was recovered and subsequently destroyed by a BDS team, an official said.

"Based on specific input, army's 41 RR alongside 140 Bn BSF and Kupwara police, cordoned off an area and found a suspicious cylindrical metal object connected to battery wires lying along a road leading from Kupwara to Kalaroos", the official said.

He said a Bomb Disposal Squad

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## Centre to keep budgetary provisions for restoration of flood hit infrastructure

Srinagar, Dec 3: The Union Finance Ministry has agreed to keep budgetary provisions for permanent restoration of infrastructure hit by 2014 floods in Jammu & Kashmir in the revised estimates of ongoing fiscal.

Documents in possession, reveal that the Ministry of Finance has agreed to keep the budgetary provision for permanent restoration of infrastructure damaged by 2014 deluge in J&K.

Under the Prime Minister's Development Package for Jammu and Kashmir, Rs 2000 crore were earmarked for restoration of infrastructure hit by deluge



of 2014.

The documents reveal that against the approved amount of Rs 2000 crore, only Rs 1178.34 crore have been released

by the Government of India till date.

"Against the action plan of Rs 2000 crore, Government of India has released only Rs 1178.34 crore. Balance amount of 811.64 crore need to be released," the documents state.

The funds have not been released even as the National Institution for Transformation of India (NITI) Aayog has recommended the same.

"On the basis of the Utilization Certificate submitted, NITI Aayog recommended to MOF for release of Rs.647.46 crore," the documents further state.

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## Seven IAF aircraft crashed in last two years: Govt

New Delhi, Dec 3: Seven aircraft of the Indian Air Force have crashed in the last two years, the government said in Lok Sabha on Friday.

Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt, replying to a question, said every aircraft accident in the IAF is investigated by a separate Court of Inquiry (Col).

"A total of seven aircraft of Air Force have crashed in the last two years, including the Mirage 2000 which crashed recently in Madhya Pradesh," he said.

Bhatt said the Court of Inquiry is ordered to ascertain the cause of the



accident and the recommendations of the investigations are implemented.

"The steps taken by the government to avoid such incidents in the future include invigoration of aerospace safety organisation, maintaining

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## People involved in selling humans will face action: MD ICPS

Srinagar, Dec 3: Human lives aren't for sale and those who will be found involved in it will face strict action, Mission Director Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) Shabnam Kamili said on Friday.

Talking to media men at B.ed College MA Road, Srinagar, Kamili said that the process of investigation of media reports

alleging sale of Covid orphans has already started as FIR has been lodged, office of the NGO sealed, and two persons arrested while further investigation is going on.

"Soon after the media reports came to fore, we have taken steps for the safety of those orphans who are registered with ICPS. There are presently 635 Covid

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## Don't let peaceful atmosphere to be disturbed: DGP to officers

Jammu, Dec 3: Director General Police (DGP) Dilbag Singh Friday chaired back to back meetings at Srinagar.

The DGP chaired a Police Establishment Board (PEB) meeting via video conferencing and in the afternoon he chaired joint security review meeting at PCR Kashmir, which was attended by senior officers of Police, Army and CAPF.

The Police Establishment



Board meeting was attended by Spl. DGP CID, J&K, R. R. Swain, Spl. DGP Crime, J&K, A. K. Choudhary, ADGP Security, J&K, Dr S. D. Singh Jamwal, ADGP Headquarters, PHQ, M. K. Sinha, ADGP Railways, J&K, Sumil Kumar, ADGP Coordination, PHQ, Danesh Rana, AIGSp of PHQ Ramesh Angral, J. S. Johar, Manoj Pandita, and other

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## Persons with disabilities our real life heroes: Farooq Khan

Srinagar, Dec 3: Terming the specially abled people as our real life heroes, Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Farooq Khan, Friday emphasized the society to play its role earnestly to push them forward towards a prosperous and successful life.

Advisor said this, while speaking as a chief guest at "International Day of Persons with Disabilities" function held at SKICC Srinagar.

Terming these specially-abled persons as "real life heroes", Advisor said that many of them in Kashmir are insightful and talented. He said that despite facing all odds and hardships throughout their journey of life, they have excelled in different fields including sports, education and civil services and have been

See Khan on pg 7...

## Indian Navy capable of defending national interests: Admiral Hari Kumar

New Delhi, Dec 3: Asserting that the Indian Navy keeps a close watch on the Chinese Navy activities in the Indian Ocean Region, Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar on Friday said the maritime force was fully capable of defending national interests in the maritime domain.

Addressing the annual Navy Day press conference, the new Navy chief also revealed that during the peak of the India-China border tensions on the Northern borders last year, the Indian Navy had deployed its warships in the forward locations and were keeping an eye on the Chinese warships operating

along the Indian maritime borders. "We are aware of the development of the Chinese Navy. They built around 110 warships in the last few years meaning 13-14 warships every year. Our plans factor all these activities and deployments in the Indian Ocean Region. PLA Navy has been present in the IOR since 2008 and we have been watching that. I want to assure you that the Indian navy is confident



of defending India's maritime interests," said Hari Kumar in the one-hour-long press conference.

He said the Chinese have been deploying seven to eight warships on an average in the Indian Ocean Region which is kept under "constant surveillance by aircraft and ships and their activities are kept under close watch."

Asked about the Indian response to the aggression by the Chinese navy in

northern areas, he said the force had forward-deployed its warships at that time.

Praising the government for the creation of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA), Kumar said this was the biggest reform that has happened in the military since independence along with the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff.

"This enables faster decision making, integration and fewer layers of bureaucracy. I feel DMA made a significant change in the way armed forces operate at headquarters' level," the Navy chief stated.

Pointing out that the

See Indian on pg 7...

## Three years on, 25 per cent work still pending at GMC Baramulla

Srinagar, Dec 3: Despite passing of nearly three years, the Jammu and Kashmir Projects Construction Corporation (JKPCC) has completed only 75 percent of work of Government Medical College (GMC) Baramulla.

The corporation is likely to miss the deadline for the completion of the project.

Till November-2021, JKPCC was yet to complete around 25 percent of the works.

The Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, P K Pole in a meeting held earlier this week was informed that the revised completion deadline of the project was December-2021. "However, only 75 percent of progress has been achieved till date and work on the project is in full swing."

In the meeting, Pole was also apprised that out of eight blocks, four will be ready by the end of December-2021.

Sources said that the concerned authorities have informed the Divisional Commissioners office that army authorities have raised objections to the construction of a multi storied



administration building. "The army authorities, JKPCC and the District Administration are on board and will take some time for its resolution," the concerned authorities told Pole.

Besides, Pole in the meeting asked to explore the possibility for completion of the inner works like water, electricity fitting etcetera of the building to which the army has raised objections till final disposal.

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# Working to ensure people in rural areas don't have to struggle for justice: Rijiju

New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI): Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday asserted that steps are being taken to create legal awareness, provide legal aid and ensure that people in rural areas need not have to really struggle to get basic minimum justice.

A large number of cases are pending in different courts, and the minister said that more than 90 per cent of the pending cases are at the lower judiciary.

Replying to questions in the Lok Sabha, Rijiju said effective steps are being taken for creating legal awareness and providing legal aid and a digital campaign has been conducted by the Department of Justice. "We need to strengthen the mechanisms and facilities across the country to make this campaign very effective."

In rural areas, the online campaign is still not that effective as it is in urban areas, Rijiju said, and emphasised that efforts being made to ensure that paralegal volun-



teers and panel lawyers also get involved in ODR (Online Dispute Resolution) and ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) by assisting people who require assistance.

With respect to many cases pending at the lower judiciary, the minister said that all the facilities will be provided to address the issue, and steps are being taken on the concept of justice at the doorstep, especially mobile courts or Lok Adalat, and hearing cases on the spot.

"I assure that the hearing in rural areas is conducted in a way that the people do not have to really strug-

Rijiju said.

According to the minister, the concept of ODR in India is at a nascent stage.

A committee set up by Niti Aayog released a report titled 'Designing the future of dispute resolution: the ODR Policy Plan for India' was released on November 29.

The report has recommended mainstreaming of ODR in the country as a cost-effective, convenient and efficient process, which can be customised to the specific needs of the parties, considering the nature of the dispute.

To another query, Rijiju said that since there is no legal framework so far, measures to increase awareness regarding ODR do not arise at the level of the government at present.

The minister also noted that public utility services do not fall exclusively in the realm of the central government, as these services are provided by state governments also.

# Stop politics on oxygen shortage: Mandaviya to opposition

New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI): Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Friday asked the opposition parties to stop playing politics over oxygen shortage during the second wave of COVID-19 infections and take note of the Centre's efforts to ramp production of the life-saving gas to meet the surge in demand.

Addressing the Lok Sabha during the Question Hour, he said the Union government made "all possible efforts" to ensure the availability of oxygen and increased its production following a rise in demand during the second wave of the pandemic.

"Sadly, even in such a situation, many people did not refrain from playing politics... I appeal, take note



of our honest efforts. This is not a subject of politics," he said in reply to a question on the issue raised by Congress MP Suresh Dhanorkar.

Mandaviya also hit out at the opposition over claims about deaths due to oxygen shortage during that period, saying the Centre sought from states data on the matter and only the Punjab government replied that there were four suspected cases of such deaths and a probe into

them was underway.

"I want to say that Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) had said at the chief ministers' meeting that there was no need to hide the number of deaths due to shortage of oxygen shortage. It (numbers) should be reported," the Union Health Minister said.

The Centre wrote to states thrice, requesting them to provide data on the number of people who died due to shortage of oxygen, Mandaviya said.

"A total of 19 states responded and it's only Punjab which stated in writing that four suspected deaths were there (in the state) and that too being investigated. We made it public. Still, politics is happening," he added.

# Man lynched in Jharkhand village, 4 held

Giridih, Dec 3 (PTI): A man was allegedly lynched by a group of people in a village in Jharkhand's Giridih district on suspicion of being a thief, police said on Friday.

The incident took place in Khetko village on Thursday night, they said. Four people have been taken into custody in this connection as per directions of Giridih Superintendent of Police, Amit Renu, an officer said.

Bagodar Police Station in-charge Saroj Kumar Choudhary said three people suspected to be thieves had entered the village on Thursday, but two of them managed to escape.

The deceased could not be identified yet, he said, adding, further investigation is underway.

# Deep depression intensifies into Cyclone 'Jawad', to make landfall around Puri on Dec 5

New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI): A deep depression in the Bay of Bengal has intensified into cyclonic storm 'Jawad', the India Meteorological Department said on Friday.

The cyclonic storm is likely to reach the west-central Bay of Bengal off the coast of north Andhra Pradesh and Odisha by Saturday morning, IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said.

Thereafter, it is likely to recurve north-northeastwards, move along the coast of Odisha and adjoining Andhra Pradesh and touch the coast around Puri by December 5 noon, according to the weather department.

The name of the cyclone - 'Jawad' - has been proposed by Saudi Arabia.

A low-pressure area had developed over the Andaman Sea on November 30. It intensified into a depression on December 2 and further into a deep depression on Friday morning. It turned into a cyclone on Friday noon, the IMD DG said.

Very heavy rainfall is likely to start in north coastal Andhra Pradesh and south coastal Odisha by Friday evening. The intensity of



rainfall is likely to increase on Saturday, he said.

A red colour warning has been issued for Andhra Pradesh's Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts for Saturday. The red colour warning has also been issued for the Gajapati, Ganjam, Puri, Jagatsinghpur districts of Odisha.

The IMD has forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places over West Bengal on Saturday and Sunday, and heavy rainfall at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura on Sunday and Monday.

Sea conditions will remain unsafe for shipping and fishermen in central and north Bay of Bengal from Friday to Sunday.

The IMD has been issuing regular bulletins with the latest forecast to all the states concerned.

"Off-shore and along-shore operations along the coast of north Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal should be judiciously regulated on Friday and suspended on Saturday and Sunday to ensure safety of life and property," it said.

Squally wind, gusting up to 65 kmph, is likely to start along and off the coast of north Andhra Pradesh and Odisha from Friday midnight. The wind speed will increase up to 100 kmph from Saturday evening for the subsequent 12 hours, the central MeT office said.

The cyclonic storm will intensify into a severe cyclonic storm in the sea for a temporary period, with wind gusting to 110 kmph, Mohapatra said.

Squally wind gusting to 65 kmph also likely to commence along and off the coast of West Bengal from Friday evening. The wind speed may increase to 80 kmph from Sunday morning for the subsequent 12 hours, the IMD said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Thursday reviewed the preparedness to deal with the situation arising out of the likely formation of Cyclone Jawad that is expected to hit the North Andhra Pradesh-Odisha coast and directed officials to take every possible measure to ensure that people are safely evacuated.

According to the PMO, the prime minister has directed officials to take every possible measure to ensure that people are safely moved to safety and the maintenance of all essential services such as power, telecommunications, health, drinking water, and that they are restored immediately in the event of any disruption.

# Cyclone 'Jawad': NDRF earmarks 64 teams

New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI): The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has earmarked a total of 64 teams to tackle the situation arising out of the impending cyclonic storm 'Jawad' that is expected to affect the states of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal this weekend, a senior officer said on Friday.

NDRF Director General (DG) Atul Karwal told reporters during an official briefing here that while 46 teams have been deployed or pre-positioned in the vulnerable states, 18 teams have been kept in reserve.

According to the deployment map shared by the DG during the press conference, out of the 46 teams, 19 are based in West Bengal, 17 in Odisha, 19 in Andhra Pradesh apart from seven in Tamil Nadu and two in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

All teams have been made available as desired by the various state governments and they will be deployed in consultation with local authorities, the NDRF DG said.

A single NDRF team has about 30 personnel who are equipped with pole cutters, electric saws to clear uprooted trees, inflatable boats and some other relief and rescue gadgets.

"We are confident of taking care of the situation in the best possible manner," Karwal said.

He said all preparations have been done by the federal contingency force to help the affected states and the citizens.

The DG said 'Jawad' has been categorised as a 'severe cyclone' where the wind speeds range between 100-110 kmph and it is expected that it would not scale up and take shape of a higher category of cyclonic storm.

He said the force was in touch with the integrated defence staff (IDS) for quick airlift of additional NDRF teams to the affected states.

# People will teach BJP government a lesson: Gehlot

Jaipur, Dec 3 (PTI): Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday accused the Centre of not paying attention to the problems of the people saying they would teach it a lesson in times to come.

He also said that Congress' 'Mahagai Hatao Rally' scheduled on December 12 will be successful.

"The Centre is not even listening to the problems of countrymen, whether it is inflation that's troubling the common man, or something related to farmers, they don't care at all," Gehlot told reporters after visiting the rally site in Vidhyadhar Nagar here.

Gehlot said, "They (the central government) are



displaying great arrogance. People will teach them a lesson in the times to come."

He said it was unfortunate that the party was not given permission to hold a rally in the national capital.

"Inflation remains an issue across the country. Why was permission not given to the proposed rally? It only would have represented the sentiments of the entire country," Gehlot said.

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) has called for a 'Mahagai Hatao Rally' on December 12 against the rising inflation in the country, which will be held in Jaipur instead of New Delhi now.

To oversee the preparations for the rally, Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal and state in-charge Ajay Maken reached here on Friday.

The Congress leaders accompanied Gehlot to the proposed rally site.

Gehlot thanked party leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi for choosing Jaipur for this rally and said people from all over the state and country will come to this rally to make it a success.

# Air quality panel for Delhi issues new orders, edu institutions to be shut

New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI): In a new set of directions to prevent further deterioration of air quality in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR), the Centre's air quality panel on Friday ordered shutting of educational institutions, allowing only online mode of education.

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) also directed that industrial operations and processes in NCR, not running on Piped Natural Gas or other cleaner fuels, shall be allowed to operate only up to eight hours a day from Monday to Friday and shall not be allowed to run on weekends.

All schools, colleges and educational institutions in the NCR shall remain closed, allowing only online mode of education, except for the purpose of conduct of examinations and laboratory practical, the commission said.

It also said its earlier di-



rections on industries shall continue. According to these directions, all industries in NCR, still using unapproved fuels, shall be closed by the respective governments with immediate effect. Also the NCR states and the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) shall enforce a strict ban on use of diesel generators, except for emergency services.

In its new directions, the commission also stopped the entry of trucks in Delhi, except the electric ones and those running on Com-

pressed Natural Gas, besides trucks carrying essential commodities.

The commission directed that the chief secretaries of the respective states and the Delhi government shall ensure implementation of these directions.

Strict enforcement of these directions as also the directions/orders issued by the commission from time to time since its inception shall be ensured by the respective agencies and implementation, compliance of the same shall be monitored by the

chief secretaries of the respective state/GNCTD, the commission's order stated.

In view of the compelling need to prevent further deterioration of environment and towards improvement of air quality in Delhi and NCR, the commission, in exercise of its powers conferred upon it (by)... the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act 2021, directs that these measures shall be implemented with strict force with immediate effect, until further orders, it read.

The CAQM, an executive body set up by the Ministry of Environment earlier this year to oversee measures to curb air pollution in the NCR, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, also constituted task forces for each of these states to implement, enforce, monitor and report compliance status of its orders.

# Delhi govt to install 1.40 lakh CCTV cameras in second phase: Kejriwal

New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI): Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said the Delhi government will install 1.40 lakh CCTV cameras in the city in the second phase of the project.

He said 2.75 lakh CCTV cameras have been installed in the national capital since the Aam Aadmi Party formed the government.

Citing a survey, the chief minister said that Delhi is well ahead of London, New York, Singapore and Paris in terms of CCTV cameras per square mile.

"We are going to install 1.40 lakh CCTV cameras in phase two of the project. Public Sector Undertaking Bharat Electronics Limited will install the cameras," he said at a press conference.

According to a survey, Delhi ranks number one in 150 cities in the world in terms of CCTV cameras installed per square mile, the chief minister said.



"Delhi has 1,826 CCTV cameras per square mile. London, which has bagged the second spot in the survey, has 1,138 cameras. We are well ahead of London, New York, Singapore, Paris. There is no comparison," he said.

Delhi has thrice the number of CCTV cameras in Chennai and 11 times the cameras in Mumbai, Kejri-

wal said. There is an improvement in women security situation since the government installed the cameras. Women feel safe. Police get a lot of help in solving crime cases, he said.

Kejriwal also said the Centre had tried to "impede" the project and he and party colleagues had to stage dharna in the LG house.

# 'Will boycott PAC centenary celebrations to protest amendments to GNCTD Act'

New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI): Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel on Friday said they will boycott the centenary celebrations of the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on December 4 and 5 to protest the "unconstitutional" amendments to the GNCTD Act in March.

Goel said chairpersons of Public Accounts Committees in state assemblies and assembly speakers have been invited to the event, which will be addressed by the prime minister.

"There will be no representation of the Delhi Assembly in the centenary celebrations of Parliament's Lok Lekha Samiti. Neither I nor the Delhi Assembly's Lok Lekha Samiti chairperson Atishi (Marlena) will attend the two-day event, Goel said.

He said he will write to



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind on the matter and alleged that the Centre wanted to "impinge" on the powers of Delhi Assembly committees by amending the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) Act.

"We have registered our objection on this matter through several platforms. We even wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, but to no avail. So now, to oppose these unconstitutional amendments to the Act, we have decided to boycott the centenary celebrations of the Parliament's Lok Lekha

Samiti (Public Accounts Committee) on December 4 and 5, Goel said in a press conference.

He said that assembly committees play a crucial role in establishing transparency and keeping a check on the works of the government and its departments.

Through amendments to the GNCTD Act, the Centre has snatched away these powers of assembly committees, he said.

Earlier in August, Goel had said the Delhi Assembly would move the Supreme Court to challenge that portion of the GNCTD Act which entails "snatching away" the powers of the assembly committees.

The amended GNCTD Act, passed in Parliament in March, makes it clear that the "government" in Delhi means the "Lieutenant Governor".

New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI): Amid a stalemate over the suspension of 12 opposition Rajya Sabha MPs, Leader of the House Piyush Goyal on Friday said how can there be a reconciliation when these members are unwilling to apologise for their unruly behaviour in the previous session.

The issue came up in the House when RJD leader Manoj Kumar Jha said in the Rajya Sabha that some BJP members "gatedcrashed" the site in Parliament complex where the 12 suspended members were staging an agitation.

"Gatedcrashing amounts to taking away the democratic values," Jha said.

As some Opposition members tried to raise this issue, Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said that he wants to clear a misconception that the

Leader of Opposition was not allowed to comment on the suspension of members.

The Leader of Opposition in the House was given five minutes to speak about it during Zero Hour on November 30, he said.

Naidu further said, "I hope all will work together to resolve this issue. I have suggested both the Leader of the House and the Leader of Opposition to discuss and ensure smooth functioning of the House."

At this, Goyal posed how can there be a reconciliation when the suspended members are not ready to tender an apology. "I want to understand from you sir, what does the Opposition expect from us?" he asked.

Claiming that some members of the opposition parties had approached him on this issue, Goyal told the House, "I said, I am happy to



meet everybody but... a courtesy towards the Chair and nation is an apology. They said we cannot apologise."

The Leader of the House further said that he told the opposition members about past instances where he and the Chair had apologised for very minor issues.

"They (opposition members) feel what they have done is very legitimate and noble. In these circumstances, what do we talk to the Opposition?" he said.

"Some leaders of opposition parties and some suspended MPs have been making provocative" statements

in the last few days. They are saying 'maafi kis baati ki' (What's there to apologise?). This shows they are endorsing the attack on marshals and unruly scenes in the House in the last session," he added.

The 12 opposition MPs were suspended from the Rajya Sabha on Monday for the entire Winter Session of Parliament for their "unruly" conduct in the previous session in August. The Opposition has termed the suspension as "undemocratic and in violation of all the Rules of Procedure" of the Upper House. The suspended MPs include six from the Congress, two each from the Trinamool Congress and Shiv Sena, and one each from the CPI and CPI(M). They have been holding day-long protests in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue inside the Parliament complex.

# BJP, SP, Cong mislead UP people with their poll promises, alleges Mayawati

Lucknow, Dec 3 (PTI): Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Friday accused the BJP, SP and the Congress of misleading the people of Uttar Pradesh with their election promises and forgetting those after coming to power.

In a series of tweets in Hindi, she asked the people of the state to beware of these three parties.

"Parties in Uttar Pradesh, especially the BJP, SP and the Congress, make a flurry of promises every day before elections to woo and mislead the people. After coming to power, most of these promises are forgotten. This has been their history till now. People beware," Mayawati tweeted.

**DDC Budgam launches plantation drive at Budgam**

BUDGAM, DECEMBER 03: The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Budgam, Shahbaz Ahmed Mirza today launched a plantation drive of Conifer trees at Chinar Kashmir Child Nurture and Relief home, Budgam.

The drive was organised by the JK Forest Department in collaboration with Chinar Kashmir Child Nurture and Relief.

The plantation drive was also well attended and participated by ADC Budgam, President MC Budgam and scores of the inmates of the Chinar Nurture home.

Speaking on the occasion, the DDC said that such plantation drives will be launched in every panchayat under the theme of 'Har Gaon Haryali' where 500 trees of different kinds will be planted.

Afforestation through Plantation drive is crucial to maintain ecological balance and increase Green cover, the DDC added.

District Forest Officer (DFO) Budgam, Mohammad Ashraf Katoo on the occasion said that the department's target is to achieve the 66 percent forest cover and presently there is only 55 percent in the district.

The DFO Budgam, in presence of DDC on the occasion distributed the low cost seed balls among the inmates and the locals and stressed them to plant such seeds in the barren land.

**Progress of registration of unorganized workers on e-SHRAM Portal reviewed at Pulwama**

PULWAMA, DECEMBER 03: The District Development Commissioner (DDC) Pulwama, today convened a meeting of DLIC members and reviewed the progress of registration of unorganized workers on the e-SHRAM portal.

The DDC emphasized on the need to expedite registration of unorganized workers on the e-SHRAM portal. He directed concerned officials to disseminate the benefits of registration among unorganised workers so that they are benefitted of the scheme.

The e-SHRAM registration will help to maintain the database of the unorganised workers which will be helpful in extending the benefit of social security schemes meant for these workers at ground level, he added.

During the meeting, it was informed that under this scheme unorganized workers like migrant workforce, construction labourers, domestic workers, milkmen, migrant workers, auto-rickshaw/truck drivers, fishermen, agriculture workers, Asha workers, Aganwadi workers, MGNREGA, Mid-day meal workers, Street Vendors, Platform workers etc have to be registered so that they can derive benefit of this scheme.

It was also informed that the registrations for the scheme are free of cost and the workers do not have to pay any registration fees.

The meeting stressed to ensure 100 percent registrations of unorganized workers within the set time-frame.

He also directed the concerned officers to go door to door in far flung areas and register the left out beneficiaries on e-SHRAM. He solicited the support from PRIs.

Among others the meeting was attended by SSP, Pulwama and all the line departments and representatives of CSC.

**DC Kupwara urges to harness talent of specially abled persons**

KUPWARA, DECEMBER 03: The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) was today observed across district Kupwara with larger participation of specially abled persons, students, PRIs and Officers of Education and other concerned departments.

The main function was held at the Auditorium of Boys Higher Secondary School, Kupwara, where Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Imam Din participated as Chief guest.

The SSP Kupwara, DDC Member Kalaroo, Chief Education Officer Kupwara, District Information Officer Kupwara and other concerned were present at the occasion, besides, a large number of students, specially abled persons and employees of the Education Department.

In his address, the DC highlighted the importance of observing the day and said the specially abled persons are the important segment of our society and to look after them is the prime duty of every individual. He said December 03 is Internationally being observed for the welfare of specially abled persons and to promote their rights and raise awareness about their well-being.

He said Government as well as Associations are working for the upliftment of this important section of the society and various skill development programmes have been devised for these persons and urged upon stakeholders to put all possible efforts for harnessing the talent of specially abled persons, especially students to encourage them to stand on their own legs.

The DC directed CEO, Kupwara to ensure periodic competitions among the specially abled students and give them appreciations so that their morale could be uplifted. He gave an example with the theme that those who try to uplift others are virtually uplifting themselves and likewise those who try to downsize or suppress others are in fact themselves going down.

Imam Din said that the International Day of Persons with Disabilities was also observed at Zonal Education Level of the district, besides, at Town Hall Kupwara and Town Hall Handwara.

**Rozgar mela under 'Be-Rozgari Say Swa-Rozgar' culminates with Kulgam**

KULGAM, DECEMBER 03: Registrations cum awareness programme (Rozgar mela) under the initiative of 'Be-Rozgari Say Swa-Rozgar' concluded today witnessing great response here in block Devsar of the district.

Youth from Devsar, Kund, Pahloo and other areas queued up at the registration counters established by the line departments for registrations under various self-employment schemes.

At the outset of the programme, unemployed youth were sensitized about different self-employment schemes including schemes of Mission Youth meant for the empowerment of the youth, so that they are able to generate livelihood for themselves and others.

**International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

**Sheetal Nanda reiterates govt's support for persons with disabilities for their inclusiveness in society**

JAMMU, DECEMBER 03: Secretary Social Welfare Department, Sheetal Nanda today reiterated the government's commitment to support the persons with disabilities so that these people with special needs can feel inclusive in the society.

She stated this while addressing an event here to observe the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, organized by Hope Disability Center in Collaboration with JK State Rehabilitation Council, Department of Social Welfare, Department of Youth Services & Sports, Department of Information & Public Relations, Department of Culture and JK Sports Council.

Speaking on the occasion, the Secretary said that as a society there are certain responsibilities of people towards such persons who need support more than anything else.

She observed that the Department of Social Welfare is ready in its endeavour to work with organiza-



tions like HOPE Disability Center so that more could be done in this direc-

tion. Ms Nanda also appreciated the

center for its work done especially addressing needs of persons with dis-

**Director Sainik Welfare Department calls on LG**

JAMMU, DECEMBER 03: Brigadier Gurmeet Singh Shan, Director Sainik Welfare Department (J&K) today called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at Raj Bhavan.

The Director briefed the Lt Governor on the preparations for the upcoming celebration of Armed Forces Flag Day on 07 December and about various activities of the department related to the welfare of the Ex-servicemen and Veer Naris.

He expressed gratitude towards the Lt Governor for landmark approvals to set up 100 bedded children hostels, one each at Srinagar and Jammu, and promulgation of the policy to provide relaxation in age and physical endurance tests to ex-servicemen for recruitment in government jobs in J&K.



Brigadier Gurmeet Singh Shan also apprised the Lt Governor of the efforts made to reach out to veterans in the border areas and far-flung regions, which include adhoc offices been set up in Bandipora and Akhnour, proposal to set up new offices in other remote areas, use of digital technology, digital life cer-

tificate generation at all 13 ZSWOs, adoption of e-office, the launch of department's website, besides various other initiatives and steps for the welfare of Ex-Servicemen.

He also apprised about the campaign being undertaken to sensitise citizens about the importance of contributing towards the Armed

Forces Flag Day Fund, which is used for welfare activities.

The Lt Governor appreciated the remarkable work done by the Sainik Welfare Department for Veterans and Veer Naris. He impressed upon the Director to continue his endeavors for the welfare of Ex-Servicemen and their family members.

**MD NHM reviews TB Elimination Action Plan for J&K**

**Asks officers to redouble efforts towards achieving Elimination of TB in UT by 2025**

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 3: Mission Director, National Health Mission, J&K, Yasin M Choudhary, today reviewed preparedness for Tuberculosis Elimination Action Plan for Jammu and Kashmir.

Mission Director asked the officers and officials to redouble their efforts towards achieving all set targets as per National Strategic Plan (NSP) 2017-2025 for Elimination of Tuberculosis from the UT by 2025.

Pertinently, during the recent UT level review of National TB Elimination Programme by the Lieutenant Governor emphasis was laid on preparation of detailed action plan (micro level) from block to UT level besides conducting TB testing, notification of TB cases and disbursement of DBT under Nikshy Poshan Yojana and holding detailed reviews twice in a month along with COVID assessment.

MD, while discussing action plan for TB Elimination in the UT, exhorted upon the concerned officers to ensure implementation of decisions taken in the review meeting chaired by Lieutenant Governor.

He directed the officers and officials associated with TB control programme to launch a massive door to door aware-

ness campaign regarding Tuberculosis simultaneously with the ongoing Har Ghar Dastak campaign being carried out for COVID vaccination and distribution of Ayushman Bharat Golden Card. He also asked for involving panchayats, youth clubs and schools in the campaign of conducting household surveys for Tuberculosis.

After detailed deliberations, it was decided to utilize the services of ASHAs and ANMs under the supervision of MLHPs for conducting house to house surveys. Besides, District Tuberculosis Officers were asked to ensure availability of testing facilities.

Mission Director directed the officers of health department to conduct meetings with all DACs, BACs and Block Medical Officers for carrying out hands-on training of ASHAs and ANMs for conducting door to door survey of TB patients.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Renu Sharma, Director Health Services, Jammu, Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Rather, Director Health Service, Kashmir, STO Jammu and Kashmir, District Tuberculosis Officers Jammu and Kashmir besides other senior officers of National Health Mission and Directorate of Health Services, J&K.

**VC KVIB visits Kailash Kund Sudhmahadev Beekeeping Cluster Doda; Reviews ongoing works**



BADHARWAH, DECEMBER 3: Vice Chairperson, Jammu and Kashmir Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB), Dr. Hina Shafi Bhat, today visited the Common Facility Centre of Kailashkund Sudhmahadev Beekeeping Cluster, Doda, to inspect the ongoing works on the unit.

Addressing public during an awareness programme conducted under the soft intervention of the cluster, Vice Chairperson said that Kailash Kund Sudhmahadev Beekeeping Cluster being established under SFURTI shall greatly boost the economy of local beekeepers with a notable increase in production of honey in the district. She said that CFC of the clus-

ter, coming up with a project cost of Rs. 136.710 lakh, shall house honey processing plant and other relevant machines and equipments. The cluster will facilitate the farmers with honey extraction, processing, packing, labeling and marketing under one roof, she added. She asked the implementing agency to step up efforts ensuring that cluster is completed in a time bound manner.

She stressed upon the unemployed youth to take benefit of employment schemes like PMEGP and JKREGP being implemented by J&K KVIB.

She also interacted with the public representatives of the area, beekeepers and other stakeholders

to assess their issues and concerns.

Later, Vice Chairperson visited various micro industries units established under PMEGP and JKREGP in Badharwah and adjoining areas. She underlined the need for penetration in remote areas through organization of localized awareness and sensitization campaigns so that unemployed youth may harvest the benefits of J&K KVIB schemes to the fullest.

Vice Chairperson was accompanied by associated beekeepers and stakeholders from the cluster area, Deputy CEO Administration, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Jammu division, District Officer, KVIB Doda, and local PRIs accompanied the Vice Chairperson.

**Pr. Comm'r Income Tax meets Taxpayers & Youth of Pulwama**

PULWAMA, DECEMBER 3: In continuation to their outreach programmes across the UT of J&K and Ladakh, on the 3rd day, Taxpayers Awareness Campaign, 'Mulaqaat' was continued today in the district of Pulwama of Kashmir Province.

The proceedings were chaired by M.P Singh, who heads the Income Tax Department in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh as the Principal Commissioner of Income Tax, Srinagar (PCIT). The District Magistrate of Pulwama, Baseer ul Haq Chaudhary and officers of the CGST Department were also present.

The interaction was with representatives of the local youth, representatives from the trade community, industrialists, saffron growers, small shopkeepers & businessmen in large numbers. Along with spreading awareness amongst the taxpayers regarding Income Tax Slab rates, the PCIT urged the audience to contribute to the process of Nation Building as honest and proud tax payers.

Principal Commissioner of Income Tax further emphasised that economic development without financial discipline cannot bring self respect among people. The first step towards



financial discipline is to pay their due taxes and file their ITRs which is a very essential process. The department accepts the ITRs as such in 99% cases and in the territories like J&K, less than 0.2% returns are scrutinised that too under the watchful eyes of senior most authorities. He reiterated that there is no scope of any bias or harassment any more under the new transparent and accountable tax regime.

He further spoke about the Faceless Scheme under which all scru-

tiny proceedings would be conducted online to ensure smooth compliance and transparency of the proceedings. Shri M.P Singh emphasised that for redressing the genuine grievances of the tax payers, officers are resolved to go the extra mile, sit for late hours and are actually doing so.

Beyond this, feedback from the people was taken by the officers regarding taxation issues and their aspirations from the Union Budget. The local traders and small shopkeepers were

also informed about sections of the Income Tax Act, 1961, under which they can avail of the presumptive taxation scheme under which no books of accounts are required to be maintained and taxable income is calculated on presumptive basis.

With regard to the Union Budget the locals gave their ideas and suggestions, centric to Pulwama district. Increased focus on industrialisation of Pulwama along with tax benefits for the same was highlighted by the locals.

In this regard, the District Magistrate of Pulwama intimated that various subsidies to the tune of Rs. 3600 crore are given to the industrial sector, which has created employment opportunities for more than 37000 people.

The local youth of Pulwama raised issues related to CA (Controlled Atmosphere) cold stores, dairy farms, corrugated box factories, appealed for reduction of GST rates and highlighted issues related to GST. They urged that manufacturing units of Kashmir are not able to compete with other states due to higher transportation costs and to promote local industries higher rates of CGST should be on finished products brought in states rather than on raw material.

A 'Taxpayers' Awareness and Facilitation camp was also organised in the district. Overall, it was a highly constructive and fruitful interactive session where the voices, thoughts and ideas of the locals from Pulwama were heard and recorded. M.P Singh has assured that the Income Tax Department is committed to the best taxpayer services for its assesses and that the doors to his office are always open for the public.

## Why the suspended MPs will not apologise

Binoy Viswam

The Opposition came to the Winter Session with the hope that, for once, the government would honour Parliament and its ethos by engaging in debate and discussion about the issues affecting the lives of Indian citizens. The customary all-party meeting held by the government and the short speech made by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh fed that hope. Some of us wondered whether such a significant all-party meeting held such little regard for the Prime Minister that it could be skipped. Our surprise was short-lived because we have now learnt from our collective experience since 2014, that under Modi, Parliament and its proceedings do not require much attention. His presence in the House is so rare that even the treasury benches make it a point to vociferously cheer and applaud him on the rare occasions that he chooses to "visit".

On the morning of the first day of the session, the PM proudly claimed, in a public address, that he and his government would answer all questions and issues raised by the Opposition. The promise proved hollow. The government passed the farm laws' repeal bills without any discussion in both Houses on the same day. It justified this action by claiming that a discussion was not required as the repeal had long been demanded by the Opposition. But our reading of parliamentary procedure tells us that once a bill is introduced, it becomes the property of the House. In pursuance of that principle, the Opposition vehemently demanded a discussion and debate. It appears that this government believes that bills can be passed in Parliament without discussion or scrutiny — and they can be repealed in the same manner.

After the repeal of the anti-farmer Acts, the government cleverly planned a diversionary tactic. It brought a motion to suspend 12 MPs, including me, from the House. It is quite unusual that in the name of events in the previous session, disciplinary action is being taken in the current one. Government voices are now justifying the suspension based on the report of a "committee" that was constituted to look into the events of August 11. However, the said committee's functioning was unknown to anyone and neither it, nor its report, finds any mention in the resolution.

Assuming the committee existed, not one suspended MP was given the opportunity to be heard, violating all principles of natural justice.

Such abuse of parliamentary practices are not exceptions under the BJP government. Parliament has been turned into a law-making factory where the brute force of majority overpowers all norms and procedures. The "disrupted" Monsoon Session has been strategically placed at the door of the Opposition, while forgetting that for the entirety of the session, the Opposition demanded, through every parliamentary tool available, debates and discussions on issues such as the farm laws, price rise, mismanagement of Covid, and Pegasus. On August 11 came the General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2021. Though the nomenclature of the original act talks about nationalisation, the 2021 amendment bill sought the annihilation of public sector insurance companies. Despite the Opposition's repeated pleas to send the bill to a Select Committee, the government passed the Bill in under 30 minutes. It was this draconian bill and unparliamentary action that was being opposed on the last day of the previous session.

It is worthwhile here to note the words of late Arun Jaitley, as leader of Opposition in 2011: "Parliament's job is to conduct discussions. But many times, Parliament is used to ignore issues and, in such situations, obstruction of Parliament is in the favour of democracy. Therefore, parliamentary obstruction is not undemocratic." The government conveniently forgets the fact that "disruptions" happened only because of its dictatorial approach.

As the suspension prevails, many people talk about settling the issue through apologies. The Opposition collectively holds the view that such a step cannot even be considered as we strive to raise our voices in solidarity with the peasants and workers and for the defence of the great values of democracy — for the real spirit of "Aatmanirbhar Bharat". In such a situation, no self-respecting political party or its worker will tender any sort of apology. We have learnt our politics from a different school than that of Savarkar.

# Monetization of railways could be a much-needed game changer

Atul Chaturvedi

The announcement by the Union Government to usher in major changes by way of the National Monetization Pipeline (NMP) plan on the 23rd of August 2021 has triggered polarizing debates and discussions on the possible implications of this policy. Projected revenue from railways is expected to be 1.5 lakh crores and will contribute to 25% of the overall pipeline of 6 lakh crores. It is important to remember that asset monetization is a measure to generate additional capital for new infrastructure creation in the country without sale on any public asset. NMP merely provides a mechanism for enabling private companies to lease and operate infrastructure owned by the Government. Against this backdrop, it would be worthwhile to analyze the ways in which this measure could impact the country's railways in times to come.

Owing to a network of 121,407 km of total track over a 67,368 km route, the Indian railways is the fourth largest in the world in terms of size and employs more than 1.3 million people. The freight trains are particularly significant from the perspective of commerce and transport more than 90% of the coal that provides 50% of the country's power requirement. However, since the railways has been primarily dependent on government support since independence, it was challenging to generate adequate funds for capital expenditure. Bulk of the funds continued to be subsumed under operating expenses. Infrastructure and funding challenges in railways manifested in the form of collisions, derailments and level crossing accidents. Besides, in the last fiscal COVID induced disruption resulted in a revenue loss of Rs. 38,017 crore in the passenger segment. Considering the increasing focus on augmenting railway infrastructure to facilitate freight and passenger movement, significant investments are needed to address capacity constraints.

The year 2014 was a watershed moment as the Union Government initiated bold reforms by not only allowing private investments in railways but also permitting 100% FDI in railways infrastructure sector. Consequently, ten areas/activities that were listed under the category of Construction, Operation and Maintenance permitted 100% FDI through the automatic route. As per the data released by DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) for railways and associated sectors, the FDI inflows stood at US\$ 1.23 billion from April 2000 to March 2021 and constitutes only 0.23% of the total FDI inflows in India. So, asset monetization in this context assumes significance as it will pave the way for greater influx of funds by private players. And in recent years, we have already witnessed an uptick in investor sentiment — in 2015 General Electric won a \$2.6-billion contract to supply 1,000 locomotives (100 locomotives on yearly basis for 11 years). Since India's railways is a lifeline for more than 30 million citizens who use it every day — modernizing the facilities and enhancing the speed



will go a long way towards making our workforce more productive.

To keep pace with other leading economies of the world, India will have to expand its high-speed railway network. The Indian Railways Vision 2020 report highlighted that our railways has to match the speed and efficiency of trains in countries like US, France, Japan, and Germany in aspects like — speed (average train speed is 60 kms/hour in India) and route-kms per million population served — which are metrics to gauge the level of rail connectivity in a country. To address these challenges, the National Infrastructure Pipeline and the Draft National Rail Plan (NRP) 2020 provide a detailed asset-level plan for the development of the railway sector. The NIP envisages a total capital expenditure of Rs 13.7 lakh crore by both the Centre and States over FY 2022-25, of which Rs 1.6 lakh crore is expected through the PPP mode. The Draft NRP 2020 laid out a strategic roadmap for the sector for the next three decades, which includes an increase in the modal share (freight) of railways from 26% to 45%, while continuing to provide best-in-class services for passengers.

An efficient implementation of NMP will ensure huge influx of funds that could vastly upgrade the infrastructure and operational logistics for passenger trains, revamp railway stations, freight terminals, railway colonies, and railway tracks. In this context, it is important to realize that the bulk of our railway assets have been lying either unutilized or underutilized since independence. Take the case of the land along railway tracks — it could be leased out to telecom companies for laying cables. Likewise, it would be prudent

to enable the utilization of freight terminals as logistics park for private companies and generate another revenue stream. Robust investments by the private sector will facilitate the achievements of ambitious targets set by the government — that includes achieving 100% electrification by 2023, Net Zero Carbon Emission network by 2030, ease of ticket booking, online freight services and suchlike. Niti Aayog's analysis pegs the monetisation value for railway infrastructure development at Rs 76,250 crore from FY22 to FY25, while for passenger train operations, the value is pegged at Rs 21,642 crore.

Importantly, it is worth noting that the move towards asset monetization has happened in a gradual manner. A similar model was adopted in the case of major toll roads in the country. Per estimates the redevelopment of 125 stations along with the development of real estate would cost approximately Rs 50,000 crore. Further, another challenge emanates from the under capacity of passenger trains that is evidenced by the fact that 15% ticket holders on an average are wait-listed. In 2018-19 alone over 8.84 crores of passengers couldn't travel as they were waitlisted. To mitigate this problem, 12 clusters have been earmarked in high-demand routes and it is expected to bring in 30,000 crores worth of private investments with the potential of adding 150 modern trains along 109 routes. Thus, the monetization of railways is based on an exhaustive study of the challenges plaguing the sector and supported by a sound economic rationale and is likely backed by other sectors to emulate.

The Author is Secretary, Government of India.  
(All views expressed are personal)

## Key technology trends that will shape 2022 and beyond

Madhav Sheth

A lot has changed in the last two years — from how we communicate to how we perceive work. The acceleration of the adoption of digital technologies due to the pandemic has led to an increase in streamlining operations with connected technologies and automation, resulting in greater speed, less waste, and more focus on making the lifestyles of the end consumer more seamless. As the digitization and virtualization of business and society continue to accelerate, let's take a look at a few key technology trends that shaped the year and the outlook for 2022.

### AIoT gaining momentum

Even before the pandemic, the two trends that were dominating the technology industry were the Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI). But as the world progressed towards rapid digitization, industrial automation, these two technologies became more than just buzzwords. The convergence of IoT and AI started to redefine the future of automation and is set to lead the connected consumer revolution. With AI and Machine Learning (ML) being used to make IoT devices smarter and secure, by 2022, over 80% of IoT initiatives will use AI and ML. From fitness trackers to health monitors, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality gadgets that employ AIoT, such as smart wearables, smart speakers, wireless earphones will connect to your environment and respond to various scenarios based on the data they collect. The future AIoT platforms are going to enable intelligent devices. Combined with 5G communication technology, the AIoT sector is bound to show extensive application needs.

### Rise of intelligent TWS earphones

Despite the pandemic, the global TWS (True Wireless Stereo Headset) market grew 78% year on year and was expected to grow 33% year-on-year in 2021, reaching 310 million units. The rise from work from home as well as increased dependency on smartphones for entertainment/ gaming/ content consumption has exponentially raised the demand for TWS earbuds — setting a massive transformation in the personal audio space. Moreover, with the increasing maturity of AI and ML technology, there is an opportunity for a more audible and richer audio experience. Also, AI-powered TWS may be able to reduce power consumption, along with noise reduction, which is the next direction of TWS Bluetooth earbuds. And with the widespread application of ML sensors, improved analysis, and accurate environmental noise detection, it will become possible for TWS earbuds to realize functions like exercise, meetings,



and physical health judgment as well.

### Demand for 5G

5G adoption is widely expected to outpace 4G next year. 5G is what will set a foundation for the intelligent, connected environment; not due to its superior speed advantage over 4G but its reliability and low latency — opening up vast new applications and use cases. While a lot of companies have already introduced 5G capable smartphones and devices, the semiconductor industry is the most to benefit. However, tapping into that potential will require a new way to engage customers, never done before. Regardless of whether technology companies are riding the 5G wave or not, it will reshape the high-tech and mobility landscapes over the next decade, and it's the right time to prepare for a sharp demand for 5G enabled products. From faster networks to remote medicine, there is tremendous excitement around 5G, and with these possibilities, the entire value chain will go through an experimentation phase to uncover how value can be added for the customer's benefit.

### Increased security practices

Targeted cyber-crime is on the rise as working from home has become a gateway to new forms of data theft. Cybercriminals attempting to access corporate data and customer details are not the only threat to businesses today, individuals working from home/ remotely are becoming potential weak links in corporate IT security systems. With 60% of organizations expected to use cybersecurity risk as a primary determinant for transactions and business engagements, there is an increased focus on privacy laws, cyber-physical systems, ransomware attacks

on individuals, and corporate intellectual property. Moreover, cybersecurity technology combined with AI and ML tools is being developed for addressing specific relevant issues, such as contactless travel. For example, remote identity verification via smartphones, digital passports, and electronic travel authentication using layers of AI security will enable seamless touchless travel. Another trend is of zero-Trust, which means the increase in digital identity proofing tools to verify employee remote logins and devices — giving the remote workforce the least privileged access — the minimum permissions they need to fulfill their function.

### Rise of tech designed for remote work

As a quick response to the pandemic, organizations across the globe implemented work-from-home, and have been surprised by its success. Remote work is here to stay as companies across the globe adopt a 'hybrid work culture'. While the world retrofitted tech from the pre-pandemic era to fit their needs, 2022 will see technology leaders innovate to achieve continuous business success and support employee productivity using technology designed specifically for hybrid/remote work. For example, ramping up/ innovating battery performance is key to an 'untethered' experience when it comes to remote work. It allows devices to last longer and charge faster, driving a seamless and sustainable device experience. Moreover, like the rise of TWS, people in a remote work environment want to have a 'hands-free' and touchless computing/ mobile experience. 2022 may see technology being driven in that direction with AI and connected device advancements.

## The politics-policy disconnect in India

Ruchi Gupta

There's a breakdown between politics and policy in India. Decision-making on virtually all governance issues is disconnected from politics and the mobilisation of public opinion. The repeal of the farm laws is thus a notable instance of politics and policy coming together, although in conflict. What is striking, however, is that the politics came from farmers' groups, not political parties. The manner in which the government rammed through the three bills, tried to bully and delegitimise the protests and then repealed the laws shows that not only did the government not attempt to build consensus in favour of the bills, but that the channels of feedback from the ground were themselves not functioning properly. The Opposition was supportive of the protests but, with some notable local exceptions, had little role to play in the actual mobilisation of public opinion on the ground. The Opposition speaking in one voice in the Parliament helped, but the heavy lifting of organising in the villages and sustaining the protests was done by the farmers' groups.

This disconnect between politics and policy is not a recent development, though it manifests differently across political divides. The liberal side has a policy-first lens but is unable to articulate its ideas in a manner which makes for good politics, repeatedly couching its ideas in a bureaucratic framework disconnected from political organisation. The impetus for a bureaucracy-first policy framework stems from the desire to remove local political discretion, which is assumed to be anti-people; the result, however, is to increase the distance between the policy initiative and the political organisation and thus the conduit for outreach and communication with the public. Moreover, bureaucracy is downstream from politics and this approach rather than curbing the state may have instead contributed to undermining the democratic process of political accountability since the political class is, by design, not central to the policy in the first place.

The right, on its side, has a politics-first lens but it derives its politics largely from its social agenda instead of issues of governance. In India, the right has a conception of a Hindu India but it lacks conceptual clarity and a governance agenda for the state. The policy imperatives, if any, are ad hoc and appear to be driven by the demands of running the political apparatus instead of a clear governance agenda. Instead, the right mobilises public opinion around cultural and community issues where the expectation from the state is not necessarily governance but patronage and protection for preferred social groups. Despite these differences, what is common across parties is the apolitical harnessing of the state as a disburser of different kinds of economic largesse, especially just before elections, as political parties cast about for simple ideas for easy mass communication.

There are many reasons for this wholesale breakdown of our political process. Indian politics and the state are weakly institutionalised to begin



with, which leads to an all-around fuzziness in the relationship between politics and policy. However, this is as much an effect as it is cause, with the direction of change towards greater deinstitutionalisation instead of the opposite. Another contributing factor is that traditional sites of consensus-building such as media, civil society, and political parties have developed pathologies which have rendered sustained consensus-building almost impossible. Consequently, even on issues at the centre of public imagination, we are unable to coalesce around a way forward for constructive action.

One reason is of particular interest because it raises the bar to use democratic representation to mainstream new ideas to an impossible height: The excessive centralisation of power in party platforms and the head of the government (state and national). This renders the individual elected representative extraneous to governance even in their own constituency, where their raison d'être is to provide representation and oversight. This causality requires its own larger argument but there are two incontrovertible consequences of this centralisation. First, elections can be used to change regimes but not to extract political accountability since there is no clear channel for "representation"; and the consolidation of partisanship, which has hijacked public interest, leaving no room to construct a majority on any issue outside of party lines. An added consequence of this congealed partisanship is that party supporters too lack leverage over their party to initiate new ideas or deliberation.

There's too much at stake to allow such a state of affairs to continue. We have the largest youth population in the world, yet in many ways, the political process in our country is especially ill-equipped to respond to the challenge of giving our young a positive sense of purpose or engagement. It is important to rescue public interest from partisanship and cut through at least some of the bad-faith crosstalk across partisan divides. There are many issues which lend themselves to cross-cutting collaboration outside of ideological affiliations. Institutional reforms are required to create such a space but public-spirited individuals across political divides can lay the foundation for such collaboration through issue-based discipline, moderation and intellectual independence.

# WHO RUSHES EXPERTS' TEAM TO S AFRICA TO HELP COMBAT COVID-19'S NEW VARIANT OMICRON

Johannesburg, Dec 3 (PTI) The WHO has rushed a team of experts to South Africa's Gauteng province, the epicentre of the new Omicron variant of COVID-19, to ramp up surveillance and contact tracing efforts as the country grapples with rising cases of infections.

Omicron, which was first identified in South Africa exactly a week ago, now has been detected in at least 24 countries around the world, including India.

We are deploying a surge team in Gauteng province to support surveillance and contact tracing, World Health Organisation's Regional Emergency Director for Africa Dr Salam Gueye said in a media briefing on Thursday.

A team is already working in South Africa on genomic sequencing, he said.

The Gauteng province, which is the economic hub of South Africa, has accounted for almost 80 per cent of the infections over the past week.

Some 11,500 new infections were registered on Thursday, a sharp rise from the 8,500 cases confirmed on



the previous day.

In contrast, daily infections were averaging between 200 and 300 in mid-November in the country, according to health officials.

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) said at the same briefing that around 75 per cent of samples tested positive for the new variant.

For the month of November, we had 249 sequences and

of those, 183 have been considered to be Omicron, said NICD clinical microbiologist professor Anne von Gottberg.

According to the Africa Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention, the continent recorded 52,300 new COVID-19 cases compared to the previous week, a 105 per cent increase.

WHO's Africa director Dr Matshidiso Moeti said on Thursday that countries

must adjust their COVID-19 response and stop a surge in cases from sweeping across Africa and possibly overwhelming already-stretched health facilities.

Gauteng Premier David Makhura confirmed in a separate media briefing that the province was on the cusp of a fourth wave.

We are monitoring the situation very closely; getting feedback from our clinical

teams also on the full impact of this. As we see the (rising) numbers every day, we are very concerned about it, Makhura said, as he made a plea to residents of the province to step up to get vaccinated.

The premier said that since Monday, there were over 50,000 vaccinations a day from the low of 30,000 daily before the announcement of the new variant.

If we sustain the daily vaccination of 50,000 throughout this period into the festive season, it will help us to reach at least another half a million people before they leave Gauteng, he said.

Makhura was referring to the annual exodus to rural areas outside the province by workers in Gauteng as business and industry shuts down from mid-December for several weeks until early in the new year.

We need to catch people here in Gauteng and vaccinate them because we know that during the festive season millions of people leave our province. We don't want people to be carrying this variant

to other provinces, especially those who are not vaccinated, he explained.

Joining Makhura at the briefing was Gauteng COVID-19 Command Council chairperson Dr Mary Kawonga, who said the province was already seeing a spike in cases.

The rate at which cases are increasing and the fact that we actually two days ago passed the seven-day rolling average that was the threshold for the third wave means that we are in a resurgence, and we need to behave like we are already in the (fourth) wave, without waiting for the technical definition, she said.

Kawonga said the peak of the fourth wave was expected in about two weeks, with about 45,000 active cases and about 4,000 hospitalisations at the peak.

Remember, this is the modelling and the prediction. Depending on how we are able to vaccinate and how we adhere to non-pharmaceutical interventions, it is very possible that whatever is predicted might not come to pass, she pointed.



**THE GAUTENG PROVINCE, WHICH IS THE ECONOMIC HUB OF SOUTH AFRICA, HAS ACCOUNTED FOR ALMOST 80 PER CENT OF THE INFECTIONS OVER THE PAST WEEK.**

## Solomon Islands politician wants diplomatic ties with Taiwan

Taipei, Dec 3 (AP) The head of the most populous province in the Solomon Islands said the country would likely switch diplomatic ties back to Taiwan if the prime minister is ousted from his post following next week's no-confidence vote, after looting and violent protests shook the capital city last month.

Daniel Suidani, the premier of Malaita, said Friday he thinks the Solomon Islands should partner with Taiwan because they share democratic values.

Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare angered many in 2019, particularly leaders of Malaita, when he cut the country's diplomatic ties with Taiwan to recognise China instead. Suidani said the switch was done without adequately consulting the public.

The Solomon Islands faced violent protests and unrest last week as long-simmering tensions over economic issues boiled over. The National Parliament building, a police station and businesses were set alight during two tumultuous days in which police failed to control a mob as it wrecked parts of the capital city.

The dispute over the nation's foreign policy is just one of several issues on hand.

Suidani called for national dialogue to resolve the issues causing ongoing unrest in his country, and said the reasons for the violence are longstanding domestic issues over the economy and land rights, not foreign interference.

He said that increasing corruption, unemployment and informal settlements, or slums, were among the major factors leading to the violence in recent days. He also accused the central government of blocking economic development in Malaita.

He said he supports further protests on Monday but will encourage people to do it through legal avenues.

In 2020, the US government pledged a 25 million aid package to Malaita, which has been viewed by some as an attempt to gain influence in the country. Suidani, who was wearing a red T-shirt with a prominent USAID shirt logo on the front on Friday, said the package was a request from the Solomon Islands government.

He denied receiving financial aid from Taiwan, though he said the province received COVID-19 protective gear and health equipment during the pandemic from the country.

## US steps up disclosure pressure on Chinese companies

Washington, Dec 3 (AP) Chinese companies will have to disclose more information about audits and whether they are controlled by a government or else leave US stock markets under a rule approved by securities regulators.

The rule approved on Thursday by the Securities and Exchange Commission steps up a long-running standoff between Washington and Beijing over how much information companies with US-traded shares must disclose.

Companies that used an auditor in a foreign jurisdiction will be required to confirm they are not owned or controlled by a government entity there, according to the SEC. Companies also will be required to disclose additional information in annual reports.

Trading prohibitions can be imposed on some companies, the SEC said.

Other governments cooperate with US demands for more financial details from companies to pre-



vent false reporting. But Beijing, citing security concerns, refuses to allow the US Public Companies Accounting Oversight Board to review work of Chinese auditors.

China's government criticized the move and warned it might block American investors from access to fast-growing companies.

The measure is an attempt to politically suppress Chinese com-

panies and contain China's development, said a foreign ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian.

We are firmly opposed to that, Zhao said.

Hundreds of Chinese companies have raised tens of billions of dollars in US financial markets, but their status is a matter of growing dispute with Beijing.

The latest rule applies to audit

firms the PCAOB is unable to inspect or investigate, the SEC said, a group that would be mostly Chinese.

Separately, the US government earlier barred Americans from investing in the stocks, bonds and other securities of Chinese companies deemed to be linked to the ruling Communist Party's efforts to upgrade its military technology. (AP)

## UAE agrees to buy French warplanes as Macron visits Gulf

Nice (France), Dec 3 (AP) France says the United Arab Emirates has purchased 80 French-made Rafale warplanes for 16 billion euros.

There was no immediate confirmation of the deal from Emirati officials.

The French Defense Ministry described the deal as France's largest-ever weapons contract for export. French President Emmanuel Macron is in the Emirates on the first stop of his two-day visit to the Gulf.

Macron's two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia comes a month before France assumes the rotating European Union presidency and ahead of the French 2022 presidential election where Macron is expected to seek a second term.

Returning from the Gulf with a contract to sell French fighter jets to the Emiratis, a deal that Paris and Abu Dhabi have discussed for almost a decade, would boost France's defense industry after the collapse of a 66 billion contract for Australia to buy 12 French submarines.

And the red carpet treatment Macron can expect from Gulf political heavyweights would present France as the EU powerhouse in the Gulf and Middle East since Britain's exit from the bloc.

Macron stands out among European Union leaders with his willingness to be in the spotlight, to drive the foreign policy and push things ahead, said Silvia Colombo, an expert on EU-Gulf relations at the International Affairs Institute in Rome.

But, primarily, Macron is pursuing French business interests, Colombo said. He has a very clear idea that he has to go where the business community wants to be, where France can make economic gains.

Macron's keen interest in forging personal relationships with leaders like Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, and his counterpart in Saudi Arabia, Mohamed bin Salman Al Saud, makes him a welcome guest. Both Gulf leaders value a degree of pragmatism when discussing democracy and human rights issues on which their

countries have been heavy criticized by rights groups and European lawmakers while pursuing business opportunities.

France has deep ties to the United Arab Emirates, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula, particularly since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

The UAE opened a French naval base in 2009 at Abu Dhabi's Port Zayed. French warplanes and personnel are also stationed at Al-Dhafra Air Base, a major facility outside the Emirati capital of Abu Dhabi that's also home to several thousand American troops.

Months after Macron was elected in 2017, he traveled to the UAE to inaugurate Louvre Abu Dhabi, built under a 1.2 billion agreement to share the name and art of the world-famous museum in Paris.

In September, Macron hosted Abu Dhabi's crown prince at the historic Chateau de Fontainebleau outside Paris, which was restored in 2019 with a UAE donation of 10 million euros (11.3 million).

## Sri Lanka detects 1st case of COVID-19's Omicron variant

Sri Lanka on Friday detected its first case of COVID-19's new variant Omicron, Deputy Director General of Health Services Hemantha Herath said.

Today, we have found one Omicron infected person from our labs, he announced. The person, who arrived from an African nation, was currently in quarantine along with his family members, the official said.

The Sri Lankan government on November 28 had announced that arrivals from South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho and Eswatini are required to undergo mandatory quarantine.

Herath said that the detection was made possible by the continued surveillance carried out by the health authorities having warned the public on the new variant weeks ago.

As of Thursday, the total number of COVID-19 infections since March 2020 stood at 5,65,471 with 14,399 deaths.

## WHO says measures against delta work for omicron variant too

World Health Organisation officials in the Western Pacific say border closures adopted by some countries may buy time to deal with the omicron coronavirus variant, but measures put in place and experience gained in dealing with the delta variant should remain the foundation for fighting the pandemic.

While a few regional countries are facing surges, COVID-19 cases and deaths in many others have decreased and plateaued, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific Dr. Takeshi Kasai told reporters Friday in a virtual news conference broadcast from Manila, Philippines.

Border control can delay the virus coming in and buy time. But every country and every community must prepare for new surges in cases," Kasai said. The positive news in all of this is that none of the information we have currently about omicron suggests we need to change the directions of our response."

Much remains unknown about the new variant, including whether it is more contagious, as some health authorities suspect, or if it makes people more seriously ill, and whether it can thwart the vaccine.

## US will resume policy for asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico

San Diego, Dec 3 (AP) Migrants seeking to enter the United States will again have to stay in Mexico as they await immigration hearings, as the Biden administration has reluctantly announced plans to reinstate the Trump-era policy and agreed to Mexico's conditions for resuming it.

Revival of the Remain in Mexico policy comes even as the Biden administration manoeuvres to end it in a way that survives legal scrutiny. President Joe Biden scrapped the policy, but a lawsuit by Texas and Missouri forced him to put it back into effect Thursday, subject to Mexico's acceptance.

Mexico's foreign relations secretary said in light of US concessions Mexico will allow returns, expected to begin next week, for humanitarian reasons and for temporary stays.

Mexico's conditions include COVID-19 vaccinations for migrants, more protection in danger-

ous Mexican border cities, better access to attorneys and quicker resolution of cases.

About 70,000 asylum-seekers have been subject to the policy, which President Donald Trump introduced in January 2019 and which Biden suspended on his first day in office.

Illegal border crossings fell sharply after Mexico, facing Trump's threat of higher tariffs, acquiesced in 2019 to the policy's rapid expansion. Asylum-seekers were victims of major violence while waiting in Mexico and faced a slew of legal obstacles, such as access to attorneys and case information.

Migrants are expected to be returned starting Monday in one border city, which has not been identified. It will eventually be done in seven locations: San Diego and Calexico in California; Nogales, Arizona; and the Texas border cities of Brownsville, Eagle Pass, El Paso and Laredo.

The Homeland Security Department said Thursday that it was acting to comply with a court order but that Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas believes the policy has endemic flaws, imposed unjustifiable human costs, pulled resources and personnel away from other priority efforts, and failed to address the root causes of irregular migration.

Deeply flawed, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Thursday when describing the policy. "We're working to implement under the court order, she said.

The dual announcements follow intense discussions between the US and Mexico after US District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, a Trump appointee in Amarillo, Texas, ordered the policy be reinstated, subject to Mexico's participation.

The policy's new iteration, outlined in a briefing for reporters

and a court filing Thursday, promises major additions and changes that Mexico demanded.

All migrants subject to the policy will be vaccinated against COVID-19. Adults will get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which requires only one shot. Children who are eligible under US guidelines will get the Pfizer shot, with second shots when they come to the US for their first hearings.

The US will try to complete cases within 180 days, a response to Mexico's concerns that they will languish. The Justice Department is assigning 22 immigration judges to work on these cases exclusively.

US authorities will ask migrants if they fear being returned to Mexico instead of relying on them to raise concerns unprompted. If the migrants express fear, they will be screened and have 24 hours to find an attorney or representative.

## China suspends energy projects in SLankan islands located close to India over 'security concern' from 'third party'

Colombo, Dec 3 (PTI) China has suspended a project to install hybrid energy plants in three islands of Sri Lanka, citing "security concern" from a "third party", amid reports of India raising concern over its location.

In January, the Chinese firm, Sino Soar Hybrid Technology, was awarded the contract to install a hybrid renewable energy system in Delft, Nagadeepa and Analthivu islands, off the coast of Jaffna, according to a report in news-first.lk news website published on Thursday.

The three islets are located close to Tamil Nadu.

Without naming India, the Chinese embassy here in a tweet on Wednesday confirmed that "Sino Soar Hybrid Technology, being suspended

to build Hybrid Energy system in 3 northern islands Flag of Sri Lanka due to 'security concern' from a third party".

Instead, it added, Beijing has inked a contract with Male on November 29 to establish solar power plants at 12 islands in the Maldives.

According to the newsfirst.lk report, in early 2021, India lodged a "strong protest" with Lanka on the award of the tender to the Chinese company for the construction of renewable energy power plants in Delft, Nagadeepa and Analthivu.

The contract was part of the Supporting Electricity Supply Reliability Improvement Project, which is implemented by the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) and funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), it said.

## Need to convert Fintech initiatives into Fintech revolution, says PM Modi

**New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday underlined the need for converting Fintech initiatives into a Fintech revolution with a view to ensure financial empowerment for every single citizen.

The Fintech industry has achieved huge scale and found acceptability among the masses, he said while inaugurating the InInfinity Forum.

"Now, it is time to convert these Fintech initiatives into a Fintech revolution. A revolution that helps to achieve financial empowerment of every single citizen of the country," the Prime Minister said.

Stressing that technology is bringing a big shift in finance, he said mobile payment last year exceeded ATM cash withdrawals.

Citing another example, he said, fully digital banks without any physical branch offices are already a reality and may become commonplace in less than a decade.

As humans evolved, so did the form of our transactions. From barter system to metals, from coins to notes, from cheques to cards, today we have reached here, he said.

Observing that India has proved to the world that it is second to none when it comes to adopting technology, he said transformational initiatives under Digital India have opened doors for innovative Fintech solutions to be applied in governance.

Sharing India's financial inclusion drive led by technology, Modi said from less than 50 per cent of Indians having bank accounts in 2014, India has almost universalised it with 430 million Jan Dhan accounts in the last seven years.



He also listed initiatives like 690 million RuPay cards, clocking 1.3 billion transactions last year; UPI processing around 4.2 billion transactions last month, and almost 300 million invoices being uploaded on the GST portal every month.

Emphasising that financial inclusion is the driver of the Fintech revolution, he said Fintech is resting on four pillars - income, investments, insurance and institutional credit.

When income grows, investment becomes possible. Insurance coverage enables greater risk-taking ability and investments. Institutional credit gives wings for expansion. And we have worked on each of these pillars. When all these factors come together, you suddenly find so many more people participating in the financial sector, Modi said.

Highlighting the importance of trust in Fintech in the light of the wide acceptance of these innovations among the masses, the Prime Minister said the common Indian has shown immense trust in the ecosystem by embracing digital payments and such technologies.

## TVS Emerald announces new finance scheme to home-buyers

**Chennai, Dec 3 (PTI):** Emerald Haven Realty Ltd (TVS Emerald), the real estate division of TVS Group, on Friday announced the rolling out of new finance scheme for its project TVS Emerald Atrium to home-buyers.

The gated apartment project is part of 18-acre community development 'TVS Emerald Green Acres' coming up in neighbouring Perungalathur.

According to a statement from the company, TVS Emerald rolled out the limited period finance scheme

10:85:5 scheme which allows home-buyers payment flexibility as they need not take up a home loan until two years.

An aspiring home-buyer needs to pay 10 per cent as booking charge and 85 per cent of payment after two years on completion of flooring of the purchased unit. The balance 5 per cent can be payable during the possession of the apartment, the statement said.

The scheme can be availed till December 15, the company said.



"We are delighted at the strong, positive response to our new project TVS Emerald Atrium. To fast-track the project and also offer home-

buyers a unique value proposition, we have launched a limited period scheme 10:85:5 scheme," president of TVS Emerald Sriram Iyer said.

"The customer is not required to take a loan or have a financial burden till two years from the day of booking thereby ensuring savings on pre-emi of upto Rs 6 lakh," he said.

Spread across 2.5 acre, TVS Emerald Atrium comprises four towers, eight-storied building with spacious 2 BHK and 3 BHK apartments ranging in carpet areas from 567 square foot to 845 square foot. The units are priced at Rs 49 lakh onwards, the statement added.

## Need collective global action for effective regulation of technology: FM

**New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI):** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday called for a "collective global action" for effective regulation of ever-changing technology and tech-driven payment systems.

So far, regulators are only "catching up" in regulating ever-evolving technology and hence there is no one point formula with which it can be regulated, she said.

Her comments also come against the backdrop of the government preparing to come out with legislation to regulate cryptocurrencies.

"Even as we are thinking about at a national level, there should simultaneously be a global mechanism through which we are constantly monitoring the movement of technology, so that whether it is your cryptocurrency, whether it is tech-driven payment system, data privacy, whether it is ensuring that data is used ethically..."

"When you are looking at data as one of the revenue generating options, to regulate it will have to be a collective effort," Sitharaman said.



Speaking at the InInfinity Forum 2021, she said technology respects no physical borders and has the power to sweep through borders. "... It means that global action is the only way with which you can regulate effectively."

India is working on a new Bill on cryptocurrency which will take into account the rapidly changing dimensions in virtual currency space and will be brought in Parliament during the ongoing session, which will end on December 23.

The Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021, seeks to "create a facilitative frame-

work for creation of the official digital currency to be issued by the Reserve Bank of India. The Bill also seeks to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India, however, it allows for certain exceptions to promote the underlying technology of cryptocurrency and its uses".

Replying to a question on how regulation keeps pace with technology amid discussion on cryptocurrency in India, she said since these are evolving areas, there is no clear point answer.

"Regulation, both legislative and executive, ... at least till now have only been catching up with technology and rapid movement of technology. So as long the executive and legislature are only catching up, you will never be on top of it. And with technology, I am not sure they (regulators) can ever be on top of this kind of situation, because it is ever changing and ever evolving," Sitharaman said.

She said India has seen digital revolution for the past years and financial inclusion has achieved the social norms of empowering the poor.

## Rupee falls 14 paise to 75.16 against USD

**Mumbai, Dec 3 (PTI):** The rupee on Friday slipped 14 paise to close at 75.16 (provisional) against the US dollar, tracking massive sell-offs in domestic equities amid growing worries over the new COVID variant.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened at 74.98 and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.95 and a low of 75.18 against the US dollar in a highly volatile trading session.

The local unit finally settled at 75.16 a dollar, down 14 paise over its previous close.

The rupee on Thursday settled at 75.02 against the US dollar.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.06 per cent up at 96.21.

## Sensex slumps 765 points, Nifty ends below 17200

**New Delhi, Dec 3:** The key benchmark indices reversed their two-day winning streak with losses in excess of a per cent. Index heavyweight Reliance Industries, banking and FMCG shares were responsible for a significant amount of the losses.

The BSE benchmark index, the Sensex, had started trade on a positive note and soon rallied to a high of 57,757 (up almost 300 points from the previous close). Selling emerged towards the end of the first-hour of trades, and thereafter it accentuated in noon deals. The BSE 30 index slumped to a low 56,641 in late trade - down 1,116 points from the day's high. The

Sensex finally ended with a loss of 765 points at 57,696.

The NSE Nifty tumbled 309 points from the day's high of 17,490 to a low of 17,181, and eventually settled 205 points lower at 17,197.

The broader indices, however, outperformed the key benchmark indices. The BSE Midcap index ended almost flat, while the Smallcap index added 0.3 per cent. The overall market breadth was also positive, with 1,778 advancing shares versus 1,475 declining stocks on the BSE.

Among the Sensex 30 stocks, PowerGrid Corporation was the major loser, down 4 per cent at Rs 206. Reliance Industries shed 2.8



per cent at Rs 2,414.

Asian Paints, Kotak Bank, Tech Mahindra, Maruti, Bharti Airtel, ITC, Sun Pharma, Dr.Reddy's and Mahindra & Mahindra were the

other prominent losers, down 1.5 per cent to 2 per cent, each. Larsen & Toubro and IndusInd Bank were two out of the five notable gainers.

In the broader markets, Vodafone Idea zoomed another 12 per cent and hit a 52-week high in trades today. The stock has rallied as much as 32 per cent this week. The stock has been in demand post tariff hike.

Shares of Tata Teleservices Maharashtra (TTML) were locked at the 5 upper circuit for the 14th straight trading session, up 5 per cent at Rs 129.45, also its new high on the BSE on Friday. The Tata Group telecom services stock has nearly doubled or up 97 per cent

from level of Rs 65.70 on November 12, 2021.

**Primary Market Update**

In the primary market, Tega Industries IPO was subscribed a whopping 204.7 times as of 3:20 PM on the final day of the offer today, with strong demand from wealthy investors (NIIs) and Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs), the quota was subscribed 612.7 times and 207.6 times, respectively. The retail quota was subscribed 28.2 times.

Anand Rathi Wealth IPO was subscribed 2.6 times so far on the second day of the issue. The retail portion was subscribed 4.1 times and wealthy investors 2.6 times.

## Govt seeks Parliament nod for Rs 62K crore infusion in AIAHL



**New Delhi, Dec 3 (PTI):** The Government on Friday sought Parliament's nod to infuse over Rs 62,000 crore into the company that holds residual assets and liabilities of Air India after its privatisation, as part of over Rs 3.73 lakh crore additional spending planned in the current financial year.

The extra spending would include Rs 58,430 crore by way of additional fertiliser subsidy, Rs 53,123 crore towards payment of pending export incentives and Rs 22,039 crore to rural development ministry for transfer to National Rural Employment Guarantee Fund.

Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary tabled the second batch of supplementary demands for grants tabled in Lok Sabha envisaging a net cash outflow of over Rs 2.99 lakh crore and Rs 74,517 crore extra expenditure would be matched by savings by different ministries.

As per the document, Rs 62,057 crore would be given to the Civil Aviation Ministry for equity infusion in Air India Assets Holding Company (AIAHL) for re-payment of past government guaranteed borrowing and past dues/liabilities of Air India.

Besides, an additional Rs 2,628 crore would be given

towards loans and advances to Air India for recoupment of advance from Contingency Fund of India.

The additional fertiliser subsidy include Rs 43,430 crore on account of payment towards indigenous and imported Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) Subsidy and Rs 15,000 crore towards urea subsidy scheme.

Besides, the Department of Food and Public Distribution would be given an additional Rs 49,805 crore for meeting expenditure towards various schemes of food storage and warehousing.

About Rs 2,400 crore would be given to Department of Commerce for meeting expenditure towards subsidies under the 'Interest Equalisation Scheme', and Investment under the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) scheme, among others.

Another over Rs 5,000 crore and over Rs 4,000 crore has been earmarked for additional spending by the Ministries of Defence and Home, respectively.

The 2021-22 Budget had projected government's total expenditure at Rs 34.83 lakh crore. But this is expected to overshoot considering the two batches of supplementary demands for grants presented by the government so far.

## IMF says chief economist Gopinath to replace Okamoto as no. 2 official

**Washington, Dec 3:** The International Monetary Fund named its chief economist Gita Gopinath to become its second-ranking official, replacing First Deputy Managing Director Geoffrey Okamoto who will leave the global lender in early 2022.

Gopinath had been scheduled to leave the global lender to return to Harvard University in January, but decided to stay on in the wide-ranging policy role under IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, the IMF said.

Georgieva said Gopinath was "universally recognized as one of the world's leading macroeconomists" and had precisely the expertise needed for the No. 2 job, given the increased macroeconomic challenges facing IMF member countries as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Indeed, her particular skill set" combined with her years of experience at the Fund as Chief Economist - make her uniquely well qualified. She is the right person at the right time," Georgieva said.

She said the IMF would realign some roles and responsibilities in its senior management team, with Gopinath to oversee surveillance activities, and research and flagship publications, while working to "foster the highest quality standards for Fund publications."

The United States, the largest shareholder in the IMF, welcomed the pick of Gopinath, and the move to restore job responsibilities that had been shifted under Okamoto, a source familiar with Treasury's thinking said.

Gopinath, the first woman to serve as the fund's chief economist, has played a key role in broadening the role of the IMF's research



department, creating a new analytical approach to help countries respond to international capital flows, and also worked on a detailed IMF plan to end the pandemic, she said.

Okamoto said he would return to the private sector after over a decade of "intensive public service," but gave no details about his next position.

A dual citizen of the United States and India, Gopinath is due to start her new role on Jan. 21, shortly after the IMF releases an update to its World Economic Outlook. The IMF board is expected to approve the move in coming weeks.

The leadership changes come on the heels of an independent report commissioned by the World Bank, which claimed Georgieva, then the CEO of the World Bank, and other senior officials had pressured World Bank staff to alter data to favor China.

The IMF executive board cleared Georgieva of any wrongdoing in October, but U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said. Washington viewed the allegations as legitimate and serious, and demanded the IMF take proactive steps to ensure the integrity of IMF data and protection of any whistleblowers.

## Services activity grow robustly in Nov as price pressures intensify

**Bengaluru, Dec 3:** Activity in India's dominant services sector continued to grow at a robust pace last month supported by a strong recovery in domestic demand, a private survey showed, but elevated price pressures remained a major concern.

Asia's third-largest economy expanded at the fastest pace among major economies last quarter, boosted by coronavirus vaccinations and stronger government spending. The economy grew 8.4% annually during the July-September quarter.

That positive momentum seems to have been largely sustained in the first two months of this quarter. The Services Purchasing Managers' Index, compiled by IHS Markit, eased to 58.1 in November from 58.4 in October, but last month's rate of growth was the second-best in over a decade and well above the 50-mark separating growth from contraction for a fourth straight month.

Excluding October, new business expanded at its quickest pace in nearly nine years in November, primarily driven by the robust recovery in domestic demand. "The recovery of the Indian service sector was extended to November. Companies were somewhat



convicted that output levels would continue to increase in the year ahead, but worries regarding inflationary pressures weighed on confidence again," noted Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit.

Despite reporting the biggest jump in input costs since April, firms were only

able to pass on some of costs to customers, pointing to further pressure on margins. Prices charged rose at a slower pace in November compared to October.

The pace of hiring was also the weakest in three months despite an improvement in business expectations. Adding to concerns, the recent emergence of the Omicron coronavirus variant has raised the chances of another blow to the economy.

However, robust expansion in services activity along with strong growth in manufacturing boosted the composite index to a near 10-year high of 59.2 in November from 58.7 in October.

"Looking at the manufacturing and service sectors combined, the results are even more encouraging and bode well for economic performance in the third quarter of fiscal year 2021/22 so far," added De Lima.

## Indian banks behind on digital adoption, it's time to wake up: Uday Kotak

**Mumbai, Dec 3:** Indian banks have ceded the payment ground to financial technology companies, but it is time to "wake up!" said Uday Kotak, managing director and chief executive officer (CEO) of Kotak Mahindra Bank on Friday.

He was speaking at the inaugural InInfinity Forum organised by International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) and Bloomberg. The topic of the event was "FinTech Beyond Boundaries - A Banker's Perspective."

When it comes to adopting digital, "Indian banks have been behind the curve," Kotak said. "Indian banks have allowed the growth of Unified Payment Interface (UPI) payments and essentially, they've been monopolized by key players - Google Pay and PhonePe - and they have got 85 per cent market share," while the Indian banks dragged their feet in the space expect-

ing not enough income in payments.

"It's a wake-up call for Indian banking. Wake up! Large parts of the traditional financial markets are moving out," he said.

"Bankers were short-sighted over past years. Their standard response was 'Oh, there is no money in payments,' and they let the payments market effectively be taken over by these two or three companies," said Kotak.

Consumer technology companies have revenue models outside finance, for example in the advertising space. However, banking regulations prohibit banks from having non-financial businesses.

"There are serious issues about how to draw the lines and simultaneously there's an issue about financial stability. All that I'm saying is we need to make sure that in the name of competitive service, we don't have a systemic and



a stability challenge at the same time," said Kotak.

On fintech companies allowing deposit mobilisation through their platforms, the veteran banker said the terminal issue was the risk of "who is raising the deposit? Is it the consumer tech company, which is the apparent front engine which is going to the customers and marketing deposits, and who runs the risk of the underlying asset?"

"So we need to make sure that as we vote for FinTech, you must also be clear that we do not betray trust. The Prime Minister this

morning mentioned the most important aspect of the digital growth is consumer trust that has to be protected at all costs."

Banks must have the ability to feed the enormous data being churned out by the financial system into analytics and machine learning. Especially, the turnaround time for micro-small and medium enterprises (MSME) must enable an MSME to get clarity on a loan in minutes, if not seconds.

"I think that revolution is on us. The whole lending and the platform which will develop will make it possible for MSMEs to raise money, at least within the same day, rather than having to wait for a few weeks before they know whether they're going to get the money or not."

The banks are working towards that transformation beyond Aadhar, UPI and India Stack.

Non-resident Indians with

passports and persons of Indian origin could be allowed to use UPI to popularise the instrument.

"Geography is history in the post-covid world," said Kotak, stressing the need to expand the Indian payments system globally.

"I would like to say that India has revolutionized in the area of digital payments and the digital systems. In many ways, we are leapfrogging many countries and I do believe that our UPI payments systems, as well as our Aadhar unique identity basis for transactions, is a world innovation," he said.

"I would love to see how we can export it globally. Frankly, it can be used even in developed countries, but certainly in countries which are developing and I would strongly encourage building bridges using these two systems to make India a global financial technology and digital player," said Kotak.

## FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

## Cases...

including 9,196 recoveries and 152 deaths are from Kathua, 7,164 including 7,042 recoveries and 120 deaths are from Samba, 4,835 including 4,782 recoveries and 44 deaths are from Kishtwar, 6,530 including 6,418 recoveries and 100 deaths are from Poonch, 6,057 including 5,987 recoveries and 67 deaths are from Ramban and 6,903 including 6,684 recoveries and 43 deaths are from Reasi.

As per the daily information bulletin 4,563,943 persons in Jammu and Kashmir are under observation while 6,757 persons have been kept under home quarantine besides that 1,708 persons are in isolation.

According to the bulletin, 4,122,593 persons have completed the surveillance period and 428,406 persons are under home surveillance besides that so far results of 17,797,145 samples are available. Out of 17,797,145 the number of samples tested negative stands at 17,459,701 while as 337,444 have tested positive, among them 1,708 persons are active, 331,257 persons have recovered and 4,479 persons have died.

## Test...

quarantined (Institutional) and treated as per standard protocol. The samples of positive cases shall be sent to the designated INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IGSLs) promptly, as per the India SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) guidance document and close tracking and testing of the contacts of travellers who have tested positive, as per MoHFW guidelines shall be adhered to," the order reads.

"Designated Surveillance Officers must establish a close coordination with their designated, tagged INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IGSLs) for expediting results of genomic analysis and necessary public health measures should be taken in case of presence of variants of concern or variants of interest (VoCs/VoIs) is reported by the INSACOG network," it said. The order said that people from "At-Risk" nations, who test negative, will however, have to be in home quarantine for 7 days.

"They should be tested again on day 8 and if test negative, shall be advised to monitor themselves carefully for at least 02 weeks and travellers coming from countries considered not at risk and whose samples have tested negative should be advised to monitor themselves carefully for at least 02," it said.

"The Principle of "Test-Track-Treat-Vaccinate" shall be implemented in order to ensure stringent implementation of containment measures as per MoHFW guidelines and to prevent the spread of variants of concern or variants of interest (VoC/Vol) and formation of clusters of cases," the order said.

## Azad...

stop. "Firing Rehaab-e-Zirat, Rehbar-e-Taleem and casual labourers should also stop forthwith," Azad said.

He said J&K is a place worst hit by bloodshed as there are hundreds of widows, and orphans. "We lost hundreds of civilians also. 60,000 civilians were killed in the militancy related incidents in J&K. The figure includes some 6000 Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits but majority of those killed were Muslims," he said if militancy ends, that would help take J&K to new heights on developmental front.

## SED...

Officers (CEOs) and District Institute of Education and Trainings (DIETs) to involve the Panchayat's in the monitoring of primary schools.

The official communiqué reads that in a review meeting of centrally sponsored scheme Samagra Shiksha in Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief Secretary in the month of November passed instructions for the improvisation of different interventions in education and monitoring of primary schools by Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs).

"In this context, the CEOs, and DIETs are advised to instruct Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs) to inform the PRIs of their zone to take up the monitoring of primary schools and winter camps for which a 'Monthly School Evaluation Tool' has been formulated by the Directorate of School Education Kashmir (DSEK) to be considered for the monitoring purpose," it reads

The official said that the PRIs have been asked to submit the monthly reports of school performance to concerned Zonal Education officers for the redressal of discrepancies thereof.

"Besides, the PRIs may be given the soft copy of learning outcome-

document of NCERT wherein the class and age appropriate competencies and skills of children are recorded which will help the PRIs to assess the learning levels of students," reads the communiqué.

It also reads that the monthly school evaluation tool may be discussed with PRIs in the meetings and the service of DIET faculty, Zonal Resource Groups (ZRGs) and Education Reform Committees can be utilized for the purpose.

## Cold...

previous night. The famous resort in south Kashmir was coldest place in entire Valley.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 2.3°C against minus 1.4°C on previous night and normal of minus 0.6°C, the official said.

Kupwara town in north Kashmir recorded a low of minus 2.8°C against minus 3.3°C on the previous night, the official said.

Gulmarg, the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir, recorded a minimum of minus 1.0°C against minus 1.5°C on the previous night, the official said.

Ladakh's Leh recorded a low of minus 5.6°C against last night's minus 4.6°C while Kargil town recorded a low of minus 4.0°C. Drass in Kargil, the second coldest place in the world after Siberia, recorded a low of minus 12.9°C, the official said.

The weatherman has forecast widespread light to moderate snowfall and rains in plains of Jammu and Kashmir during 4-6 December.

"A fresh western disturbance most likely to affect J&K and adjoining areas during 4th (evening) to 6th (Afternoon) December with peak activity on 5th December," the official said, adding, "Widespread light to moderate snowfall in middle and higher reaches of Kashmir/Jammu and light snow/rain over plains of Kashmir/Jammu is expected."

He said higher reaches of Kupwara, Baramulla, Bandipora, Shopian and Ganderbal districts may receive 6-9 inches of Snow during the period.

Regarding the probable impact, he said, there may be temporary disruption of air and surface traffic over passes like Zojila, Sinthan Top, Razdan Top, Mugal Road due to snow and freezing temperatures on December 5.

The MeT official said that there should be proper pruning of orchards and withheld irrigation and fertilizer application in wheat and mustard crops in plains of Jammu during period. (GNS)

## Seven...

a database of accidents and incidents, improving training methodology and increased use of simulators," he said.

Asked about steps being taken by the government to boost the country's security, he cited several measures including the creation of the post of the Chief of Defence Staff.

"Various steps have been taken by the Government from time to time to strengthen the security of the country. Towards this, the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) was created in December 2019," he said in the written reply.

Bhatt said the CDS has been mandated to carry out integration and jointness in the armed forces including the creation of integrated theatre commands.

He said the CDS has also been made permanent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee, adding a separate Department of Military Affairs (DMA) has been created to look after the matters related to Army, Indian Air Force and the Navy and jointness amongst the three services.

"Further, modernisation, upgradation and sustenance of military equipment and weapons is taken up from time to time to equip the armed forces with modern weapon systems/equipment under various procurement provisions," he said.

## Centre...

It is worthwhile to mention that NITI Aayog was monitoring the works taken up under the PMDP component for permanent restoration of the infrastructure.

## Kupwara...

was roped in to the site, which with due diligence and safety moved the suspected object from the road to a safer place in nearby forests to destroy it.

"The vehicular traffic has been restored along the road after kept halted for nearly two hours", the official added. (GNS)

## People...

orphans registered with ICPS,"

she said.

She said that all NGO's working here must get themselves registered with ICPS, otherwise they will get penalized.

"The NGO which is allegedly involved in the sale of Covid orphans wasn't registered with ICPS," Kamili said. She said that it is the responsibility of society to keep check on such issues as if someone is selling, someone is purchasing and an NGO is working as a broker in the middle. "If someone is missing, there should have been at least a missing report in the concerned police station or ICPS. We all should wake up to this and ensure that human lives aren't for sale," she said.

She said that there will definitely be an action against the involved persons and all NGO's must get registered. "This message must be passed to religious seminaries so that such issues won't come to fore," Kamili said.

## DGP...

concerned officers of PHQ.

DGP flanked by ADGP Armed, J&K, SJM Gillani and IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar chaired the meeting via video conference from PCR Kashmir while other officers attended the meeting at Conference Hall, PHQ.

During the meeting various agenda points pertaining to capacity building and welfare of the jawans were discussed. All the agenda points were taken one by one and discussed threadbare and appropriate decisions taken on each.

The DGP said that various wings of police need to rationally review their deployments and see that persons posted at a particular location for very long are transferred out and replaced with suitable persons. This he said will enhance the capabilities of these units.

He also said that unauthorised attachments and localised arrangements should be done away with and cases be reviewed and recommendations must be justified while giving emphasis on encouraging the deserving personnel.

He said that the recommendations must be performance based and due weightage must be given to the circumstances, topography, and difficulty faced besides the perseverance and operational acumen displayed by the personnel must be taken as the touch stone for recommendations.

DGP further stated that only those personnel should be rewarded who contributed to the professional work.

During the meeting, different representation/ petitions and directions from the various judicial authorities were also discussed.

AIG (Personnel) PHQ conducted the proceedings of the meeting and presented the backgrounds of each and every agenda item.

Pertinent to mention that during the year 2020 upto July 2021 out of turn promotions were given to four ASIs, forty HCs, 160 SgCts, 475 Cts and four Followers for their outstanding contribution and 393 SPOs were also absorbed in the department as constables for their outstanding duties.

In the afternoon, the DGP chaired a joint security meeting at Police Control Room (PCR) Kashmir to review the security scenario in Kashmir Zone.

The meeting was attended by ADGP Armed J&K SJM Gillani, IG (KOS) CRPF Deepak Rattan, IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar, IG (SOS) CRPF Charu Sinha, DIG CKR Srinagar Sujit Kumar, BGS Ops 15 Corps P K Mishra, DIG CRPF North Srinagar Dr Randeep Kumar Rana, DIG CRPF South Srinagar Mathew A John, DIG BSF Ops Srinagar Arvinder Singh, SSP APCR Srinagar Shahid Mehraj RATHER, SSP Srinagar Sandeep Choudhary, SSP PCR Kashmir Zubair Ahmed Khan and SP PC Srinagar Ifthikar Talib.

Spl. DGP CID J&K, R. R. Swain attended the meeting through video conferencing from Jammu.

Speaking to the officers, the DGP expressed satisfaction over the synergy existing between the officers and formations of forces. He expressed hope that together security forces will continue to work harder for greater peace.

DGP stressed upon the officers not to let the peaceful atmosphere be disturbed by the elements inimical to peace by effectively and sincerely handling the lawful duties and commitments.

He said that the action against militants and their OGW networks and handlers should be continued unabated and all such elements should be kept under check so as to foil their ill designs that are aimed at disrupting normal lives of the people.

Singh said that security grids need to be kept fully geared up at all levels with joint efforts of all security forces and agencies. He

directed officers to review the security strategies more often so as to check for any loopholes if ignored. The DGP also took a review of the winter preparedness.

He appreciated the forces for the recent successes against militancy but stressed for continued pressure on militants/OGWs to consolidate the peace.

He directed the officers to stay focused and to maintain surveillance on the support system of militants. He said that Pakistani agents and their handlers here are always looking for soft targets to foment trouble in the much better prevailing security scenario in J&K.

Officers from CRPF, Army, and BSF shared their views and assessments in the meeting.

## Power...

them to lurch at large. The locals from different areas, especially belonging to the non-metered areas, said that there is no adherence to the power curtailment schedule.

"From morning to evening, the electricity remains off for over eight hours and with the additional power cuts, we are being supplied electricity for mere two-three hours a day," Adil Rashid, a local from Zafran Colony area of Pantha Chowk, said.

He said that one fails to understand what has been achieved by augmenting the power infrastructure in J&K, adding that despite claiming high and tall every year, the people across Kashmir are being pushed to the wall as they are being forced to reel under darkness most of the time.

"The concerned department has claimed to have commissioned several grid stations in the last couple of years, but the power scenario has failed to witness any change on the ground in winters," Ali Muhammad, another local from Zewan area of Srinagar said.

"The consumers are always being blamed for non-judicious use of electricity. The electricity can be used judiciously only when the people are supplied with adequate electricity," he said. "Last winter, there were cuts, but not to the extent we are witnessing this winter."

The consumers later appealed the government to look into the matter and ensure that the curtailment hours are lessened and also the schedule is adhered to by the department concerned.

## Khan...

contributing majorly towards the society. He said their contribution is larger than the contribution of a normal person with no physical disabilities.

He said that, "we both as a society and as a government must sensitize ourselves to know our responsibilities towards them."

He urged upon the specially-abled persons that instead of seeking help, they must fight for their rights and thrive hard to achieve their goals like many others like them who have been leading life successfully and have turned into job providers instead of job seekers.

On the occasion, Advisor also felicitated winning students who participated in a painting competition. The young specially-abled persons enthralled the audience with their colourful performances they presented on the occasion while various renowned artists also performed couple of skits to sensitize people about their role and responsibilities towards these specially-abled persons.

On the occasion, specially-abled role models, athletes, players including Insha Bashir and Ishrat twin wheelchair basketball players were felicitated for their courage and achievement in various fields.

The Sports Council also awarded a cheque of Rs. 80,000 to Mohamad Sultan Rather, a young athlete without upper limbs, who has been selected for ensuing International Wushu championship to be held in Istanbul Turkey.

After their felicitation, Mohamad Altaf Chopan, truck driver from Baramulla, Ashiq Ali from Ganderbal, Misra Banu Kangan, Showkat Ahmad Lone, Mudasir Ahmed from Budgam and others with major disabilities narrated their success stories. The programme was jointly organized by the department of Social Welfare and Hope Disability Centre in collaboration with J&K Rehabilitation Council, Directorate of Youth Services and Sports, Department of Information and Public Relations, Department of Culture and Department of Sports Council.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Sports Council, Nuzhat Gul said that, "we must feel privileged to be among these specially-abled people who with their grit and passion have proved that they are able by their abilities to become superheroes."

She reiterated the resolve of the

administration to help these athletes to overcome any difficulty to reach various podiums at national and international level.

Among others, DG Welfare, Bashir Ahmad Dar, Executive Director Rehabilitation Council, Ishfaq Ahmad, Director Health Services Kashmir, Mushtaq Ahmad Rather and Director Hope Disability Centre, Sami Wani also spoke on the occasion and appreciated the dedication of these specially-abled persons to prove their mettle in different fields.

Director Disaster Management, Amir Ali, Special Secretary, Khurshid Ahmad Sanai and Officer on Special Duty to Advisor, Mohamad Ashraf Hakak were also present on the occasion.

The program was attended by specially abled persons, District Program Officers, Doctors, CDPOs, Supervisors, Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers and people from all walks of life.

## Indian...

Chinese aggression on northern borders and the COVID-19 pandemic has created complex security challenges, he said that "despite the COVID-19, Indian Navy has maintained combat and mission readiness and resulted in preventing any misadventure in the maritime domain."

## Still...

The Divisional Commissioner directed the Additional Deputy Commissioner, KPDC, Public Health Engineering (PHE) Baramulla to ensure power and water supply to the hospital by or before December-15-2021." The Principal GMC shall immediately place indent in this regard."

In the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Baramulla requested for more manpower needed to be deployed for the completion of the project on time.

In the meantime, Pole reminded the concerned authorities the about the issue of merging of 60 Kanals of Industries department land with the hospital for future expansion of the GMC, to which it was informed by Deputy Commissioner Baramulla that in lieu of that 750 Kanals of land has been identified outside the Baramulla Town but no formal indent has been placed before the district administration.

## Joint Director DSEJ inspects facilities in Government Schools

JAMMU, DECEMBER 03: Joint Director, Directorate of School Education Jammu, Hem Raj Pakhroo today inspected functioning of Higher Secondary School Boys, Samba and Government Model Higher Secondary School Hiranagar amongst other schools in Jammu region.

During the visit, he inspected classrooms, libraries, laboratories; ICT Laboratories and newly constructed buildings by SAMAGRA SHIKSHA and interacted with the students and staff members. He also inspected the community classes being run for the students during these pandemic times.

He passed on necessary directions regarding maintenance of cleanliness in school premises & strict adherence to COVID-19 guidelines to the HOFs and asked them to take all necessary precautions to defeat the Covid-19 virus and at the same time work towards building an environment where students can feel safe and continue their studies without any fear.

## Winners of Divisional Level Kala Utsav felicitated at Kathua

KATHUA, DECEMBER 03: To felicitate the winners of Divisional Level Kala Utsav, a felicitation function was held today at District Resource Centre, Kathua.

The winners were also given medals along with certificates of appreciation for their contribution. Chief Education Officer, Prakash Lal Thappa graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

He appreciated the students for bringing laurels to the district by winning Divisional level Kala Utsav overall Best District Trophy. The Chief Education Officer inspired the students who bagged the top position in their respective art form and entertained the audience with their scintillating performances.

## Director RDD conducts extensive tour of District Udhampur

UDHAMPUR, DECEMBER 03: To take the stock of ongoing developmental works being executed in the RDD sector, Director Rural Development Jammu, Mohammad Mumtaz Ali today conducted an exhaustive tour of District Udhampur.

En-route, he inspected various ongoing development works being executed under RDD schemes in Block Udhampur and Tikri. He directed the Block Development Officers to expedite the pace of works ensuring timeline completion.

Later, the Director RDD chaired a meeting of all Block Development Officers, Executive Engineers, AEEs and AEs of Rural Engineering Wing of Rural Development Department (RDD), Udhampur to review physical and financial achievements under different schemes under implementation in the district.

He took an extensive review of progress on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), budget performance, payments of wages, details of Aadhar seeding (ABP conversion), details of incomplete and ongoing works for 2018-19 and 2019-20, person days generated during 2021-22, Labour budget for 2021-22, status of liabilities under MGNREGA, issuance of new job cards, geo tagging of MGNREGA phase-I and II performance, status of works being executed under 14th FC, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin (PMAY-G), CD & Panchayat, Status of Panchayat Ghars under RGSA.

Director RDD asked the BDOs to complete all sanctioned houses within this financial year besides mobilizing their men and machinery for effective implementation of all schemes and coverage of 100 per cent eligible beneficiaries under PMAY (G). He expressed satisfaction over pace of progress on several vital parameters. He issued instructions to BDOs to expedite the progress of ongoing development works under CD & Panchayat and RGSA for timely completion. Earlier, Assistant Commissioner Development, Udhampur Mushtaq Ahmed Chowdhary gave a detailed powerpoint presentation about the progress of different schemes of the RDD sector in the district.

Additional District Development Commissioner, Kanta Devi; Superintending Engineer (REW), Anil Kumar Pandohi; Executive Engineer (REW), Ram Singh; besides all Block Development Officers, AEEs, and AEs of Rural Development Department were present in the meeting.

## Seeks collective efforts for effective enforcement of road safety norms

RAJOURI, DECEMBER 03: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Rajesh K Shavan today chaired a meeting of the District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) to discuss and finalize the implementation of traffic management plan in the district.

The meeting was attended by the ASP, Vivek Shekhar; CMO, Dr Shamim Un Nissa Bhatti; DIO, Narinder Kumar; ARTO, Shami Kumar; ExEn PWD Rajouri, Maqbool Hussain; ExEn Jal Shakti Rajouri, Mushtaq Ahmed besides others concerned officers attended the meeting. A discussion on various points including finalization of District road safety plan, implementation of ribbon act, shifting of maxi cabs from old bus stand to Bela Colony, identification of black spots, installation of crash barriers, organisation of road safety awareness camps etc was held threadbare in the meeting.

Referring to the implementation of the Ribbon act, the DC asked the concerned officers to identify the structures constructed along the roadside and get them removed at the earliest under the provision of the Act. Deliberating upon the complaints of overcharging from the passengers, the ARTO apprised that regular Nakas are being conducted to tighten the noose around violators. He also sought the active cooperation of the Traffic Department for the strict implementation of the revised fare rates in the larger public interest.

Discussing the shifting of maxi cabs operating from Old Bus Stand, the DC directed for the immediate shifting of the maxi cabs to Bela Colony to reduce the traffic congestion in the city area.

The DC said that collective efforts are required to minimize road accidents and urged the concerned officers to ensure close interdepartmental coordination for implementing road safety measures.

He also emphasized that road safety is a matter of immense importance and enhancement of safety by way of formulating a comprehensive action plan, therefore, deserves priority attention of all the stakeholders. The DC asked to identify the black spots on the roads and take corrective measures in accident-prone areas by fixing signboards and other precautionary measures.

He also directed the concerned officer from the Motor Vehicle Department to keep organising special road safety awareness camps and generate awareness among the masses about the road safety parameters and motivate them to follow the golden rules of traffic.

## Rajouri: DLC clears 72 Forest Rights Act Claims

RAJOURI, DECEMBER 03: District Level Committee on the Forest Rights Act today cleared 72 claims in Rajouri. The DLC meeting was held under the Chairmanship of the District Development Commissioner Rajouri, Rajesh K Shavan.

DFO Rajouri, Arshdeep Singh; DFO Nowshera, Neelima; ADC Nowshera, Sukhdev Singh Sambayal; ADC Kalakota, Krishan Lal; ADC Sunderbani, Vinod Kumar Behnal; ADC Koteranka, Surinder Mohan Sharma; CPO, Mohammad Khurshid; SDM Thanamandi, besides other concerned officers attended the meeting. After a threadbare discussion and scrutiny of all the claims put up in the meeting, the committee settled 72 cases of FRA benefiting over 629 families and 2788 souls.

It is worth mentioning here that the DLC Rajouri has settled 846 cases till date under FRA and 3959 families and 19438 souls have been benefited. Discussing the progress concerning the identification of the bridge paths within the forest boundaries, the DC sought a detailed report from the concerned officers about the number of bridge paths identified so far in their respective jurisdictions who in turn briefed about the same.

All ADCs, SDM have been directed to submit the list of the identified bridge paths to the DFOs for further course of action at their end so that these community assets within forest boundaries can be covered under the Forest Right Act.

## Juhi seeks on spot, speedy disposal of public grievances

UDHAMPUR, DECEMBER 03: Juhi Pathania, Vice Chairperson, District Development Council Udhampur today stressed upon the officers to come with latest and updated information about the public issues and ensure that the grievances of the people are sorted on the spot.

Speaking at the Block Divas meeting in Block Khoon of district Udhampur, she also appealed to the PRIs as well as the people to give in advance a brief resume of their respective grievances and issues which they are supposed to raise in the block divas.

The grievances of the common people included provision of erecting poles and laying of electricity lines to all those people who have been issued connections under Saubhagya. They also sought up-gradation of Dhar road to Sortha road, Banu to Bilaspur road, Sundla to Laa and Dhar road to Dager road.

The people also called for provision of drinking water supply in the villages of Choremotto, Babey and Panjian and others which are suffering due to shortage of water supply. They also asked for provision of staff in GHSS Garh Samna Banj. The Vice Chairperson expressed anguish over delay in completion of girls hostel at G.S Banj and directed the PWD department to complete the project at the earliest.

Juhi Pathania further sought immediate installation of transformers at Swalta, Tajor and Bainsar (SC Basti Khoon). She also asked the PDD authorities to install the transformers which are already sanctioned under PMDP.

Sarpanches and Panches of the area complained against some departments/officials for being unresponsive to public issues projected at Block Divas meetings.



## COVID-19 hits Junior Hockey WC, one person tests positive

Bhubaneswar, Dec 3 (PTI) COVID-19 hit the ongoing FIH Junior Hockey World Cup here after an incident-free week with one positive case being reported on Friday.

Despite being held inside a bio-bubble and all media persons covering the event subjected to RT-PCR tests every 48 hours, one person, who has been accessing the media centre at the Kalinga Stadium, tested positive in RT-PCR test conducted on Thursday.

According to a member of the local organising committee, the person who tested positive is a social media team member of Department of Sports and Youth Services (DSYS), Odisha government.

The development created a sort of panic among the organisers, who made it mandatory for the journalists covering the event to undergo RT-PCR test on Friday, failing which they would be barred from entering the media centre.

"RT-PCR test is mandatory for all today who want to access the media centre and cover the rest of the tournament. It is being conducted every 48 hours but has been made compulsory after a member of DSYS social media team tested positive," the local official said.

"He has been accessing the media centre daily and hence contact tracing is on and today's test is mandatory for all those who have been using the media centre."

The showpiece junior tournament, which started on November 25, had remained incident-free till Friday.

day's case.

While the Junior World Cup is being held inside a bubble without any spectators, media persons have been allowed to attend the event under strict COVID-19 safety protocols.

Despite being held behind closed doors, all matches involving India have seen crowd turning up to watch them. Around 3,000 spectators attended the home team's quarterfinal win against Belgium on Wednesday.

"...audience mostly are the sports hostel students or staff or coaches etc. Some would have come with families. Some families are also staying in the stadium campus itself. There are at least 70-90 family members of Indian team players," State Information Officer Sujit Ranjan Swain said in a statement while explaining crowd turning up during India matches.

"Some Hockey India delegates with families, some sponsors, some former hockey players and their families are also there. DSYS accredited card holders involved in organising the event are more than 700," he added.

The pandemic had affected the Junior World Cup even before it began with Australia, New Zealand and England pulling out of the tournament due to different COVID-related reasons.

Defending champions India play six-time winners Germany, while Argentina are up against France in the semifinals to be played later on Friday.

The tournament ends on Sunday.

## BCCI AGM likely to discuss fate of India's tour to South Africa

Kolkata, Dec 3 (PTI) The fate of India's upcoming tour of South Africa amid the trepidation triggered by new COVID-19 variant Omicron will be addressed when the BCCI holds its 90th Annual General Meeting here on Saturday to discuss a host of other issues as well.

In BCCI's 24 point agenda, point (T) pertains to "Update on Future Tours Programme" and under this provision the discussion can happen.

The emergence of Omicron, which is said to spread faster than the earlier Delta variant, in multiple countries including India has triggered widespread alarm all over the world.

The variant was detected and flagged to the world by South Africa and as things stand now, there have been multiple hospitalisations in the Gauteng province, where Johannesburg, the venue of the first two Tests beginning December 17, is located.

Team India are slated to leave for Johannesburg early on December 9 but as of now, there's lack of clarity on whether the tour is on, shelved or curtailed.

India are slated for a full tour comprising three Tests, three ODIs and four T20Is.

Although the series is

not part of the meeting's official agenda, it can be brought up during the Future Tours Program discussion.

During their last tour to England in September, India, leading 2-1 going into the final Test in Old Trafford, could not field a side following a COVID outbreak inside the team bubble and the match had to be rescheduled to July 2022.

Taking that into account, the Board members would certainly deliberate long on the issue which has now emerged as the priority with less than a week left for the team's departure.

At present, the India A team is in South Africa and the Board is still continuing with that assignment.

Skipper Virat Kohli, who is due for his milestone 100th Test in Cape Town, sought further clarity on the tour on the eve of the second and final Test against New Zealand in Mumbai on Thursday.

"...you want to have clarity and you want to be in a situation where you know exactly what is going on. We have to be realistic as well. We cannot just ignore the things that potentially could put you in a confusing place. And no one wants to be there," he had said.

## CLUBS WANT FIFA TALKS OVER HEALTH RISKS OF JANUARY CALL-UPS

Geneva, Dec 3 (AP) The group representing Europe's top soccer clubs expressed "deep concerns" about the health risks to players traveling worldwide in January for national team games like at the African Cup of Nations.

The European Club Association's executive board met in Paris and cited "the worsening public health situation" as the omicron variant of the coronavirus spreads. The group called for talks with FIFA, which manages the calendar for international soccer games and for the release of players.

Before the pandemic, there were no national team games scheduled in January 2022.

But four of soccer's six continents are now playing catch up with postponed tournaments and World Cup qualifying matches.

The 24-nation African Cup will held be from Jan. 9-Feb. 6 in Cameroon after a one-year postponement. Dozens more players based in Europe will also head to North America, South America and Asia for World Cup qualifiers in a new Jan. 24-Feb. 2 window FIFA created to help get games played.

Those make-up dates arrive amid an aggressive new variant of COVID-19 that clubs fear could be brought back by their players.

Tension over virus protocols has seen

some European clubs previously refuse to release South American players, and a marquee Brazil-Argentina game became a fiasco within minutes in September when health officials entered the field to remove players.

The ECA said its board will "engage urgently with FIFA to ensure all necessary precautions are in place to protect players and club interests as the health situation continues to deteriorate in an alarming manner."

The group aims for constructive talks with FIFA at the same times as its more than 240 members are fighting against the world body's push to win approval for a biennial

men's World Cup.

Opponents of the plan were joined Thursday by European lawmakers from 47 nations in a report on sports published by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, known as PACE.

"It considers that such a change would have disastrous consequences for European football," the lawmakers said in a document that will be debated in January.

Among other sport's governance issues raised in the PACE report were ensuring host nations of major sports events respect human rights and ensure gender equality.

## UN urges truce during winter Olympics in Beijing

United Nations, Dec 3 (AP) The UN General Assembly has urged all nations to observe a truce during the Beijing Winter Olympics starting in February, saying a halt to conflicts during one of the world's premiere sporting events can be a tool to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation.

A resolution adopted by consensus by the 193-nation world body on Wednesday recalled the ancient Greek tradition of ekecheiria, calling for an Olympic Truce, to encourage a peaceful environment and ensure safe passage and participation of athletes in the games, thereby mobilising the youth of the world to the cause of peace.

The resolution urges members states to observe the Olympic Truce, individually and collectively from the week before the start of the 24th winter Olympic games in Beijing until the week after the Paralympics. The Olympics run from Feb 4-20 next year followed by the Paralympics from March 4-13.

The assembly resolution underlined the importance of cooperation



among UN member states in implementing the values of the Olympic truce around the world and emphasised the importance of work promoting this by the International Olympic Committee, International Paralympic Committee and the United Nations.

The General Assembly revived such calls for an Olympic Truce in 1993 after an appeal from the International Olympic Committee allowed athletes of war-torn Yugoslavia, which was on

the brink of breaking up, to participate in the 1992 Barcelona summer games.

General Assembly President Abdullah Shahid told the assembly before the resolution's adoption that sport brings together people of every religion, race, ethnicity, and political background to celebrate humanity's athletic prowess and potential.

It diverts energies from hostility and conflict towards friendly competition (and) it promotes an active

lifestyle and supports our mental and physical well-being, he said. It can instill the spirit of camaraderie, support quality education, and relieve the psychological stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has taken a big toll on our collective psyche and left us so weary.

Shahid said the pandemic has taught the world that all of humanity shares a common destiny and urged people everywhere to acknowledge their obligations to others and to the planet, and to reflect on the pointlessness of conflict and aspire for peace.

China's UN Ambassador Zhang Jun introduced the resolution, saying it had 173 co-sponsors and sends a powerful message of unity and cooperation to overcome the pandemic.

He said the government is making every effort to ensure the health and safety of all athletes and participants at the Olympics and Paralympics.

He said China is promoting the truce ideal in primary and secondary schools nationwide, while working to make the games as clean and pure as ice and snow. (AP)

## World Tour Finals: Srikanth loses to Lee, bows out of tournament

Bali, Dec 3 (PTI) India's Kidambi Srikanth bowed out of the season-ending BWF World Tour Finals after losing to second seeded Malaysian Lee Zii Jia in straight games in his third and final group B match here on Friday.

The former world no. 1 Indian was no match for Lee, the reigning All England champion, going down 19-21 14-21 in 37 minutes to end his campaign.

It was Srikanth's second loss to the world no. 8 Malaysian, who had defeated the Indian at Hyllo Open in straight games.

Srikanth trailed 0-3 at the start but made his way to a slim 9-8 lead at one stage. An alert Lee, however, ensured a two-point advantage at the interval.

A six-point burst helped the Indian to again grab a 17-15 lead but he let it slip as Lee pocketed the opening game.

Srikanth made a good start in the second game, moving to 7-3 advantage but Lee once again turned the tables, jumping to 13-9 and kept his nose ahead to eventually shut the doors on the Indian.

