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BHUBANESWAR, WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 6, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹4



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BJP IN HUDDLE TO PICK CMS

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After securing a decisive mandate in the Hindi heartland States of Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh, the BJP high command is currently in a huddle to name the Chief Ministers (CM). It has been three days since the results of the Assembly polls were declared on Sunday. Party sources said several rounds of meetings, involving top leaders, including BJP President JP Nadda, have taken place in the last two days to finalise the candidates for the key positions. The party, despite having prominent leaders like multiple-time incumbent Chief Ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan in MP, Vasundhara Raje Scindia in Rajasthan, and Raman Singh in Chhattisgarh in the electoral fray, did not go to the polls with a specific chief ministerial candidate. While there has been no word from senior party leaders on the likely chief ministerial picks, names will be decided keeping in mind the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. Interestingly, party sources have revealed that all three winning States may have Deputy Chief Ministers, following the model the BJP has implemented in Uttar Pradesh under the leadership of Yogi Adityanath. BJP sources said the central



leadership will soon be appointing observers to oversee meetings of newly elected MLAs of the party in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan where they will elect their leaders. "Party will definitely keep in mind the major Lok Sabha elections within six months," party sources said. In Rajasthan, two-time Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Mahant Baba Balak

Nath, Rajsamand MP Diya Kumari, and Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat are the top four contenders for the top post in Rajasthan. Although Vasundhara remains the front runner, at least until the Lok Sabha polls. Vasundhara is trying to impress the Central leadership and holding meetings with her loyalists since Sunday when the result were declared. On the other

hand Shivraj Singh Chouhan in MP and Raman Singh in Chhattisgarh have maintained a low profile and have left the issue with Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. Sources from Vasundhara camp claimed that nearly 50 MLAs have met her at her residence since then. She has been the Chief Minister of Rajasthan twice from 2003 to 2008 and from 2013 to 2018.

While she was the chief ministerial face in earlier elections, the party decided to go to polls without projecting any leader for the post and Modi leading the campaign. BJP Sources said the party is not very keen on Vasundhara having a third tenure as the Chief Minister. The party's in-charge for Rajasthan, Arun Singh, said the decision of the party's

parliamentary board about the Chief Minister's post will be acceptable to all, even as newly elected MLAs continued to visit Baba Balak Nath. The Lok Sabha MP from Alwar is the head of the Baba Mastnath Math in Rohtak. He was the BJP's candidate for Assembly elections from the Tijara Assembly constituency. Known as 'Rajasthan ka Yogi' Balak Nath is the eighth 'mahant' (chief priest in a monastery) of Baba Mast Nath Math. Another name that can be considered for the top job in Rajasthan is that of Gayatri Devi's granddaughter and Rajsamand MP Diya Kumari. Previously, she was an MP from Sawai Madhopur. She is known for social work and was initially considered as an outsider in Sawai Madhopur. In Madhya Pradesh among the probable names for the CM post being tossed around are incumbent favourite Chouhan, Kailash Vijayvargiya and Jyotiraditya Scindia. In a video message on Tuesday, Chouhan said he had not been a contender for the CM's post in the past, nor was he one now. "As a party worker, I have always carried out whatever work the BJP assigned me to the best of my ability, with dedication and honesty," Chouhan said in a video statement posted on his social media account.

Heavy rains in State till Dec 7



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as the landfall process of severe cyclonic storm Michaung started in Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday noon, several parts of Odisha also experienced rainfall activities under its influence. The IMD Regional Office here on Tuesday predicted that several districts of Odisha are likely to experience heavy rainfall activities in the next 24 hours. The IMD said light to moderate rain or thundershower is very likely to occur at most places over the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Kandhamal and Nabarangpur on Wednesday. Issuing an Orange warning, the weather office said heavy

to very heavy rainfall (7 to 20cm) is very likely to occur in the districts of Malkangiri, Koraput and Rayagada. Heavy rainfall (7 to 11cm) very likely to occur in the districts of Gajapati, Ganjam, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, and Kandhamal, the IMD said issuing a Yellow warning. On Thursday, light to moderate rain/thundershower is very likely to occur in the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Kandhamal and Nabarangpur. Heavy rainfall (7 to 11cm) is very likely to occur in the districts of Ganjam, Gajapati, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri and Rayagada, the IMD said issuing a Yellow warning.

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Shri Naveen Patnaik
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha

6th December 2023 || 5PM
Convention Centre
Lokaseva Bhavan, Bhubaneswar

Tirtol MLA's marriage application rejected

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Amid the ongoing feud between Tirtol BJD MLA Bijaya Shankar Das and his rumoured girlfriend Somalika Dash, the former received a jolt on Tuesday as his application for marriage registration with another woman was rejected.

The Cuttack district Sub-Registrar office rejected the application submitted by the MLA on the ground of furnishing 'inaccurate informa-



tion' regarding himself and his prospective bride. Earlier, Somalika had lodged a complaint at the Sub-Regis-

trar office objecting to the application accusing Bijaya Shankar of producing wrong credentials for the registration of marriage. Later, she moved the Orissa High Court seeking a stay on the marriage registration applied by Bijaya Shankar with another woman.

According to reports, Bijaya Shankar had submitted an application on September 21, 2023 for registration of marriage with one Pratyusha Nanda, a resident of Cuttack city, at the Sub-Registrar of-

fice, Cuttack.

Somalika had earlier alleged that the MLA did not turn up for marriage at a court in Jagatsinghpur even as the two had applied for marriage registration at the office of the Sub-Registrar in the district. She also accused him of running a sex racket.

She alleged that the MLA engaged innocent girls in the illegal activity. The money collected through the sex racket was used by the MLA for poll-related expenses.

Detection, registration of DA cases

Odisha Vig tops among agencies in States

PNS ■ CUTTACK

In all major parameters like detection and registration of DA cases, criminal misconduct, chargesheets, conviction and dismissal/removal of public servants, the Odisha Vigilance is among the top performing States in the country.

As per recently published Crime in India-2022 by the National Crime Records Bu-

reau (NCRB), Odisha Vigilance was first among all the States in detection and registration of DA (Disproportionate Assets) cases in the country. Similarly, with registration of 84 corruption cases on the allegation of criminal misconduct (misappropriation of govt funds), the Odisha Vigilance was 3rd among all the States in the country.

In the year 2022, chargesheets were filed in 321

cases which was 3rd highest in the country. Further, in the 321 cases, Odisha Vigilance chargesheeted 551 accused persons for corruption, which was 3rd highest in the country.

Apart from this, in 2022, with 90 cases ending in conviction, Odisha Vigilance ranked 3rd in the country on this parameter. Also, on the parameter of number of persons convicted in the year, Odisha Vigilance was 2nd among all

anti-corruption agencies of the States, with 124 accused persons convicted for corruption related offences. Moreover, regarding the proactive action of dismissal/removal of public servants from Government service in 2022, Odisha ranked 3rd highest in the country. Further, for awarding major punishments to accused persons involved in Vigilance cases in the year 2022, Odisha was 2nd highest in the country.

Ramesh Panigrahi's new play unveiled

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Playwright Dr Ramesh Prasad Panigrahi has returned with a new play entitled as "Kabinka Nama Bedabyasa" that recounts the poignant story of how Amba, the princess of Kashi, went begging for justice from door to door in a male-dominated world far-away in that mythical age.

The wizard of the dramatic art, Panigrahi, has skilfully and intricately made his new creation appear more like a piece of document recording the shrill cries of women in our contemporary society which is yet wildly hegemonic.

The guests, all luminaries on the literary horizon of Odisha,

launching the latest work of the trend-setter at a gathering here, deplored that critics, unbeknownst of architecture of drama, are ridiculously at the helm of evaluating this magical art.

Coordinated by Debadutta Pati, the session hosted litterateurs Gourahari Das as chief guest, novelist Ajaya Swain as chief speaker and poet Kedar Mishra as guest of honour.

The performance of some scenes from the play by Dr Nibedita Jena and Prasanta enthralled the audience.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks by Barsha Publication director and host of the event Badal Mohanty.

BJP slams State govt over rise in crime graph

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJP on Tuesday came down heavily on the Odisha Government over the rise in crimes in the State as revealed by the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

BJP leader Irasis Acharya said the State recorded a nearly two-fold increase in 'violent crimes' in 2022. While almost 22,244 cases of 'violent crimes' were registered in 2021, the number rose to 40,566 in 2022.

"But the Chief Minister sitting inside his cozy house is being credited as India's number one CM," remarked Acharya.

Despite being way behind in setting up industries, Odisha



has topped in the industrial riots chart. What is even more concerning is the crime against senior citizens which has risen by 161% from 2021. Even the crimes against women, children and SC/ST have gone up in Odisha," he observed.

Acharya underlined the NCRB report pointing to the increase in cybercrimes

against women and in political violence. NCRB report says 224 political riots happened in Odisha in 2022, even more than Kerala which is in the second spot.

Raking up the Ambabhona police station vandalism case, Acharya said, "MLA and former Minister Sushant Singh along with over 100

goons of the BJD were involved in the case.

According to the NCRB report, three in every 1 lakh population have been murdered in the state in a year. As per the same report, the state has achieved the dubious distinction of registering the fourth highest cases of women abuse in the country.

Odisha's demographic transformation at 2036

Focus during Odisha Vikash Conclave from today

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Themed as 'Transformative Odisha@2036 Demography & Development,' the fourth edition of the biennial Odisha Vikash Conclave (OVC) will be held here from December 6 to 7 putting lens on Odisha's

demographic transformation and development till 2036. Critical areas identified for deliberation in the conclave include Aging Population, Migration and Urbanisation, School Education, Youth, Skill and Employment, Health and Nutrition.

The OVC 2023 will focus on deliberating on the emerging issues and concerns, responses and remedies and come up with a roadmap to

move forward through an effective collaborative framework.

As a run-up to the conclave, some in-depth discussions have also been planned with the civil societies, academia, corporate bodies and youth groups separately to take insights of various stakeholders. A discourse with selected representatives of panchayats and communities has been scheduled for December 6.

The conclave has partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the NITI Aayog.

The conclave will be an agenda-setting event leading to the development of an action plan with key deliverables. The programmatic action plan can guide the implementation of the strategies and initiatives for a transformative Odisha @2036.

VSS Nagar Parishad meets 5T Chairman

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Members of the Veer Surendra Sai Nagar Unnayan Parishad led by its general secretary Dillip Dashsharma on Tuesday met 5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman VK Pandian and discussed about the problems concerning VSS Nagar.

The delegation held discussions regarding construction of a road from Laxminagar in VSS Nagar to Nandankanan, stopping collection of fee for converting land from leasehold to freehold, shifting of the garbage dump from near the Sainik



School, turning of the overbridge being constructed in the area from 'L' shape to 'T' shape and opening of the Vani Vihar gate on the VSS

Nagar side. Local Corporator Prabhasini Mohanty, Durga Puja Committee president Artatran Dalei and vice-

president Nimain Charan Das, Maheshwar Biswal, Dharanidhar Rout and Chintamani Barik were among others present.

Youth found dead at lover's house in city

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A youth was found dead at his lover's house in the Sisupalgarh area on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar city on Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as Papuni Swain, a resident of the Nimapada area in Puri district.

According to reports, Papuni was working as a worker at the Public Health Engineering Organisation (PHEO). He was in a relationship with a woman from Sisupalgarh for the past few years. He visited her house very

often. However, the couple had a heated argument over some issue on Monday, following which the irate beau reportedly hanged himself with a dupatta inside the room.

On receiving information, the Dhauli police rushed to the spot on Tuesday morning and recovered the body and sent it to the Capital Hospital for postmortem.

Whether it was a case of murder or suicide, police were yet to reveal anything. Meanwhile, a scientific team reached the site to initiate a probe into the incident.

Dumping waste at public places BMC fines ECoR Community Centre

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh on the Managing Officer of the East Coast Railway (ECoR) Community Centre for dumping waste at public places.

Not only this, the Railway Staff Benefit Community Hall at Mancheswar, which dumped wet and dry wastes, has been sealed in the presence of BMC Commissioner Vijay Amruta Kulange.

On Monday morning, the commissioner made a surprise visit to Ward-9. During a visit to the community hall and market area in Mancheswar, he found wet, dry and plastic wastes scattered on the roadside. In particular, it was clear that the wet, dry and plastic wastes coming out of the community hall had been deliberately dumped on the roadside. Ten hours after the sealing, the Secretary of the Community Hall Managing Committee deposited Rs 1 lakh with the BMC. The BMC later removed the seal from the hall.

Pandian reviews Maka Mission

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman VK Pandian on Tuesday reviewed the implementation of the Mukhyamantri Maka Mission and also took stock of the problems faced by the betel and lemongrass farmers.

It was ascertained that the State's maize production has grown by 50%. Besides, the MSP for procurement of maize has increased. Till the end of November, 44,730 quintals of maize was procured by the FPOs.

A decision was taken to form more FPOs and involve

more private businessmen so that the maize farmers get good price.

It was also decided that ORMAS would help in primary processing and marketing of maize.

Notably, till the end of the current year, 15 FPOs would be formed, out of which 13 have been already formed. Four FPOs have been formed for women. The Maka Mission is being implemented in Nabarangpur, Koraput, Gajapati and Nuapada districts. Besides, the farmers, the Mission Shakti members are getting involved in the mission.

Workshop on low sex ratio in Odisha held

By State Health Dept, UNFPA

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Odisha, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), organised a State level consultative workshop on addressing low sex ratio at birth (SRB) in Odisha on Tuesday.

Some of the reasons commonly put forward to explain the low levels of SRB in Odisha are preference for sons, sex selective abortions, and female foeticides.

The objective of the workshop was to discuss the causes and consequences of the low SRB and develop a comprehensive action plan to improve the situation. The workshop also aimed to sensitize the district health officials and

build their capacities on strengthening the implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC and PNDT) Act, 1994, which prohibits sex selection and regulates the use of diagnostic techniques.

Around 100 participants, including the Additional District Public Health Officers (Family Welfare)-cum-District Nodal Officers, PC and PNDT and Assistant Managers-LAIS of all districts, health officers and concerned consultants, legal and medical experts, social scientists, members of civil societies and other stakeholders attended the workshop which was inaugurated by the Mission Director, NHM in presence of Director, Family Welfare Dr Bijaya Kumar Panigrahi and Head of Office, UNFPA, Odisha Md Nadeedm Noor.

States' poll results

Opp in Odisha sounds confident for 2024

SRIKANTA K TRIPATHY ■ BHUBANESWAR

While the landslide victory of BJP in the three Hindi heartland States of Chhattisgarh, MP and Rajasthan has soared the spirits of the State BJP here, the addition of yet another southern State, Telangana, after Karnataka in the Congress's kitty in the run up to the 2024 general elections too has kept the party unit happy and optimistic in Odisha despite it being in a moribund state.

Having been long

marginalised in the State by the mighty BJD under the emphatic leadership of CM Naveen Patnaik who has been repeatedly winning elections for the last 23 years, the opposition BJP and Congress, though have different takes on the impact of the recent Assembly election results of the 5 States on the general elections due in a few months from now, have, somehow, been looking confident of performing well in the Assembly election in Odisha, which will be held simultaneously with the Parliamentary polls. While the BJP

has been celebrating the moments as a prelude to the 2024 countdown, the Congress was sure of a turnaround in its fortunes.

BJP national vice-president Bajjayant Panda said, "Yesterday it was Chhattisgarh, next year it is Odisha. Efforts are being made to create an atmosphere that the present Government in Odisha is undefeatable and the Government here is powerful with money, muscle power and officer power. But nothing will work." The former Kendrapada MP, Panda along with State

BJP president Manmohan Samal, was addressing a rally in Kendrapada.

Similarly, BJP leader Pradeep Purohit brought serious allegations against the BJD. Purohit alleged that the BJD spent crores of money in Chhattisgarh to prevent BJP's victory. He further alleged that the BJD leaders in western Odisha also tried their best to woo people to vote against the BJP during the Assembly election in the neighbouring State.

Addressing a Press conference at the party headquarters here, BJP president Samal said

"The poll results recently announced in the four States have given a new turn to politics in the country. Similarly, the politics in Odisha will take a 'U' turn after the results of the 2024 General Elections are out. Benefits of 'Modi Guarantee' are going to be reflected in the State."

Samal took a swipe at the BJD Government by raising issues of corruption, harassment against women, depleting the State exchequer for promoting a successor in the BJD, not opening the Ratna Bhandar and appeasement poli-

tics. Congress, however, was not in mood to concede that the results of the States will decide the fate of the simultaneous elections in 2024. PCC president Sarat Pattanayak dug into history and showed instances as to how Congress did well in general elections at different times even after losing State elections preceding immediately.

On the contrary, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for BJP's stupendous feat on Tuesday over phone.

AM/NS India steel unit Gram Sabhas in 3 K'pada GPs from Dec 11 to 13

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

The State Revenue and Disaster Management Department has served notices to organise gram sabha/ public grievance from December 11 to 13 in different gram panchayats for the proposed AM/NS India's 24 MTPA integrated steel plant in Mahakalapada block of Kendrapada district. It has been asked to the locals to participate and provide their opinions for the proposed plant.

The Deputy Collector of Special Land Acquisition Cell

has served the notices to the sarpanches of three gram-panchayats located in the proposed steel plant area such as Ramnagar GP, Kharanashi GP and Batighar GP where Gram Sabhas will be held on December 11, 12 and 13, respectively.

The Impact Assessment Draft Report prepared by the Social Action for Rural Development (SARD) in this regard will be discussed in the meetings. The affected villages have been identified as Kharanashi, Nipania, Badatubi, Barakolikhol, Banabiharipur and Ramnagar under Mahakalapada block. The pro-

posed land is going to be acquired from the six villages.

District Collector Amrit Rurutaj said an approximately 1,281.3480 acres of private land will be acquired for the development of the AM/NS India's steel plant out of a total of 3,343.965 acres, including K-form and encroachment land. As many as 9,765 persons will be affected. The AM/NS India has moved for the diversion of forest land for the proposed steel plant before the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. The green signal in this regard is yet to come.

Flyovers, underpasses delayed Farmers' Satyagraha at Humma NH soon

KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA ■ BRAHMAPUR

The protest for early completion of two crucial over bridges and NH underpass roads that were abandoned for more than a year at Humma NH will be intensified. Farmers leader Ranka Pradhan and former Ganjam NAC Chairperson Lakshmi Chandra Pradhan have warned the National Highway Authorities (NHAI) that the farmers would soon launch a peaceful 'Satyagraha' on NH-16 at Humma, if there is further delay to complete the works at Humma and Subulia, besides

a service road from Humma to Khallikote Ghat.

Notably, the farmer leaders have submitted a memorandum to Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik stating that the work of both the over bridges have been left incomplete for the last about one year. As a result, due to narrow passage of a temporary service road, the college and school going students of the nearby villages are facing untold sufferings. Besides, the local farmers are facing a great deal of hardships while moving to their fields lo-

cated on the other side of the NH with their farming tools. According to some local leaders, the road congestion at both the under-construction places is causing some minor and major accidents almost daily.

That apart, there are no appropriate safety signals or traffic managing personnel at the spot compounding the woes of the travellers. The service road from Humma to Khallikote Ghat is also incomplete, the memorandum added. The memorandum was signed by hundreds of local people and PRI representatives, sources said.

Rengali dam-hit hold Jal Satyagraha



Demand proper rehab

PNS ■ PALLAHARA

Under the leadership of Dr Santosh Dehury, president of the association of the Rengali dam-hit people of Pallahara, Deogarh, and Talcher, a Jal Satyagraha was launched on December 1 in the Rengali reservoir near Mahalsarua village here.

The affected people have been demanding due compensation, besides various amenities in their new settlements since 1992 before the State Government, but in vain.

"When Naveen Government first was formed, it had assured to fulfil the demands of the affected people, but there is no response till now," alleged BJP leader Lingaraj Das and others who joined the agitation to show solidarity with the agitators.

Total 1,263 families of Pallahara, Deogarh and Talcher have been affected due to the dam in 1978. These families, however, have been suffering a lot, deprived of their dues and basic amenities in the area they settled.

The strike will continue till the demands are fulfilled, said Dr Dehury.

Nepal Karate meet 5 medals, including 2 gold, for Odisha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha's contestants achieved significant success at the 7th South Asian Karate Championship held in Nepal. A total of five contestants from Odisha participated in the tournament.

Odisha won total five medals which included two gold, two silver and one bronze. On the first day, Surmita and Suman Shekhar won gold in the under-21 age group, in Kata and Kumite category while on the second day, Odisha won three more medals.

The women's team of Valena Valentina and Surmita

Sinha won the silver medal. In women's 50 kg, in fighting Loma won the silver medal, one more competitor Subhakar Biswal won a bronze medal in the 76+ kg fighting.

All the expenses of the players were borne by Odisha Sports and Youth Affairs Department. The State Karate Association has congratulated the players for their success. Apart from these achievements Indian Karate is also honoured, when mentor of Indian karate Hanshi Bharat Sharma was elected as president of South Asian Karate Association during the Nepal championship.

At Soro station Man's legs severed after falling off train

PNS ■ BALESWAR

In a tragic incident, a man lost both his legs as he slipped off a train in the Soro railway station. According to reports, the legs of the victim were cut off in front of his wife.

According to reports, Manoj Nayak (40) and his wife, residents of Jaidevkasba of Sadar area who work as stonemasons in Jajpur district, had boarded a train on Monday evening to return to their native place on the occasion of Prathamastami. They were supposed to get down at

Baleswar. But mistakenly Manoj got down at Soro station as he could not identify the station. Later, when he realised that he had got down at the wrong station, he wanted to get back into the train but he fell off and his legs went right under the train wheels. His legs were severed due to the mishap. Soon, the onlookers informed the police and the Fire Department. He was rescued and rushed to the nearest Soro CHC and subsequently, shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack, as his condition deteriorated.

Rs 220-cr narcotic seizure Cocaine samples to be sent to NFSL for tests

PNS ■ PARADIP

Samples of the cocaine worth Rs 220 crore seized from a foreign cargo ship anchored at Paradip port would be sent to the National Forensic Science Laboratory (NFSL) to ascertain the exact nature and chemical composition of the narcotics substance.

The seized contraband samples would be sent to a government laboratory in Kolkata, Hyderabad, or New

Delhi for test. The final decision in this connection would be taken after the court's permission.

The process for it has already begun. Customs officials are claiming to have unearthed important information after questioning the crew members of the ship.

As per the information received by customs officials, the ship was anchored at Jebel Ali port in Saudi Arabia on October 11, before its departure

from Indonesia port. New crew members took charge of the ship before it departed from Indonesia.

Customs officials are currently undertaking the investigation to know from where more than 20 kg of the narcotic drug was smuggled in the ship. MV Debi ship has never entered India earlier. Under the circumstances, the seizure of the contraband has multiplied the problems for the ship.

As many as 21 crew mem-

bers of the ship including the captain are under the scanner of the customs department and they are currently being questioned about the seized contraband. The process to question the owner of the ship from Indonesia has also been initiated.

Notably, customs officials had seized more than 20 kg of cocaine worth Rs 220 crore from a cargo ship anchored at the Paradip Port on Thursday night.

'Nua O' drive Successful students get certs in Ganjam College



PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Under the Integrated Youth Development Programme (IYDP) or Nua O was held at Ganjam College here on Thursday in which meritorious students who participated in various sports and cultural activities and got ranks were felicitated and awarded certificates. A brief ceremonial meeting was held in which Principal Dr Simanchal Bhola presided.

Addressing the students as

chief guest, former Deputy Speaker of Assembly Rama Chandra Panda recalled the contributions of the residents and citizens of Ganjam in establishing the college. Panda urged the students to be fair, fearless and speak truth to cherish the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi to sustain democracy.

Among others, Chairperson of Ganjam NAC Pratiba Padhi; former Principal of Ganjam College Dr Prabin Nanda and DIPRO Rabinarayan Behera also spoke.

Sudakshya: Another Ganjam girl gets job

Scheme a catalyst of transformation for girls under Skilled-in-Odisha drive

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

In a remarkable journey of empowerment of girl students under the Sudakshya scheme, Nilendri Das, daughter of Kalia Das, a farmer from Beguniapada, Ganjam, has been able to realise her dreams

A trainee in Electrician trade from the Government ITI, Brahmapur, she has secured a coveted position in the vertical transportation sector at Johnson Lifts, Odanai, Tamilnadu. Her elder sister Sonali also had excelled in the Turner trade in 2021 from the ITI.



Under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the inclusion of Sudakshya in polytechnics this year has further bolstered the encouragement for girl students in Odisha. The drive has proven instrumental in transforming the landscape, nurturing inclusivity for 'Skilled-In-Odisha', with a direct impact on girls' enrolment exceeding 30% both in Government ITIs and Polytechnics.

'Yuva Sangam' Initiative IIM S'pur's Kerala delegates tour BBSR

Union Min Pradhan interact with them

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

IIM Sambalpur organised a 3-day visit to Bhubaneswar for the delegates from Kerala as a part of the 'Yuva Sangam' initiative under the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' programme by the Union Ministry of Education. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan interacted with the delegates in Bhubaneswar. The



event was also graced by Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs V Muralaeeharan and Director of IIM Sambalpur Mahadeo Jaiswal.

Pradhan emphasized the

core objectives of the Yuva Sangam initiative and said the tour would offer a new and enriching experience for the Kerala delegation, fostering the exchange of socio-cultural heritage between students from both States.

Prof Jaiswal highlighted the similarities between Kerala and Odisha in terms of culture, heritage and ethos.

The members of the delegation explored various prominent sites, including the Governor's House, Puri Jagannath temple, Sun Temple of Konark, Khandagiri and Udayagiri caves and IIT Bhubaneswar. They also visited Krushi Bhavan and learned about the Millet Mission of Odisha. It's noteworthy that 46 students from Odisha will shortly visit Kerala as a part of the Yuva Sangam initiative.

Int'l talk on NEP 2020 ends at CUO

Educators, scholars, experts join

PNS ■ KORAPUT

A two-day international seminar on the topic 'Transforming Indian Tradition and Ethos through NEP-2020: Multilingual and Multi-Disciplinary Culture of Education' concluded on December 3 at the main campus of the Central University of Odisha (CUO). Organised by the De-

partment of Education in collaboration with Akhil Bhartiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasangh, the event brought together educators, scholars, and experts to discuss the profound impact of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on India's cultural and educational landscape.

CUO VC Prof Chakradhar Tripathi presided over the valedictory ceremony. He emphasized the significance of the Indian traditional system as the essence of true education and underscored the pivotal



role of teacher education in implementing NEP 2020.

Distinguished panellists shared their insights. Prof Srimani Chakravarti from the University of St Francis discussed the relevance of culturally relevant vocabulary in the Indian knowledge system.

Principal of RIE (NCERT) Prof PC Agarwal highlighted the importance of school education.

Faisal Karimi, an academician from Stanford University, addressed the threats to education under Taliban rule in Afghanistan, expressing con-

cern for the impact on girls and women. Prof Adam Paul Patteti from MANUU delved into the digitization of the mind and the humanization of the heart in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI), stressing the importance of soft skills.

Prof Prasanta Kumar Acharya, HOD of the Department of Education at Rajiv Gandhi Central University, highlighted the significance of Vedanta, Yoga, Nyay, Mimamsa, Ayurveda, and other facets of Indian Philoso-

phy in propagating Bharatiya Gyan Parampara.

Prof Satyanarayan Acharya from the National Sanskrit University called for more research on Indian culture and philosophy. Prof PC Pattnaik, Rajiv Gandhi Chair for Tribal Studies at CUO and former Senior Professor at the University of Delhi, discussed linguistic and cultural diversity. Dr Kalyani Sahu, Principal of NGBT College, highlighted festivals as a culturally unifying force and a symbol of identity.

INBRIEF

CM SANCTIONS RS 65 CR FOR TUSURA AIRSTRIP

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has approved an improvement proposal for modernisation of the Tusura Airstrip in Balangir. He also sanctioned Rs 65 crore for the project. Notably, ST and Nabin Odisha Chairman VK Pandian had visited Balangir on August 5 and 6 and received many proposals from people including improvement of the Tusura Airstrip. He had directed district Collector for preparation of a detailed project report.

BANDH HELD DEMANDING DIST STATUS TO KANTABANJI

Balangir: The Zilla Sangharsh Samiti on Tuesday observing a 12-hour bandh in Kantabanji demanding district status for the region. Shops, other business establishments, offices and educational institutions remained closed in view of the bandh.



However, vehicular movement was unaffected. Samiti members staged a demonstration at Indira Chhak here holding banners. More than 20 organisations extended support to the bandh call. The agitators decided to send a memorandum to the Chief Minister regarding their demand.

12 INJURED AS PICNIC VAN OVERTURNS IN BALANGIR

Balangir: At least 12 persons were critically injured when a picnic van carrying them overturned in Titilagarh in Balangir district on Tuesday. Around 20-25 persons were going for a picnic from Haladi village in Muribahal to Gurjmundia in Kalahandi district when the driver lost control and the vehicle overturned at the Patarakela railway crossing near Titilagarh. Locals helped the injured victims, most of whom were children and women, and took them to the Titilagarh hospital for preliminary treatment. As some of the victims' conditions got worse, doctors referred them to the Bhima Bhoi Medical College Hospital, Balangir.

YUVA ODISHA NAVIN ODISHA FEST HELD AT KEONJHAR

Keonjhar: The Yuva Odisha Navin Odisha celebration which kicked off since November 16 at the Dharanidhar University here had its valedictory function on Monday. The winners of various categories in sports and games along with painting



and art competition were awarded prizes. Patna MLA Jagannath Naik was chief guest while social worker Dharitri Rout, Prof Pratap Mohanty, VC, Baroda Prasanna Das, Ashis Chakraborty, Prasant Kar, RO, SPCB, Bijay Behera and Dr Sudha Das attended as guests. A university theme song composed by Rajendra Behera was also released.

FOUR DACOITS NABBED IN BALANGA

Balanga: Police arrested four miscreants at Bayabar Chhak during night patrolling on Monday while they were planning to commit a dacoity in the Balanga police station area. One



miscreant managed to flee from the spot. Police seized two live bombs, sharp swords, an iron rod and other weapons from the miscreants. Balanga PS OIC Dibyaranjan Panda, ASI Suprava Sahoo and other staffs were performing patrolling when they came to know about the five dacoits. Seeing police, the criminals tried to flee, but police managed to nab them all except one. The four arrestees were court-forwarded at Nimapara.

CLOSE SHAVE FOR 6 FISHERMEN IN DEEP SEA

Kendrapada: Six fishermen, who were the crew members of Ramnagar-based mechanised fishing boat Maa Ramchandi-1 and catching fish within 22 km from Madali mouth in the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, had a close shave from taking watery grave on Monday night. Some other fishing boats came to their rescue while they were swimming at the sea to save their lives with plastic jarkins and buoys after their boat capsized due to mechanical snags and water seeped into the boat.

WB MAN ARRESTED IN TRUCK THEFT CASE IN CHHATRAPUR

Chhatrapur: One Asthakim Seikh of West Bengal was arrested by Chamakhandi-Chhatrapur police in a truck robbery case on Monday. The accused has been working as a hired worker in house construction sites. A truck of the Odisha Food Cor-



poration had been parked near Jagannathpur railway gate when Seikha tried to steal it from there. But truck owner Milan Patnaik could know the movement of the truck through GPS tracking. Some people followed the truck after getting information from the owner and stopped it at Chhatrapur. Police seized the vehicle and arrested Seikh.

Modi takes a swipe at critics after poll win

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday took a swipe at critics, saying they may remain happy with their arrogance, lies, pessimism and ignorance but people should be beware of their divisive agenda as an old habit of 70 years cannot go away so easily. He was reacting to a social media post captioned “Meltdown-e-Azam” (great meltdown) of a news clip that cited “excuses” and alleged attempts by an “ecosystem” to stoke regional divide and insult voters in Hindi speaking states after the BJP swept to power in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, brushing aside the challenge from the Congress. Congress drew some consolation by winning the assembly poll in Telangana. “May they be happy with their arrogance, lies, pessimism and ignorance. But... Beware of their divisive agenda. An old habit of 70 years can't go away so easily. Also, such is the wis-



May they be happy with their arrogance, lies, pessimism and ignorance. But...

⚠️⚠️⚠️ Beware of their divisive agenda. An old habit of 70 years can't go away so easily. ⚠️⚠️⚠️

Also, such is the wisdom of the people that they have to be prepared for many more meltdowns ahead. 😊😊😊😊

dom of the people that they have to be prepared for many more meltdowns ahead,” the PM posted. His reply and the expression of unusual social media aggression in reaction to a post was also punctuated by several emojis, also not very common with his remarks on X. BJP leaders said the prime minister's post reflects the party turning up the heat in its social media outreach in the recent months. “This post of the prime minister is not out of character. It is

aggressive and taking the opposition ecosystem head on,” a leader said. He added this has been the case with the BJP's content on social media in general too for the last few months now. “Its campaign and reels have seen aggressive in tone and tenor.” Many Instagram reels have generated 1.5 million views and more, he added. Commenting on Modi's post, a leader likened it to “a technically sound batsman resorting to a slog sweep to hit the ball for a six”.

Opposition looking for excuses to hide shortcomings: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday hit back after Congress's Rajya Sabha member Digvijaya Singh and some other Opposition leaders questioned the reliability of electronic voting machine (EVM) and said the Opposition was looking for excuses to hide their shortcomings. Digvijaya raised the issue of reliability of EVMs on Tuesday following his party's defeat in the Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh Assembly polls. The former Madhya Pradesh chief minister claimed that any machine with a chip can be hacked and said he has opposed voting by EVMs since 2003. As the BJP emerged victorious in three Hindi heartland states -- Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh -- in the recent round of Assembly polls, several opposition leaders raised questions over electronic voting machines, even as some said they had faith in the EVMs. Union Rural Development Minister Giriraj Singh slammed the opposition and



said they blame EVMs whenever they fail to win elections. “There is nothing new. The opposition, whoever it may be, when they win, they are fine with the EVMs, but when they lose, they blame it on the EVMs,” he said. Another BJP leader, S P Singh Baghel, said, “With these EVMs, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) won elections in Delhi thrice and in Punjab once, the Samajwadi Party (SP) got an absolute majority (in Uttar Pradesh) in 2012, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) got an absolute majority (in Uttar Pradesh) in 2007 and the Congress won Telangana.” He used an idiom -- “Naach na jane angan tedha (a bad workman blames his tools)” -

- to explain the situation. Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) MP Chirag Paswan said the opposition is being repetitive. “There is nothing new, but if you are raising questions in three states, also question the Telangana victory. This is a done-to-death formula. It is repetitive. Why do you go for campaigning if you think the EVMs are manipulated? You do selective criticism in states where you have lost elections. You need to accept and understand your loss,” he said. Senior BJP leader Rajiv Pratap Rudy said EVMs have been around for a long time. “EVMs have been there for the last 18-19 years. They (opposition) do not raise

these questions when they win elections. Do they not trust people? I think after repeated defeats, it is ridiculous that the opposition still raises this,” he said. Actor and BJP MP Ravi Kishan said, “It was known that they would blame the EVMs. Their brains have stopped working. Their corruption and appeasement have been rejected by people, so they are saying such immature things,” he said. “The country has rejected the opposition. In the future, the BJP will win every election,” he asserted. Actor-turned-politician Dinesh Lal Yadav Nirahua said, “The opposition will keep crying over EVMs and (Prime Minister Narendra) Modiji will come back with 400 (Lok Sabha) seats next year.” Several opposition leaders said the doubts over the EVMs have been growing. Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Saugata Roy said there are concerns that should be addressed. “Our party has not taken a decision on this but there are, obviously, questions. Many opposition parties have raised the question that EVMs can be manipulated by telephone.

Also, an Israeli technology has come into question in this matter. The government has taken a pro-Israel stand in the recent conflict (between Israel and Hamas). This needs to be looked into thoroughly,” Roy said. “The results in several states were very surprising and led to the doubt about EVM functioning,” he added. BSP MP Danish Ali said he has always been against EVMs. “Questions on EVMs are being raised for long. It was questioned by the BJP's Lal Krishna Advani. BJP's Rajya Sabha MP G V L Narasimha Rao has written a book on it,” he said. “Even when I was elected as an MP, I had said I will continue protesting against EVMs. Winning or losing is another issue, but even developed countries have stopped using EVMs. People do not have faith. Why not use ballot paper?” he asked. Communist Party of India (CPI) MP Binoy Viswam said it is a serious matter to ponder over. “The confidence over EVMs is diminishing. More and more people are believing that EVMs are doing mischief in elections,” he said.

DMK MP calls Hindi heartland gaumutra States Senthilkumar apologises after his remark draws flak

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

DMK MP Dr S. Senthilkumar sparked a controversy on Tuesday in Lok Sabha by describing Hindi heartland States as “gaumutra States”, and said the BJP can win elections only there and not in South India. The comments few months after a DMK's ‘Sanatan Dharma’ row create ripples on social media however the major alliance partner Congress immediately said the party did not relate with the politics of DMK. Participating in a debate in the Lower House on two bills related to Jammu and Kashmir, Senthilkumar said people of this country should think that the power of the BJP is only winning elections “in the heartland states of Hindi and what we generally called as gaumutra states”.



Later in the evening, Speaker OM Birla ordered to expunct the word – gaumutra – from the records. “You (BJP) cannot come to South India. You see all the results of what happens in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka ... We are very strong over there,” said Senthilkumar, amid protests from BJP MPs. Senthilkumar is representing Dharmapuri constituency in Lok Sabha and a doctor by profession, specializing in

radiology. He went on to say, “We will not be surprised if you have an option of converting all these States into Union territories so that you can come into indirect power because you can never dream of setting foot over there and taking control of all the southern states.” BJP leaders hit back at the DMK and asked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi if he agreed with the insulting remarks of its INDIA bloc partner against the north Indians. The comments come in the backdrop of some referring to the recent assembly election results as a ‘North-South divide’ after the BJP trounced the Congress in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, and the Congress won in Telangana. “Congress belives in Sanatan Dharma and Gau Mata, we don't agree with DMK's state-

ments,” said Congress General Secretary and Rajya Sabha MP Rajiv Shukla. During the elections, the row over some DMK leaders' remarks against Sanatan Dharma had been latched on by the BJP to target the Congress. Earlier this year, Congress had wrested Karnataka from the BJP, while other southern states are ruled by non-BJP parties including Tamil Nadu where Congress ally DMK is in power. In Tamil Nadu, state BJP chief K Annamalai condemned the “insensitive” remarks of the MP, saying the level of the party's discourse is “sinking” like Chennai and the “arrogance” of DMK will be the prime reason for its downfall. “After calling our North Indian friends Pani Puri sellers, toilet constructors, etc., I.N.D.I. Alliance DMK MP, makes Gaumutra Jibes,” he

said on X. “Chennai is sinking due to the misgovernance of DMK & and so is their level of discourse on the floor of the Parliament,” Annamalai said, referring to the flood-like situation in the state capital. The BJP “highly condemns this insensitive remark,” he said. Annamalai said the DMK MP has possibly forgotten that the NDA Alliance is in power in Puducherry and was in power in Karnataka until recently. “The arrogance of DMK will be the prime reason for their downfall!” he posted. Later in the evening, Senthilkumar apologised on his controversial remark. “Commenting on the results of the five recent state assembly elections, I have used a word in an inappropriate way. Not using that term with any intent, I apologize for sending the wrong meaning across,” he posted in X.

Book Ministers making hate speeches against Sanatan Dharma: BJP MP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

BJP Rajya Sabha member BGVL Narasimha Rao on Tuesday charged some Tamil Nadu Ministers with making “hate” speeches against Sanatan Dharma and Hindu religion and asked the State Government to register a case against them. The Constitution allows every religion, every member and every sect to practice their faith and even propagate it, he said, and demanded the sacking of the state ministers for their objectionable remarks. Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the Upper House, Rao said that a minister in the Tamil Nadu government indulged in hate speech against Sanatan Dharma and the Hindu religion. “I quote what he said, ‘Sanatan Dharma is like malaria, and dengue, and so it must be



eradicated and not opposed,” the BJP member said without naming anyone. Another minister in the same state government has mentioned that the purpose of the formation of the INDIA alliance is “the eradication of Sanatana Dharma”, the BJP member alleged, and wondered whether they wanted to pursue “this kind of anti-India agenda”. Rao claimed that another minister in the Karnataka government, who is the son of the Congress President and Leader of the Opposition in Rajya

Sabha, had supported those comments. “This is the agenda of the INDIA alliance,” he said, adding that such statements constitute “hate speech”. According to the BJP MP, these statements are deliberate and malafide acts intended to outrage religious sentiments, and there was also an attempt to create public mischief. “Therefore I call upon the state government, Tamil Nadu, to on its own, register FIR against the same ministers who spoke against Sanatana Dharma and also dismiss these ministers from the state government because what they have, what they have publicly stated, is the violation of the oath they have taken under the Constitution,” he said. He said it was a matter of regret that there are ministers in the state government who are campaigning against Sanatan Dharma and calling for its eradication.

‘₹15,000 crore seized by ED going back to public sector banks’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday informed the Rajya Sabha the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has confiscated assets worth Rs 15,186.64 crore under the stringent prevention of money laundering law and almost all of these have been restituted to public sector banks. Replying to supplementary questions in the House, she said specific actions through various legal provisions are being taken against defaulters and as a result, “huge monies” are going back to the banks. Sitharaman informed the House that as of March 31, 2023, legal suits were filed for recovery against 13,978 loan accounts, action under the SARFAESI Act has been initiated in 11,483 cases, FIRs have been filed in 5,674 cases, and an aggregate amount of Rs 33,801 crore has been recovered. “As of December 1, 2023, assets amounting to Rs 15,186.64 crores under the PMLA have been confiscated by the ED out of which Rs 15,183.77 crores have been restituted to the Public Sector Banks,” she said. Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar asked the minister to explain the meaning “phone banking” which was mentioned in reply to a supplementary question. Explaining the meaning of the phrase, Sitharaman said ‘Phone Banking’ was the method through which “political interference (during UPA rule of 2004-2014) spoilt all our banks and drove them to a loss-making situation”. “‘Phone Banking’ was at that time when people would call the banks and say ‘so and so will come to seek a loan from your bank, please grant it’, meaning that there's no need to look at their eligibility, etc & that the loan must be granted,”



the minister said. She further said the heart of the problem was during the 10 years of UPA rule between 2004 and 2014 when calls were made to grant loans to people who were not worthy of getting a loan. “The burden fell on us to sort the Indian banks out with reforms. Prime Minister Narendra Modi sat with all of us, including my predecessor Arun Jaitley (former finance minister). We spent a lot of time understanding where the problem was and worked together with the RBI,” Sitharaman said. It must be looked at what contributed to the NPAs and made Indian banks actually have a twin balance-sheet problem which brought down the Indian economy to the ‘Fragile Five’, she added. Due to the measures taken by the Modi government, the minister said the Indian economy is the world's fastest-growing economy, registering a 7.6 per cent GDP growth rate in the last quarter. Sitharaman also informed the House the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank (now merged with Unity Small Finance Bank) has recovered Rs 104.02 crore with active cooperation and support from agencies. Assets amounting to Rs 692.89 crores have been confiscated under the provisions of the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018, she said. The finance ministry also

informed the House that over the last two financial years, the number of non-performing asset (NPA) accounts in the commercial banks has declined from 2.19 crore to 2.06 crore, showing a decrease of 6.2 per cent. Similarly, aggregate outstanding of such accounts (gross NPAs) has declined from Rs 7.41 lakh crore to 5.72 lakh crore during the same period, showing a decline of 22.9 per cent. Further, slippage ratio (fresh slippages of NPAs during the financial year as percentage of standard loans and advances at the beginning of the financial year) of banks has declined from 2.74 per cent (fresh slippages of Rs 2.86 lakh crore) in the financial year 2021-22 to 1.78 per cent (fresh slippages of Rs 2.13 lakh crore) in the financial year 2022-23. Net NPA ratio, Sitharaman said, has come down to 0.95 per cent in 2022-23 for all commercial banks from 5.94 per cent in 2017-18. In the case of state-owned banks, the net NPA has declined to 1.24 per cent from 5.94 per cent in 2017-18. Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad said banks have written off Rs 10.57 lakh crore during the last five financial years, of which Rs 5.52 lakh crore was in respect of loans pertaining to large industries, the government informed the Rajya Sabha. “As per RBI data, scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) have written off an aggregate loan amount of Rs 10.57 lakh crore during the last five financial years,” Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad said in reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha. The scheduled commercial banks have also recovered Rs 7.15 lakh crore of non-performing assets (NPAs) during the five-year period.

Tamil Nadu seeks ₹5,000 crore aid for flood ravaged Chennai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday saw an appeal for an interim central assistance of Rs 5,000 crores to provide relief to people of Tamil Nadu affected by heavy rains. Other issues like missing women, suicide by youth in coaching institutes and sale of millets through public distribution system also figured in the house. Seeking an interim assistance of Rs 5,000 crore for Tamil Nadu to rebuild infrastructure damaged by incessant rains in Chennai and some other districts, DMK leader T Siva said heavy rains due to severe Cyclone Michaung have submerged Chennai and other districts. At least nine people, including a child, were killed in the flooding and the havoc caused hours before the cyclone was due to make landfall. Cars were swept and airport operations shut down as the streets of Chennai got inundated.



“Roads have become rivers because of non-stop running waters and rivers have become like seas... All the water bodies are overflowing. Many tanks have been breached,” he said. Informing the Rajya Sabha that roads have been badly damaged due to the fury of nature, Siva said essential supplies have been hampered. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M

K Stalin and the entire Cabinet, municipal corporation officials, fire department, sanitation workers, doctors, rescue teams and electricity department have been working on a war footing to rescue people and provide relief material. As a precautionary measure, electricity supply was suspended, Siva said. He said while the state gov-

ernment is doing everything in its means, the damage to infrastructure is so huge that it cannot be repaired at the earliest. “The state government has requested an interim relief of Rs 5,000 crore.” “I urge the Union government (that) considering the condition of Tamil Nadu and five districts, kindly release Rs 5,000 crore as initial interim relief

which would help the State government in their efforts to safeguard the people of Tamil Nadu,” he said. Drawing the attention of the Upper House to missing women, Fausia Khan(NCP)said it was matter of grave concern. She called for a sustained awareness campaign to address the issue and likely reason for it was trafficking by organized groups. Sushil Kumar Modi(BJP)drew the attention of the Elders to suicides in institutes of higher learning and said 26 such incidents were reported from Kota this year. He called for appointment of counselors to interact with students facing pressure and sought review of syllabus of institutes of higher learning. Highlighting the benefits of millets as these crops required little water for cultivation, Ajay Pratap Singh(BJP)favoured sale of millets through public distribution system as it will benefit farmers.

India to provide \$250 million to Kenya to modernise agriculture, says Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday announced India's decision to provide USD 250 million to Kenya for modernisation of its agriculture sector following his wide-ranging talks with visiting Kenyan President William Samoei Ruto. He arrived here on Monday on a three-day visit with an aim to expand overall ties between the two countries. In its foreign policy, India has always given high priority to Africa and has expanded its overall ties with the continent on a mission mode in the last nearly one decade, Modi said



in his media statement after the talks. “I am confident that President Ruto's visit to India will not only strengthen bilateral ties but will give a new momentum to our engagement with Africa,” he added. The prime minister said India will pro-

vide USD 250 million as Line of Credit to Kenya for modernisation of its agriculture sector. Referring to the Indo-Pacific, Modi said closer cooperation between India and Kenya in the region will advance common efforts.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit during a meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday

Echoes of distress persist in Chennai amid deluge aftermath

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Submerged in water, with no access to power and transport, it was various social media platforms that came to people's aid in the rain hit city since Monday. Cries of help were forwarded through the night, as Chennaiites, who waded through a similar nightmare in 2015, reconnected online again and formed citizen rescue groups to deal with emergencies. Some, like the 22-year-old Harsha Vardhan, a student from Triplicane, were caught without even a morsel of food. With rain water almost rising to chest level, Vardhan said he did not dare to go out and was forced to ask people through X for some food.

At least 12 people lost their lives in various rain-related incidents in and around Chennai even as personnel on fishing boats and farm tractors were engaged in rescuing stranded people in the city on Tuesday. "Thankfully, someone got me some biscuits and water imme-

diately. In the night, my father's friend got me dinner, said Vardhan, who recently moved to Chennai to pursue international English language test coaching. Another immigrant, a 26-year-old from Kumbakonam district, Shakthiguru Radhakrishnan, who works as a driver, found himself in a predicament when water entered his employer's car that he had parked in a corner near Perambur to wait out the storm. He too took to X, asking help from officials. But unfortunately for him, none came his way. Finally, he said, he forced himself to get out of the car in the pouring rain and push it. Seeing him struggle, some people helped him push it to a place from where it cannot float off in the water.

"The real problem for me was getting back home in Thorapakkam. "Nothing worked in that area, so I had to walk till Egmore, take a metro to Airport and then again walk to Thorapakkam. I started around 4pm and reached

home almost at midnight," said Radhakrishnan. People gingerly making their way through water filled roads became the norm last night. Some decided to risk their lives and venture out in the pouring rain, leaving a relatively safe area, just so they could ensure that their loved ones were safe. Like Aamir Khan in Mandaveli, who had to be rescued by the fire service finally. "I rushed to my parents' house in Mandaveli. I helped them move things from the ground floor, as there was around half-a-feet of water inside our house. Power was switched on at around 1 pm on Monday itself, but we were completely marooned. My parents are senior citizens. We have three pets as well. We were waiting at the first floor of our house, when we were finally rescued today," said Khan. The intensity of the flooding could be gauged from the fact that it was almost impossible to see the ground or road in most parts of Chennai.



But for the raised road median and some young men walking over it, the road towards Velachery from Madipakkam Bazaar Road in south Chennai, for instance, could have been easily mistaken for a swollen river, as boats criss-crossed the locality to evacuate affected people. The many residential neigh-

borhoods on either side of the road such as Ram Nagar were completely flooded. The access to a prominent hospital in the same area is cut off and youths of the locality stood guard at the road's entrance, near a brimming lake, to caution people from outside about the heavy inundation. Some men equipped with huge

wooden logs could be seen helping people leave their houses and in buying essential commodities. Several men could be seen carrying water cans over their shoulders and wading through water that reached the chest in some residential colonies, some of which are posh. Vehicles parked in the parking lot in several apartment

complexes were under water. Authorities deployed boats to evacuate people and some managed to leave the place on their own. Several people like Kumaran said they are used to flood situations such as this. Even with water gushing onto the road from storm water drains and, in some places even from sewers, people dared to venture out, looking to buy essentials. A couple of restaurants and bakeries that opened by afternoon did brisk business. Suresh, a businessman from Ramalinga Nagar Main Road, who was spotted wading through water later in the day, said he didn't anticipate such a heavy rainfall. "That is why we didn't buy extra vegetables and milk," said Suresh. Residents from the nearby Sadasiva Nagar too were out and about, looking to buy essentials. "Non availability of milk is a real issue, we were told it would be made available by afternoon, but it didn't happen," they said.

Some pockets of Madipakkam that are usually not so vulnerable to inundation were also hit. Here too water entered homes, especially ones that were in relatively low-lying areas. The scenario was worse in areas like Pallikaranai. Although many things were under control once the rain stopped, some, like Manikandan and his family from New Kumaran Nagar in Sholinganallur, are still waiting to be rescued. Even after the rain stopped, water level in his area is slowly increasing, he said. "It's almost six feet now as we speak. There are about 30 families here and only one person — with his child held over his head — so far dared to go out. It was so scary watching him go. "To make matters worse, there are so many snakes in the water. So, we are holding on to our phones, switching it on every now and then to save battery, pushing our case through X, and waiting to be evacuated," says Manikandan, a 45-year-old IT employee.

ISRO unique experiment

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Propulsion Module (PM) of Chandrayaan-3 has been moved from an orbit around the Moon to an orbit around Earth, ISRO has said, terming the operation a unique experiment. The primary objective of the Chandrayaan-3 mission was to demonstrate a soft landing near the lunar south polar region and perform experiments using the instruments on the 'Vikram' lander and the 'Pragyan' rover. The spacecraft was launched on July 14, 2023, on board the LVM3-M4 vehicle from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR). On August 23, the Vikram lander made its historic touchdown on the Moon and subsequently, the Pragyan rover was deployed.

The scientific instruments in the lander and rover were operated continuously for one lunar day as per the defined mission life. "The mission objectives of Chandrayaan-3 have been com-

pletely met," the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said in a statement. For the Propulsion Module, the main objective was to ferry the lander module from the Geostationary Transfer Orbit (GTO) to the final lunar polar circular orbit and separate the lander, it said. After the separation, the Spectro-polarimetry of Habitable Planet Earth (SHAPE) payload in the PM was also operated, the space agency said. The initial plan was to operate this payload for about three months during the mission life of the PM. The precise orbit injection by LVM3 and optimal earth or lunar burn manoeuvres resulted in the availability of over 100 kg of fuel in the PM after over one month of operations in the lunar orbit, it added. ISRO said that it was decided to use the available fuel in the PM to derive additional information for future lunar missions and demonstrate the mission operation strategies for a sample



return mission. To continue the SHAPE payload for earth observation, it was decided to re-orbit the PM to a suitable earth orbit. This mission plan was worked out considering collision avoidance such as preventing the PM from crashing onto the Moon's surface or entering into the Earth's Geosynchronous Equatorial Orbit (GEO) belt at 36,000 km and orbits below that, the state-

ment said. Considering the estimated fuel availability and the safety of the GEO spacecraft, the optimal earth return trajectory was designed for October 2023. The first maneuver was performed on October 9, 2023, to raise apolune altitude to 5,112 km from 150 km thus increasing the period of orbit from 2.1 hours to 7.2 hours. Later, considering the estimate of available

propellant, the second manoeuvre plan was revised to target an Earth orbit of 1.8 lakh x 3.8 lakh km. The Trans-Earthinjection (TEI) maneuver was performed on October 13, 2023. In the post-TEI manoeuvre realised orbit, the PM made four Moon fly-bys before departing the sphere of influence (SOI) of the Moon on November 10. Currently, the PM is orbiting Earth and crossed its first perigee on November 22 with an altitude of 1.54 lakh km. The orbit period is nearly 13 days with a 27-degree inclination. The perigee and apogee altitude vary during its trajectory and the predicted minimum perigee altitude is 1.15 lakh km, ISRO said. "Hence as per current orbit prediction, there is no threat of close approach with any operational Earth-orbiting satellites," it said. As per the plan, the SHAPE payload is being operated whenever Earth is in its field of view. Also, a special operation of the

SHAPE payload was carried out on October 28, 2023, during a solar eclipse. The SHAPE payload operations will continue further, the statement added. "UR Rao Satellite Centre/ ISRO's flight dynamics team has developed an analysis tool from first principles for this operation which is being validated through the return manoeuvres carried out for the Chandrayaan-3 PM," ISRO said. According to ISRO, the following are the main outcomes of the return manoeuvres carried out on the PM related to future missions: Planning and execution of trajectory and manoeuvres to return from the Moon to Earth; development of a software module to plan such a manoeuvre and its preliminary validation; planning and execution of a gravity-assisted fly-by across a planet or celestial body; and avoiding uncontrolled crashing of the PM onto the Moon's surface at the end of life of the PM thus meeting the requirements of no debris creation.



NIA files chargesheet against suspected ISKP operatives

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday filed a chargesheet in the special court here in Gujarat against five persons, including a woman, for their alleged links with terror outfit Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP). The chargesheet against Ubaid Mir, Hanan Shawl, Mohammad Hajim Shah, Zubair Ahmed Munshi, and Sumerabanu Hanif Malek was submitted in the court of special judge Kamal Sojitra by NIA special public prosecutor Amit Nair. The ISKP is a UN-designated terrorist organisation. Investigations by the NIA revealed that the accused had planned to "train themselves and carry out terror attacks" in Afghanistan after reaching the war-torn country via Iran as directed by their handler, the chargesheet stated. On June 9, the Gujarat Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) busted this ISKP module and arrested Mir, Shawl, and Shah from Porbandar city in Gujarat. A day later, the ATS nabbed Sumerabanu from Surat and Munshi from Srinagar. All four men hail from Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir. They were booked under relevant sections of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and section 120 B (Punishment of criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code. The NIA had found a video clip in which the accused can be seen pledging their allegiance to ISKP while flashing sharp weapons

sitting under the flag of the outfit, as per the chargesheet. The interrogation of the accused by the ATS had revealed that all of them were part of the ISKP module and radicalised by their handler Abu Hamza, officials had said. Mir, Shawl and Shah had reached Porbandar to work as fishermen on boats with the given GPS coordinates as directed by Abu Hamza. They had planned to cross the International Maritime Boundary Line and reach Afghanistan via Iran to join ISKP, the ATS had said. From Porbandar, they were to be taken to Iran on a dhow and were provided with fake passports for Afghanistan and to reach Khorasan via Herat, as per the ATS. The ATS had found mobile phones, tablets, and sharp weapons in the bags of the accused. It was revealed that their handler had planned to release the pre-recorded videos and photographs of their 'sacrifice' in Afghanistan. In a video clip, they can be seen pledging their allegiance to ISKP while flashing sharp weapons. The ATS had found copies of various publications promoting radicalisation, including ISKP's mouthpiece "Voice of Khorasan" during the search of the house of Sumerabanu Hanif Malek in Surat. Malek had "admitted" to having been in touch with Abu Hamza and being "close" to Munshi, the ATS had said. The case was transferred to the NIA by the Ministry of Home Affairs on June 28.



Karnataka mulls to implement social security schemes for unorganised sector workers

PTI ■ BELAGAVI (K'TAKA)

Karnataka Labour Minister Santosh S Lad on Tuesday assured the legislative assembly that the government will implement special social security schemes for unorganised sector workers including weavers and tailors in the state. He also said that the government will consider collection of cess in various sectors, similar to the one already being done in the construction sector, to provide social security schemes. The Minister was replying to a question by Terdala MLA Siddu Savadi and Kapu MLA Gurme Suresh Shetty during the Question Hour. "A cess of one per cent is being levied for every construction work in the state. The Karnataka Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board has implemented many social security schemes for the construction workers from the funds collected under this," Lad said. Noting that these schemes cannot be extended to workers to any other unorganised sector including weaving and tailoring, he said there is a social security board for unorganised workers in the state, which is registering and issuing identity cards free of cost to 11 categories of unorganised workers including porters, housekeepers, rag pickers, tailors, mechanics, carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, and barbers under the 'Ambedkar Karmika Sahay Hasta Scheme'. Free registration of 379 types of

unorganised workers is also being done on the 'e-Shram' portal, he said. Highlighting that for those who are doing tailoring in the state's garment firms, a certain percentage of the employee's salary and the same amount of the firm are being contributed to the provident fund, Lad said this provident fund is allowed to be withdrawn for purposes such as resignation of employee, retirement, illness, marriage, education, purchase of land and construction of house. But there is no provident fund facility for those doing tailoring at home or in small shops, he said, adding, there are 7,28,044 tailoring workers in the unorganised sector across the state. There is 'Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana', an accident insurance scheme meant to help workers in distress. He further said under the 'Pradhan Mantri Shramayogi Mandhan Yojana', workers in the unorganised sectors who have completed 60 years can get fixed pension of Rs 3,000 per month. He then reiterated that the state government will implement special social security schemes for weavers and tailors in the future. Like the cess model followed in the construction sector, it is being considered to collect one per cent cess in various sectors including garment, vehicle manufacturing and transport, the minister said, adding that the money collected from this cess will be used for schemes for the workers involved in the respective sectors.

Congress should decide whether Rahul will fight against BJP or LDF in LS polls: Vijayan

PTI ■ THRISSUR (KERALA)

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Tuesday said the Congress will have to decide whether it was fighting the BJP or the LDF while fielding Rahul Gandhi from Wayanad in the Lok Sabha polls next year. He said that both Congress and the LDF were part of the opposition INDIA bloc that was formed to take on the BJP in next year's general election. If there is no need for the alliance then there will be a contest between the Congress and the LDF in Kerala, Vijayan said and made it very clear that the LDF would be fielding its candidate in Wayanad. "The Congress has to decide whether Gandhi should fight against the BJP or the LDF in Kerala. Can you say here in



Kerala that you are fighting or competing against the BJP?" he said at a press conference here. Vijayan also said the INDIA alliance will not decide where the member parties would field their candidates. His remarks came a day after the ruling

CPI(M) in Kerala criticised Rahul Gandhi's reported move to contest from Wayanad. CPI(M) state secretary M V Govindan had said that the Congress MP from Wayanad should focus on combating the "fascist policies" of the BJP

rather than involving himself in intra-state political rivalries. The Gandhi scion should contest from a place where the BJP has an influence, he said and added that the saffron party is not an important force in Kerala. During his recent visit to Kerala, Gandhi had said the state and the Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency felt like home to him, hinting at a potential preference to contest from the hill constituency in the upcoming polls next year. With less than six months remaining before the scheduled Lok Sabha elections, Gandhi also said that coming to Kerala and Wayanad did not feel like work. "I consider it like coming back to my family and meeting my friends. The more I come to Kerala and Wayanad, the more I feel that it is my home," he had said.

TMC moves resolution seeking consensus building on Bills to replace criminal penal laws

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The ruling Trinamool Congress on Tuesday moved a resolution in the West Bengal Assembly seeking consensus building on three bills introduced before the Parliament by the BJP-led NDA government to replace criminal-penal laws. Moving the resolution, West Bengal minister Sovande B Chattopadhyay said that from a study of the bills, it appears that many provisions in these are much more draconian and anti-people than the original provisions in the old codes and acts which are meant to be supplemented. The BJP-led NDA government in August introduced in Parliament the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, and the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill to replace the existing Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of

Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act respectively. Chattopadhyay claimed that the three new Bills surreptitiously want to entrench police raj in India by conferring more power in the hands of enforcement authorities than were even contemplated during the colonial era. He said that since the present Lok Sabha is almost nearing its end of term, it would be fair and appropriate that the new government and the newly elected members deliberate on these important legislations. The Lok Sabha elections are due in 2024. Participating in a discussion on the resolution, senior minister Chandrima Bhattacharya claimed that Hindi nomenclatures have been used for the new Bills, which she said is an attempt to impose a particular language on the people of the country.

Claiming that the new bills are largely copied from the old laws, she said that it is old wine in a new bottle. Minister Firhad Hakim said that the Bills, if made into laws in their existing form, will turn the country into a police state. Supporting the resolution, he claimed that the new provisions will give enormous powers to law enforcement agencies. BJP MLA Arup Kumar Das, opposing the resolution, said that the new Bills have been introduced keeping in mind the present social requirements and the nature of crime. He said that the purpose of the new Bills is to provide justice and not to punish, which he claimed was just the opposite in the existing provisions. The discussions on the resolution will continue on Wednesday before being taken up for passing, Speaker Biman Banerjee said.

Railway employees can now apply for leave through mobile app

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Railway Board has simplified the leave application process for its employees by making changes in the leave module of its mobile app, HRMS (Human Resources Management System). The leave module, which was launched on August 1, 2023, for digitising the process of leave, now offers a facility for employees to apply for leaves through this mobile application. "In order to further improve the user interface for employees, facility for applying for certain types of leaves have been provided in the Mobile App of HRMS with immediate effect," said a written communication from the Railway Board dated November 4, 2023 issued to all railway zones. It added, "It may be noted that as of now, the mobile app feature will only be available for apply-

ing the leave and process of sanction needs to be done either through the web portal 'HRMS' or through mobile browser." According to the Board, the application is currently available only in the Android version. "There are certain technical reasons due to which this facility is not functional in the IOS version but we are working on it and very soon, these glitches will be removed," a Board official said. In a separate communication to all zones, the Board has further informed the steps it has taken to streamline leave management functions and to ensure updation of leave ledger of all the employees in a dynamic manner through the HRMS app. "LAP (Leave on Average Pay), LHAP (Leave on Half Average Pay) due for the employees as on 1st January of 2024 will be tentatively proposed to be credited to the leave account of the employee subject to verification

of details of each employee by the concerned leave admins," the Board's letter said. It added, "The process of manual verification is an interim measure pending launch of related modules such as Cadre Management, D&A module etc." The Board has also expressed concern over the slow speed of leave verification by the respective leave admins in various zones and divisions. This year, it issued two communications dated August 1 and November 23 directing leave admins "to complete the verification of the initial leave balance of all employees by 31.12.2023." "It is observed that the process is still not moving at the desired pace. Keeping in view the urgency of the matter all the leave admins may kindly be instructed to complete the verification process in respect of LAP and LHAP before 24.12.2023 and for CL and RH by 19.12.2023," the Board's letter said.

Cong will do well not to dwell on the Assembly poll debacle and heed PM Modi's sound advice

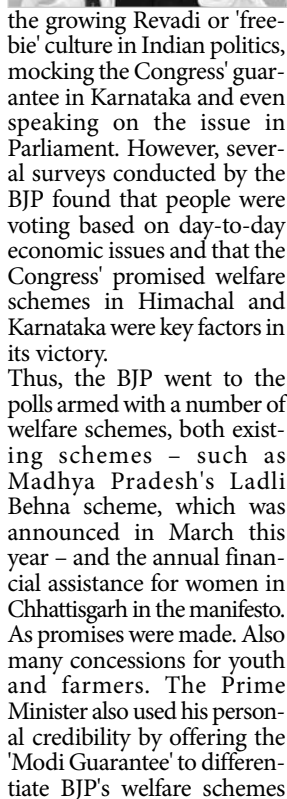
to introspect rather than finding fault with the system or blaming the BJP for the results. Following the rather surprising verdict, Modi has urged the Opposition MPs not to vent their anger in Parliament. The call for restraint comes at a time when tensions are high, and there is a risk of disruption. The appeal for a dignified and constructive approach to parliamentary proceedings highlights the importance of maintaining decorum and focusing on the nation's priorities. Unfortunately, however, the PM's own party has other ideas. Amit Malviya, the BJP's IT cell head, mocked, "Where is Rahul Gandhi hiding?" Malviya, and for that matter the huge troll army at the BJP's disposal, would do well not to provoke the Congress as that will result only in more acrimony. It is crucial for all political parties, including the BJP and the Congress, to prioritise the nation over partisan interests. The Assembly election results should serve as a catalyst for introspection, reform and improvement rather than leading to a confrontational stance. The session presents the Congress with an opportunity to reevaluate its strategy and leadership and connect with the electorate. It can be a platform for the party to articulate a clear vision for the future, demonstrating resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity.

A farmer carries harvested rice as a herd of wild elephants gathers in a field in search of food, in Nagaon

The BJP encashed the alleged massive corruption in the welfare schemes launched by Gehlot and people trusted Modi's guarantee

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is ready to return to power in Rajasthan and in the elections held on 199 seats, BJP has won 114 seats and Congress 70 seats. But this is evident from the fact that the difference between the two parties appears so big. This marks a continuation of a three-decade-old trend of voters in the desert state changing governments every five years. This marks a major turnaround in the fortunes of the party, which was divided into factions and was struggling to counter the welfarist agenda of the Ashok Gehlot-led government. To win in Rajasthan, the BJP targeted the Gehlot welfare model and ensured victory by controlling the internal strife in the party. The only hindrance was the lack of unity in its organisation and the Rajasthan unit was mired in infighting. Rani Basundhara proceeded step by step to convince Raje and bring unity to the party and addressed the leadership issue by fighting as a unit and without announcing any chief ministerial face.

Modi's guarantee card
Modi had previously mocked



from those of Congress. There was the issue of recruitment exam paper leak, which was used by BJP leader and Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat to target the youth constituency. Rajya Sabha MP Kirori Lal Meena and the state leadership held several protests on the issue. Earlier this year, when Meena was on hunger strike, Bhashundhara Raje had also given her support to him. The BJP brought together these issues, from paper leaks to crimes against women to unemployment, during a street protest in September – 'Nahi Sahega Rajasthan' – to craft a unified script and capitalise on the anti-incumbency wave. Can be picked up. Since Rajasthan has a mental tendency to elect a different government every five years, the BJP's only real fear was a welfare scheme-based loss by Gehlot at the last moment, but the CM lost that advantage too by retaining most of its sitting MLAs, which became a boon for the BJP. To turn the indecision of Gurbars in BJP's favour. In 2018, the Gujar community was seen supporting the Congress and rallied with

the Meenas to make then-state chief Sachin Pilot the chief minister. Eight Gujjar candidates of the Congress won, giving the party a total of 25 seats in Eastern Rajasthan. The BJP was reduced to three seats in the region, with the remaining seats going to independents and the BSP, which later supported the Congress. This time, the BJP had been working on a multi-pronged plan for some time to win back the Gujjar votes, as evidenced by Prime Minister Modi's attempt to capitalise on Congress's attempt to humiliate Rajesh and Sachin Pilot at rally after rally. This not only brought many Gujjar leaders into the organisation but also kept the issue of Pilot's "insult" alive in the Gujjar belt to draw community voters away from the Congress. State BJP leaders acted at Modi's behest, for example, Sukhbir Singh Jaunapuriya, a two-time MP from Tonk-Sawai Madhopur, said Pilot had "no chance of becoming chief minister because Gehlot would never allow it".

(Writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)



A MEMORABLE PERSONALITY

Sir — On December 5, 1950, Sri Aurobindo left his body in Pondicherry. His far-sighted views on many issues are still relevant and deserve our attention. He had the foresight about the necessity of a socialist revolution for evolutionary progress.

He wrote: "There is to be equality of opportunity for all, but also of status for all, for without the last the first cannot be secured; even if it were established, it could not endure (The Human Cycle: The Psychology of Social Development - page 201). On October Revolution he said to AB Purani that he was one of the influences that worked to make it a success (Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo - Page 474).

We cannot deny the contribution of the October Revolution towards human evolution. That brute capitalism made poor children die young after working as chimney sweepers, gives us enough reason to tip our hats to his foresight. Let us recall a line from William Blake's poem, "The Chimney Sweeper: When my mother died I was very young", "So your chimneys I sweep & in soot, I sleep." As a result of the October Revolution, many socialist states emerged to take care of the potentialities of every human being. Human evolution again discarded the dictatorship of the proletariat of socialism as it had earlier thrown out the laissez-faire liberty of market players. However, the contribution of socialism to human evolution can never be denied as modern welfare states have come to balance between the liberty of capitalism and the equality of socialism. All modern welfare states including the United States of America have accepted the ideas of socialism in their policy of giving social security to the people like health care and handsome allowance for the unemployed. A true welfare state is more inclined to socialism than far-right capitalism.

Sujit De | *Kolkata*

Only right education can ensure world peace



The quality of school education deserves maximum attention, particularly in terms of teacher education and recruitment, vocational skills and interest identification

The strife-torn world aspires to witness days of no wars, and no violence for future generations. One could safely state that even those who are busy fighting the Ukraine-Russia war, or Israel - Palestine war; or busy in violence in the name of fundamentalism and terrorism, must be somewhere inside willing to give a tension-violence-war free world to their future generations. Probably some select ones could still be under the illusion that their Truth is the only Truth, and all others who do not toe the line must be brought within the fold by even by violence would like their generations ahead to continue in the tradition of violence their Goal – certainly a utopia – stands achieved!

One needs a really tough-nut optimist to even imagine that wars and violence could vanish from the face of the earth in the near future. However, the faith in human ingenuity and trust in the powers of love to create an environment of hope and inspire people to work for global peace. The way out is only one; follow the path of knowledge, and be conversant in applying the skill of discrimination to separate right from wrong, light from darkness, real from false, and Truth from Untruth! This is not the oft-quoted cliché! It is the only alternative available to human beings for the very survival of the human race on the planet Earth, and the planet itself.

The main question before India and Indians is: are we preparing ourselves to become the soldiers of peace and harmony within the boundaries of India, and thereby establish that the only way is the Indian way that respects diversity, universality of the human race, and responsibility of human beings to care for every human being, and most importantly, the nature that sustains humans so long it is treated in the appropriate manner! In the third decade of the third millennium, it is evident that as the world moves ahead in its dependence on knowledge, the emergence of an enlightened and cohesive people; and a strong, prosperous, enterprising, nation would prominently depend on good quality



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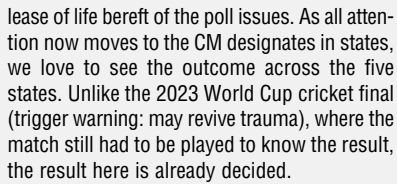
tial role of education in 'achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development'. It responds with the confidence of an alert and active nation to achieve the SDG-4 that seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote; lifelong learning opportunities for all". The challenge before the academia of the nation is how to ensure quality education on a universal scale, dynamic skill acquisition and effective personality development. This would require high levels of competence, commitment and performance from every teacher irrespective of his level or stage in the hierarchy. The NEP-2020 offers basic support by permitting flexibility in the choice of subjects of study and encourages multidisciplinary. Every learner could pursue the subject areas of his interest, he could study music and mathematics, or chemistry and philosophy. Flexibility and learner's interest shall dominate the system. As the quality of school education paves the path for quality enhancement at higher levels, it deserves maximum attention, particularly in terms of teacher education and recruitment, vocational skills, individual attention and interest identification, and assessment procedures. It shall have to fully transform itself to ensure that ideas, imagination,

curiosity and creativity with which every child is blessed with is never impeded, but dexterously nourished. Hopefully; education shall get all the resource support in future, and the dilution of quality in certain aspects of education shall be redressed early. Only then the Indian education attract global attention and appreciation and shall not be 'just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world, or life beyond schooling, but for complete realisation and liberation of Soul'. True Indian education imbued with the legacy of 'Worlds but one family' could pave the path for global brotherhood in the world of today that is suffering in innumerable ways. The first step in India could be the transformation of elementary schools! Yes, if teachers are given the autonomy -and responsibility – to present a model of regularity, punctuality, discipline, honesty, integrity, empathy, broad vision, commitment to the profession, value-based conduct, and growing up in competence, the multiplier impact would be tremendous. That could transform work culture in every other sphere of life. For that, the nation must trust the teacher and look after him!

(Professor Rajput works in education, social cohesion and religious amity)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BJP's spadework succeeds



A range of exit polls have given their verdict on what they see as likely to happen in the five Assembly elections. With the BJP emerging as an impossible opponent to dislodge, is Madhya Pradesh the new Gujarat? The BJP has always won a higher vote share than the Congress this millennium. The thumping victory in MP made its model most amenable for its governance. The exit polls have gone awry but exact poll results proved BJP's supremacy in state elections.

CK Subramaniam | Chennai

DRUG ADDICTION

Sir — Today the country's youth are falling into the swamp of drugs. One of the reasons for this is lack of stamina. Young people today lose their morale very quickly, which leads to depression and then falling into the trap of drug addiction. Parents should teach their children to fight situations and make them strong. The second big reason is that addiction has become popular nowadays. In many films, the actor is shown smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol, as a result of which young people are also inspired to become addicted to drugs. The biggest weakness of young people is accepting drugs as a fad by falling into bad company. Young people need to empower themselves and share any problems with their parents.

Ashraf Nawaz | *Hyderabad*

SOIL POLLUTION: A CAUSE OF CONCERN

Sir — Soil pollution has received a different level of attention than water and air pollution. The chemicals emerging from industrial and agricultural practices cause land degradation. Untreated waste and waste waters have also destroyed

thousands of species of fish, birds and plants. Though soil has the innate property to filter out contaminants, it can do so only to a limited extent, the rest trickle out into the atmosphere. Direct contact with contaminated soil is a plausible reality. More than ninety per cent of people's food is accrued through soil and, therefore, its conservation is crucial for the eco chain.

The crippling effects of soil pollution, including congenital health disorders, infective diseases and non-contagious diseases like cancer, have worried the health professionals. No doubt, environmental scientists have in their armoury various remedies to combat soil contamination like surface leaching, bioremediation, thermal remediation, mycoremediation and phytoremediation. Nonetheless, on December 5, World Soil Day, the responsibilities of an individual as an active contributor to the prevention and elimination of soil pollution cannot be overlooked.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

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FIRST COLUMN

GET ON THE HAPPINESS TRAIN!

Happy people see the humour and magic in each moment



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

As per 'World Happiness Report' (WHR) released by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a global initiative of the United Nations, India stands at rank 126th in the global happiness ranking list with a Happiness score of 4.036, classifying it as one of the world's least joyful nations. Isn't it startling & unpleasant? There is no doubt in it that happiness is an aspiration of every human being, and it can also be a measure of social progress. It is the art of living, the very purpose of our existence & the true index of quality of life. Without happiness, life is dry and meaningless. With happiness, life immediately becomes fulfilling and wonderful.

Being happy is not about how well you're doing in general, but rather if you're doing better than expected. For example, say you go to an ice cream parlour where the desert ice cream was the best you've ever had in your life. Now, according to the happiness equation, you would be happier if you had expected it to be just average, as opposed to assuming it would be as delicious as it was. However, it doesn't mean that having low expectations is the path to happiness. Happy people usually keep themselves happy because they know the little ways to appreciate themselves and to see the humour and magic in each moment.

Each one of us wishes to be happy all the time and we pursue this goal of ours in various ways, whether it be through leisure, careers, wealth, relationships or whatever the means, the tendency of the soul is towards being happy. However, in this quest to be happy, we end up making others unhappy and at times also make ourselves unhappy. In such a situation, we should ask ourselves, "Why do we lose



our happiness?" What makes us take the wrong path and lose our inner state of buoyancy? When we pursue limited, superficial or false goals, it is very easy to lose happiness, firstly, because we are not being true to the self, and secondly, because we may build up false expectations that are not met through our goals and activities. Remember! Happiness gained through relationships and possessions has seeds of sorrow because they are sown with expectations that stem from greed, selfishness, attachment or ego. Hence before getting yourself involved in anything, we need to ask ourselves, "Will this bring me happiness?" Very few people know about the fact that human beings in their most powerful stage have a good stock of happiness. It is only when we

contravene the spiritual and natural laws, we lose happiness & start making others around us unhappy. The repercussions of anger, attachment, greed, ego and desire lead us to loss of peace and happiness. The more we are driven by these forces, the more we will spend the stock of our happiness. Hence awareness and application of spiritual truths is the only way out to sustain & increase our stock of happiness. We need to go within ourselves to tap the eternal source of happiness and for that firstly we need to be true to the self, know the self and be the self.

Once we have understood the happiness that comes from within and as a result of the manner in which we conduct our lives, and ourselves then it is possible to understand how to share that happiness with others. Increasing the happiness of others brings happiness to the self, but this cannot be an escape - that is, it is not a substitute for creating internal happiness. Benefiting the self on a spiritual level will definitely bring internal happiness & resolve past karma. So what are you waiting for? let's get on the happiness train & reach our final destination of "Happy Nation".

(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist, views are personal)

Cut out red tapism in public sector share sale



UTTAM GUPTA

The lengthy and cumbersome process of approval and bureaucratic red tape undermines the chances of the Government selling CPSU shares to willing investors

In the Budget for 2023-24, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had set a target of Rs 51,000 crore for proceeds of the sale of Union government shareholding in central public sector undertakings (CPSUs). As per available indications, the government may fall short of this target by Rs 30,000 crore.

An overwhelming share of the shortfall is due to delays in the disinvestment plans of IDBI Bank (the government plans to sell 30.48 per cent of its stake as well as 30.24 per cent shareholding of LIC aggregating to a total stake sale of 60.72 per cent) and state-owned NMDC Steel. Whereas, in the case of IDBI Bank, this is due to delays in the vetting process for potential buyers by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), The sale of NMDC Steel is hamstrung due to elections in Chhattisgarh where the company's main plant is located.

The shortfall in proceeds during the current fiscal year is in sync with the trend seen since 2015-16 when the Modi - government started disinvestment with a particular focus on 'strategic' sale (a sophisticated nomenclature for a share sale that reduces its holding in the CPSU to below 50 per cent or privatization). Barring two years viz. 2017-18 and 2018-19 when the actual proceeds exceeded the target, in the remaining six years, the achievement was far short.

Even during 2017-18 and 2018-19, the government could achieve the target primarily because of the two big-ticket sales of its shares in one CPSU to another viz. (i) sale of its 51.11 per cent shareholding in Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) to the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) during 2017-18 that yielded Rs 37,000 crore; (ii) sale of its 52.63 per cent stake in Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) to the Power Finance Corporation (PFC) during 2018-19 yielding Rs 13,000 crore. These sales can't be termed as strategic as the purchaser being another CPSU namely ONGC/PFC, the Government continues to have effective ownership over the divested entity viz. HPCL/REC.

It makes no sense to fix a target for proceeds from share sales. This is because unlike tax revenue, which can be projected with a degree of certainty, the same cannot be said about proceeds from disinvestment. In this case, a lot depends on the market scenario and, in particular, the perception of investors about the company in which share-sale is contemplated. In cases where the strategic sale is mooted, the Government faces a bigger challenge as apart from a favourable market, it needs bidders with deep pockets. The lengthy and cumbersome process of approval and bureaucratic red tape further undermines the chances of the Government kicking the ball rolling just around the time when the strategic investors are ready to put in their bets.

The Niti Aayog identifies companies for disinvestment which are then considered by the Core Group of Secretaries on Divestment (CGD), a long-drawn process by itself, which takes it to the Alternative Mechanism (AM) - a group of ministers, including finance, road transport & highways, administrative reforms, etc., - for approval. After AM's approval, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) moved a proposal for in-principal approval of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs



THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO REMAIN IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT EVEN AFTER STRATEGIC SALE. THIS IS AMPLY REFLECTED IN A STATEMENT IN SITHARAMAN'S BUDGET SPEECH FOR FY 2019-20

(CCEA). Taking all these approvals is a time-consuming process and by the time these are in place, the market scenario could become adverse. At a fundamental level, disinvestment of the government's shareholding in a PSU is tantamount to the sale of assets. Therefore, receipts arising therefrom can only be treated as 'capital receipts' (CRs). While preparing the budget, it won't be advisable to plan for receipts from this source in the same manner as it is done for revenue receipts (RRs) which are receipts generated from the day-to-day business activities e.g. dividends on shares held by the government.

The government should only provide for proceeds from share sales in CPSU on an 'actual' basis after it has happened instead of making provision at the time of presenting the budget. Having delinked from the budgetary process, it should take up disinvestment in CPSUs as an independent exercise guided by the broad principle of where it shouldn't be in.

In an approach outlined in the Budget for 2021-22, the government divided CPSUs into two broad categories i.e. strategic and non-strategic. The strategic group covers atomic energy, space and defense; transport and telecommunications; power, petroleum, coal and other minerals; and banking, insurance and financial services. The non-strategic category includes all other sectors such as industrial and consumer goods, hotel and tourist services, trading, and marketing.

While, the government wants to

sell CPSUs in the strategic sector with the caveat that at least one (and a maximum of four) will be retained in the public sector, it will privatise 'all' undertakings in non-strategic sectors. All loss-making undertakings in the latter category will be closed. Based on this template, it is working on a detailed action plan which is fine. But the process is hamstrung because of a host of legacy issues.

For instance, despite the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) and Niti Aayog recommending the privatisation of all nine CPSUs in the fertiliser sector (it falls in the non-strategic category) coming under the administrative control of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers, the latter has opposed it. The ministry feels that with control over fertilizer PSUs gone, the government won't be able to ensure adequate availability of this politically sensitive agri-input in every nook and corner of the country.

The strategic sale of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) hasn't happened nearly four years after it was initially mooted in 2019-20. A prime reason is the government's intent to regulate the prices of petrol and diesel (despite the price of these fuels having been deregulated way back in 2010/2014) which it can do by asking the three oil marketing CPSUs including BPCL to do its bidding. Its ability to influence prices will be hampered if BPCL is privatised.

The government wants to remain in the driver's seat even after strategic sales. This is amply reflected in

a statement in Sitharaman's budget speech for FY 2019-20. She had stated the intent was to change the existing policy from "directly" holding 51 per cent or above in a CPSU, to one whereby its total holding, "direct" plus "indirect", is maintained at 51 per cent.

In yet another glaring instance, even though an order of the Ministry of Finance (MoF) issued last year prohibits participation of CPSUs in the strategic sale of other PSUs, a caveat "...unless otherwise specifically approved by the Central Government in public interest" enables the powers that be to bypass this prohibition if they so wish.

Above all, the majority ownership and control by the Government for several decades has ingrained in the bureaucrat a feeling of exercising command (albeit remote) over the management of the PSU. The latter readily acquiescing has added to the sense of bureaucratic power. Although things have improved under the Modi - dispensation (courtesy of its focus on a 'policy-driven state', and increase in 'transparency'), the basic ingredients remain intact.

Modi needs to play some hardballs to kill the existing mindset of the bureaucracy. The process of share sale should be de-bureaucratised by setting up a holding company (HC) where all government shares in CPSUs are placed. To be manned by eminent professionals, the HC should be fully empowered to make all decisions.

(The writer is a policy analyst, views are personal)

Revolutionising agriculture with the 'natural produce on wheels' project

The 'natural produce on wheels' project has been a resounding success in Himachal Pradesh, showcasing that natural farming can reshape agricultural practices in the region

A truck arrives at the Agriculture Department of Himachal Pradesh in Baluganj, Shimla. Two women, Nirmala and Sumana Devi, members of Narishakti Mahila Krishi SamooH from Nerwa village, Tutu Block, Shimla, step out, bringing fresh seasonal vegetables. These vegetables, including tomatoes, radishes, French beans, and even fruits like guava and kiwi, have been collected on the same day from the doorsteps of local farmers, primarily by women.

Representing their group, the two women, along with Lokesh Bhanot, Farmers Produce Officer (FPO) from the agriculture department, move to the vegetable market or 'subzi mandi'. Bhanot, who surveyed the market rates the



SARITA BRARA

previous evening, displays the rates on a blackboard, and customers make on-the-spot purchases. The vehicle then heads to another selling venue at the state Secretariat complex, carrying the produce along with a cashier.

Upon reaching the venue, vegetables and other products are unloaded and arranged. Several women, mostly regular customers, are already waiting to buy these fresh, chemical-free, and locally-grown products. "The vegetables are fresh, have a longer shelf life, taste better, and, importantly, they are chemical-free, not harmful to our health," says Sunita, a regular customer. Other customers echo similar sentiments, expressing a preference for naturally farmed, more nutritious produce.

Beyond fresh vegetables, products from forest areas, such as anna dana (dried pomegranate seeds), amla (Indian gooseberry), kachina, Bauhinia variegata, and wild honey, are also available. The villages, falling under forest areas, allow people to collect and sell forest produce.

The farmers are paid according to the rates fixed by the FPO. Another pickup van from Basantpur Block brings vegetables from villages in that area, forming a network of women farmers participating in the 'natural produce on wheels' project. Three blocks in Shimla district, Totu, Mashobra, and Basantpur, were selected for this initiative, involving 5,000 farmers, including 8% women, practising natural farming. They are

all small and marginal farmers. Four women Self-Help Groups with 20 members are involved in this pilot that aims to procure fresh produce directly from farmers' doorsteps and sell it at the HP Secretariat & Agriculture Directorate Boileanganj, Shimla. This alleviates the need for middlemen, ensuring farmers receive fair market prices.

The project operates twice a week, and its success may lead to increased frequency based on customer response. For farmers, it is a win-win situation; they receive market prices without intermediaries, transport costs are shared among them, and all produce is sold on the same day. A survey conducted a year ago identified areas and farmers engaged in natural farming.

Farmers undergo a two-day training program, and their products are certified and graded by the agriculture department. Initiated earlier this year, the 'natural produce on wheels' project addresses the challenge of lower yields in natural farming. Farmers cultivate only a portion of their land using the kitchen garden model, maximising the output on smaller plots.

Natural farming, a chemical-free traditional method, relies on nature's laws, avoiding external inputs like chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The process minimises human intervention, making it distinct from organic farming. Pesticides used are prepared by farmers using cow dung, cow urine, garlic, red chilli, and buttermilk.

While organic vegetables are often costly, products from natural farming are more affordable for daily consumption. A survey indicates that natural farming reduces cultivation costs by 46% and increases profits by 22%. In comparison, organic farming relies on expensive inputs, contributing to higher market prices. The positive impact of natural farming extends to disease incidence. Scab and marssonina incidences in Natural Farming orchards are notably lower than in chemical farming, suggesting its potential to improve crop health. Most women involved in the project own small agricultural plots, not exceeding 6 to 7 bighas of land. Their husbands typically work in various professions, and two

women from each group manage the pickup of produce. "We spend half of our day in our agriculture fields or with livestock, managing sowing to harvesting on our own," shares one woman. The pickup service provided makes it feasible for them to sell their produce without the challenges of transportation. The 'natural produce on wheels' project has seen success, with products selling out quickly, and the demand continues to grow. It exemplifies a sustainable model, benefiting farmers, consumers, and the environment, showcasing the potential for natural farming to reshape agricultural practices in the region.

(The writer is an independent senior journalist, views are personal. Charkha Features)

Israel strikes in and around Gaza’s second largest city

AP ■ KHAN YOUNIS (GAZA STRIP)

Israel intensified its bombardment in and around Gaza's second largest city early Tuesday, as ambulances and private cars came racing into a local hospital carrying people wounded in a bloody new phase of the war in Gaza.

Under US pressure to prevent further mass casualties, Israel says it is being more precise as it widens its offensive into southern Gaza after obliterating much of the north. Aerial bombardment and the ground offensive have already driven three-fourths of the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes.

At the Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, ambulances brought dozens of wounded people in throughout the night. At one point, a car pulled up and man emerged carrying a young boy in a bloody shirt and whose hand had been blown off. "Where is the Red Cross? ... where is the United Nations?" a woman screamed outside the emergency department. "My children, since 10 p.m., are still under the rubble."

Satellite photos taken Sunday showed tanks and troops massing outside Khan



Palestinians are treated as they lie on the floor after being wounded in an Israeli army bombardment of the Gaza Strip, in the hospital in Khan Younis, Tuesday. *AP/PTI*

Younis, the latest target of the offensive, which was home to more than 400,000 people before the war.

Israel has ordered people out of nearly two dozen neighborhoods instead of the entire region, as it did in the north. But with most of Gaza's population already packed into the south, cramming U.N. shelters and family homes, there are few places left to go. Israel has barred people who fled the north earlier in the war from returning. Palestinians say that

as Israel continues to strike across the besieged territory, there are no areas where they feel safe, and many fear that if they leave their homes they will never be allowed to return.

THE QUEST TO ELIMINATE HAMAS

Israel says it must dismantle Hamas' extensive military infrastructure and remove it from power in order to prevent a repeat of the Oct. 7 attack that ignited the war. The surprise assault through

the border fence saw Hamas and other Palestinian militants kill about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and capture some 240 men, women and children.

The Israeli military says it makes every effort to spare civilians and accuses Hamas of using them as human shields as it fights in dense residential areas, where it has a labyrinth of tunnels, bunkers, rocket launchers and sniper nests.

But the militant group is deeply rooted in Palestinian society, and its determination to end decades of open-ended Israeli military rule is shared by most Palestinians, even those opposed to its ideology and its attacks on Israeli civilians. That will complicate any effort to eliminate Hamas without causing massive casualties and displacement.

Even after weeks of unrelenting bombardment, Hamas' leaders in Gaza were able to conduct complex cease-fire negotiations and orchestrate the release of more than 100 Israeli and foreign hostages in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners last week. Palestinian militants have also kept up their rocket fire into Israel, both before and after the truce.

The fighting has meanwhile brought unprecedented death and destruction to the coastal strip. The Health Ministry in Gaza said the death toll in the territory since Oct. 7 has surpassed 15,890 people – 70% of them women and children — with more than 42,000 wounded. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths. It says hundreds have been killed or wounded since the cease-fire's end, and many still are trapped under rubble.

An Israeli army official provided a similar figure for the death toll in Gaza on Monday, after weeks in which Israeli officials had cast doubt on the ministry's count.

The official said at least 15,000 people have been killed, including 5,000 militants, without saying how the military arrived at its figures.

Putin to discuss Israel-Hamas war

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin will make a one-day trip to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia focused on the Israeli-Hamas war and host the Iranian president in Moscow this week, the Kremlin said Tuesday.

Putin will make working visits to both countries on Wednesday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

The talks will focus on bilateral relations, the war between Israel and Hamas and other international issues,

Peskov said. Issues related to oil price caps under OPEC+ will also be on the agenda, he added. Putin's trip was first announced on Monday by his foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov, who didn't give a date for the visits when he spoke to the Russian news outlet Life.

"I hope that these will be very useful negotiations, which we consider extremely important," Ushakov was quoted as saying by Life.

Putin will make the visit at a time when Russia wants to advance its role as a power broker in the conflict in the

Middle East. Putin will host Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in the Kremlin on Thursday, Peskov added.

The Russian president visited China in October and recently made several trips to former Soviet nations.

The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Putin in March for war crimes, accusing him of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine.

Since the warrant was issued, Putin chose not to attend a BRICS summit in South Africa because the

country would be obliged to arrest Putin upon arrival as it is a signatory to the international court's treaty.

Neither Saudi Arabia nor the UAE have signed the ICC's founding treaty.

The notice against Putin in March was the first time the global court issued a warrant against a leader of one of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council.

The ICC said in a statement that Putin is accused of the war crime of "unlawful deportation" of children from occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia.

Top US Congressmen introduce bill to reduce Green Card backlog

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Three influential Congressmen have introduced bipartisan legislation in the US House of Representatives to reduce the Green Card backlog and end country-based discrimination for employment-based visas, a bill if passed would benefit thousands of Indian Americans.

Three influential Congressmen who introduced the legislation include Indian Americans, Raja Krishnamoorthi and Pramila Jayapal. Congressman Rich McCormick is the third lawmaker to have joined the two Indian-Americans in introducing the bill on Monday.

If passed and signed into law, it would help thousands of Indian Americans who are currently in decades-long wait for green cards or permanent residency.

HR 6542, the bipartisan Immigration Visa Efficiency and Security Act of 2023, would strengthen the US economy and boost its international competitiveness while reducing the Green Card backlog by allowing American employers to focus on hiring immigrants based on their merit, not their birthplace, a press statement said. A Green Card, known officially as a Permanent



Resident Card, is a document issued to immigrants to the US as evidence that the bearer has been granted the privilege of residing permanently.

The bill would phase out the existing seven per cent per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas while increasing the seven per-country limit on family-sponsored visas to 15 per cent, it said.

"As we work to build the economy of the future, we cannot allow high-skilled workers to languish in the Green Card backlog, left unable to fully establish themselves as Americans and contribute more fully to our nation," Krishnamoorthi said.

"I am proud to partner with my colleagues on our bipartisan legislation to end country-based discrimination for employment-based immigrant visas to reduce visa back-

logs while strengthening our economy and our workforce," he added.

The employment-based visa system provides permanent residence (or "green cards") to individuals whose work contributes to US economic growth and enhances our competitive advantage.

To qualify, a sponsoring employer generally must advertise and prove that they cannot find a qualified US worker to fill the position. Thus, although America's employment-based visa system starts as "merit-based," what happens next has nothing to do with merit or skills — visas are allocated based on the intended immigrant's country of birth, the statement said.

Approximately 95 per cent of employment-based immigrants currently live and work in the United States on temporary visas while waiting for a visa to become available. Some of these individuals remain in temporary status for many years, if not decades, because of the caps applied to their country of nationality, it read.

The statement said the new, phased-in system, established in the bipartisan EAGLE Act, would help ease the backlog for those who wait the longest.

Like the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act that

passed the House in July 2019, the bill phases out the seven per cent per-country cap for employment-based immigrant visas; and raises the seven per cent per-country limit on family-sponsored visas to 15 per cent.

Like the version of the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act that passed the Senate in December 2020, the bill includes a longer nine-year transition period to ensure that no countries are excluded from receiving visas while the per-country caps are phased out, it said.

The bill strengthens the H-1B temporary visa programme and provides an option for individuals who have been waiting in the immigrant visa backlog for two years to file a green card application, although the application cannot be approved until a visa becomes available, according to the statement.

The H-1B visa, the much sought-after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

Prince Harry challenges UK government’s decision to strip him of security detail

AP ■ LONDON

Prince Harry is challenging on Tuesday the British government's decision to strip him of his security detail after he gave up his status as a working member of the royal family and moved to the United States. The Duke of Sussex said he wants protection when he visits his home and claimed it's partly because an aggressive press jeopardizes his safety and that of his family.

The three-day hearing scheduled to begin in London's High Court is the latest in a string of Harry's legal cases that have kept London judges busy as he takes on the UK government and the British tabloid media. It was not clear if he would attend Tuesday's hearing.

Harry failed to persuade a different judge earlier this year that he should be able to privately pay for London's police force to guard him when he

comes to town. A judge denied that offer after a government lawyer argued that officers shouldn't be used as "private bodyguards for the wealthy."

Harry, the youngest son of King Charles III, said he did not feel safe bringing his wife, former actor Meghan Markle, and their two young children back to Britain and was concerned about his own safety after being chased by paparazzi following a London charity event.

Harry's animosity toward the press dates back to the death of his mother Princess Diana, who died in a car wreck as her driver tried to outrun aggressive photographers in Paris. Harry, whose wife is mixed-raced, cited what he said were racist attitudes and unbearable intrusions of the British media in his decision to leave the United Kingdom.

The 39-year-old prince is challenging the decision by



the Executive Committee for the Protection of Royalty and Public Figures to provide his security on a "case by case" basis after moving in 2020 to Canada and then California, where he and his family now reside.

He said the committee unfairly nixed his security request without hearing from him personally and did not dis-

close the makeup of the panel, which he later learned included royal family staff. He said Edward Young, the assistant private secretary to the late Queen Elizabeth II, should not have been on the committee because of "significant tensions" between the two men.

The Home Office has argued that any tensions between Harry and the royal household staff was irrelevant and that the committee was entitled to its decision because he had relinquished his role as a working member of the family. The case is one of five that Harry has pending in the High Court.

The four other lawsuits involve Britain's best-known tabloids, including a case that alleges the publisher of the Daily Mail libeled him when it ran a story suggesting he had tried to hide his efforts to continue receiving government-funded security.

UK police renew appeal over hate crime attack against British Sikh

London (PTI): A UK police force investigating a hate crime have renewed their appeal for information related to an incident in which a Sikh man in his late 50s sustained injuries after a group of boys attacked him in Slough, south-east England.

Thames Valley Police said the victim, named locally as Inderjit Singh, was walking through Langley Memorial Park when he was approached by a group of boys. One of the offenders tried to grab the victim's beard and then all the boys circled him, kicking him and pulling him to the ground. Singh sustained three broken ribs as well as swelling and cuts to his hand.

The police were initially investigating it as an incident of GBH (grievous bodily harm), but are now treating it as a hate crime, investigating officer Detective Constable Holly Baxter, who is based at Slough Police Station, said in a statement.

"I am appealing to anybody who was in the area around the time of the incident (at 7 pm local time on November 21), to please get in touch with Thames Valley Police," Baxter's statement said last week.

"We are currently conducting further patrols in the area and anyone with concerns should speak to a uniformed officer or contact us by calling 101 or via our website. We take all reports of hate crime seriously as we know that they have a devastating impact on individual victims and targeted communities," she said.

The police are appealing for anyone with their car dash-cam footage, doorbell video, or any other potential recordings from the day of the attack that could assist the investigation. Following the attack, the offenders – described as teenage boys around 13 to 16 years old – are said to have left in the direction of Marish School.

EU official warns of security risk in Europe over Xmas

Brussels (AP): Europe faces a "huge risk of terrorist attacks" over the Christmas holiday period due to the fallout from the war between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas, the European Union's home affairs commissioner warned on Tuesday. The warning came as French investigators probe a fatal weekend attack near the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Questions were raised about the mental health of the suspect, who swore allegiance to the extremist Islamic State group before stabbing a German-Filipino tourist to death and injuring two other people with a hammer.

"With the war between Israel and Hamas, and the polarisation it causes in our society, with the upcoming holiday season, there is a huge risk of terrorist attacks in the European Union," EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva

Johansson told reporters. "We saw (it happening) recently in Paris, unfortunately we have seen it earlier as well," she said, as EU interior ministers gathered in Brussels. She provided no details about any information that might have led to her warning.

Her office did not immediately respond to requests for details.

Johansson, whose brief includes security and immigration, said that European Commission will provide an additional 30 million euros (\$32.5 million) to help bolster security in vulnerable areas, notably places of worship.

German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser sent her condolences to France over the attack, and said that it highlights "just how acute and how serious the threat posed by Islamist terrorism is currently in the EU."

‘Harvard muzzled disinfo team after USD500 mn Zuckerberg donation’

Cambridge (Massachusetts) (AP): A prominent disinformation scholar who left Harvard University in August has accused the school of muzzling her speech and stifling — then dismantling — her research team as it launched a deep dive in late 2021 into a trove of Facebook files she considers the most important documents in internet history.

The actions impacting Joan Donovan's work coincided with a USD500 million donation to Harvard by a foundation run by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan. In a whistleblower disclosure made public Monday, Donovan seeks investigations into "inap-

propriate influence" from Harvard's general counsel, the Massachusetts attorney general's office and the US Department of Education.

The CEO of Whistleblower Aid, a legal nonprofit supporting Donovan, called the alleged behavior by Harvard's Kennedy School and its dean a "shocking betrayal" of academic integrity at the elite school.

"Whether Harvard acted at the company's direction or took the initiative on their own to protect (Facebook's) interests, the outcome is the same: corporate interests are undermining research and academic freedom to the detriment of the public," CEO Libby Liu said in a press statement.

Pak EC reserves verdict on plea to bar Khan from heading party

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's election commission on Tuesday reserved its verdict on a petition seeking to remove former premier Imran Khan as the head of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party due to his conviction in the Toshakhana corruption case.

Khan, 71, has been in jail since August 5, when he was arrested after a conviction in the Toshakhana case. He was also disqualified by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in the same case for failing to disclose the proceeds from the sale of gifts he got from the Toshakhana (state repository).

A petition was filed on October 3 with the top election body to bar him from holding any position within his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. Two months later, on December 2, the former-cricketer-turned-politician decided against contesting the ECP-mandated intra-party polls for the post of party chairman due to his disqualification in the Toshakhana case.

The jailed former prime minister had instead hand-picked Barrister Gohar Ali Khan to lead the party he founded and other legal challenges earlier this month.

Barrister Gohar was officially elected as the PTI chief unopposed in the intra-party polls held on December 2. On Tuesday, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikander Sultan Raja, leading a five-member bench, presided over the hearing held at the ECP headquarters in Islamabad.

During Tuesday's hearing, PTI lawyer Shoaib Shaheen said the petition had become infructuous as the party has elected its new chairman.

Dawoodi Bohra community head conferred with 'Nishan-e-Pakistan'

Islamabad (PTI): Dr Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin, head of the Dawoodi Bohra sect of Islam, was on Tuesday conferred with 'Nishan-e-Pakistan', the highest civilian award of Pakistan.

"President Dr Arif Alvi conferred the award of Nishan-e-Pakistan upon Dr Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin, Head of the Dawoodi Bohra community, at a special investiture ceremony, held at Aiwan-e-Sadr," the president's office said in a post on X. Dr Saifuddin, the head of the Mumbai-headquartered Dawoodi Bohra community spread across over 40 countries, including a sizeable congregation in Pakistan, is the 53rd Dai al-Mutlaq of the order. The Dawoodi Bohras carry out developmental works to benefit the underprivileged in all these countries.

Nishan-e-Pakistan is the highest civilian honour awarded for services of the highest distinction to the national interest of Pakistan. The award, conferred at a special investiture ceremony, recognises 77-year-old Saifuddin's services to Pakistan in the field of spiritual guidance and social services, Geo News reported.

The Bohra community head holds a special regard for Pakistan and is an advocate of peace, harmony and goodwill, read the citation read out before the conferment of the award. Recounting his services in the education sector, it was said that he had contributed to the building of the School of Law at the University of Karachi and launched a university project. Multiple healthcare institutions are operating in the name of the Bohra community head providing affordable healthcare to people.

Separately, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar met the Dawoodi Bohra community head and lauded the community's services for the progress of the country. The premier felicitated Dr Saifuddin on being awarded the country's highest civil award and expressed confidence that the Bohra community would continue to play their role in the progress and development of the country.

Each year, the announcement of awards is made on August 14, Pakistan's Independence Day, and the awards are conferred next year on Pakistan National Day, observed on March 23. But in special cases, these dates are not followed and the investiture can be arranged anytime.

Finance ministry releases ₹17.4 bn for general polls

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government said on Tuesday that it has released Rs 17.4 billion to the election commission for the upcoming general elections, a day after the poll body raised concerns over the non-provision of funds. Cash-strapped Pakistan, which is facing both political and economic instability, is going to the polls on February 8.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Finance Division said it has released Rs 17.4 billion to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in addition to Rs 10 billion released in July 2023 for the conduct of general elections in the country. "This brings the total released

amount to Rs 27.4 billion for holding general elections. The Finance Division remains committed to the provision of funds as and when required by the Election Commission of Pakistan," it added. The development comes a day after the electoral body raised concern over the delay in the release of the urgently needed amount for the conduct of polls.

Addressing the ECP's concerns, caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi said that the government would meet the financial needs of the ECP ahead of the February 8 general election. "There is no crisis in meeting the financial needs of the ECP," Solangi said in a post on X. "Whatever budgeted

China recognises Taliban govt in Afghanistan

PTI ■ BEIJING

China has become the first country to confer diplomatic status to a Taliban-nominated official as Afghanistan's Ambassador to Beijing, thereby formally recognising the Taliban-run administration as a legitimate government in Kabul.

"As a long-standing friendly neighbour of Afghanistan, China believes that Afghanistan should not be excluded from the international community," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing on Tuesday when asked whether China recognised the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. Earlier reports from Kabul said China has given Bilal Karimi, a Taliban

nominee the status of Ambassador and he has submitted his credentials to the foreign ministry here.

China along with Pakistan and Russia maintained its embassy in Kabul after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021 following the withdrawal of American troops from the war-ravaged country. While maintaining close contact with the Taliban interim administration, Beijing withheld recognition, especially over global criticism of the Taliban's treatment of women and girls, excluding them from educational institutions. No other country has formally recognised the Taliban government, which has been criticised over human rights violations and crushing women's rights.

Defending China's move, Wang said, "We hope Afghanistan will further respond to the expectations of the international community, build an open and inclusive political structure, adopt moderate and prudent domestic and foreign policies, firmly combat all forms of terrorist forces, develop friendly relations with other countries, especially with its neighbours, and integrate itself into the world community."

"We believe that diplomatic recognition of the Afghan government will come naturally as the concerns of various parties are effectively addressed," Wang said.

China, which shares borders with Afghanistan, also has serious concerns over the regrouping of East Turkistan

Seven injured in blast in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PTI ■ LONDON

Four minor children were among seven people who were injured on Tuesday when an improvised explosive device exploded near a school here in the capital of Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. According to the police, the blast occurred around 9:10 am on the congested Warsak road near a school and a private bank in Peshawar. At least four kilograms of explosives, planted in a "cemented block" on the side of the road, were used in the blast, Geo News reported.

According to a Michni Gate Police Station official, seven people were injured in the blast. Four children between the ages of seven and ten were also injured, Lady Reading Hospital authorities said. Police and rescue teams were sent to the site as soon as the blast was reported, Warsak Superintendent of Police Arshad Khan was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper.

Those injured were moved to a private hospital, where the condition of two children was critical, spokesperson of the Peshawar Lady Reading Hospital Asim Khan said. He added that none of the children were wearing a school uniform. Khan said that the police launched a search operation in the surrounding areas. "The element of extortion is also being considered," he was quoted as saying. "It would be premature to say who was the target," he added.

According to The Express Tribune newspaper, No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. Pakistan has been hit by a wave of terrorist activities orchestrated by various terror outfits.

3 die in mishaps caused by freezing rain in Germany Munich airport suspends flights

AP ■ BERLIN

Freezing rain and cold weather buffeting Germany were blamed for traffic accidents that left three dead on Tuesday while Munich Airport temporarily suspended flights.

One student was killed in a crash involving a school bus in the Erzgebirge mountains in the eastern German state of Saxony, police said. At least 10 other schoolchildren were taken to a hospital. Two adults, including the bus driver, were seriously injured.

The bus skidded into the side of a winter road maintenance vehicle in Sehmatal county near the Czech border, German news agency dpa reported. It then crashed head-on into a tree and the impact was so strong that it completely destroyed the front of the vehicle.

In Munich, all flights were either cancelled or postponed between 6 a.m. and noon (0500-1100 GMT), with the airport warning that many flights scheduled for later in the day might also be affected by the severe weather conditions.

The airport, Germany's second-biggest, announced the temporary shutdown on Monday night as a result of weather forecasts for Tuesday. "The operating areas will be deactivated in the first half of the day. The plan is to allow air traffic to resume from midday," the airport said on its website. "However, it can be assumed that the majority of flights will also have to be cancelled during



A plane is cleared of ice in Munich Airport, Germany, on Tuesday

AP/PTI

ing the rest of the day for safety reasons."

Tuesday's cancellations came after all flights at Munich Airport were grounded on Saturday following heavy snowfall in the city and in Germany's southern state of Bavaria. Two people died in a collision between a car and a tractor-trailer on the A8 highway in Upper Bavaria. According to the police, their car skidded under the rear of a truck, which had come to a stop across the highway overnight from Monday to Tuesday due to frozen rain on the highway's surface, dpa reported.

The A99 near Munich was shutdown in both direction after 13 vehicles were involved in a mass accident, dpa reported. There was no immediate information about possible injuries. Train operator Deutsche Bahn said traffic in

the Munich region would be affected for several days.

"At present, access to Munich's main station is severely restricted. Only a few long-distance trains are therefore running to and from Munich," it said on its website on Tuesday. Rail services to the Austrian cities of Salzburg and Innsbruck, as well as Zurich in Switzerland, remained suspended. Deutsche Bahn said that there could also be train cancellations and delays in other parts of southern Germany. Passengers were asked to postpone non-essential journeys to Wednesday.

Southern Germany as well as neighbouring Austria and Switzerland have been experiencing heavy snowfall which has affected public transport all over the region and led to alarm about possible avalanches.

Russian shelling hits southern Ukraine; 2 killed

AP ■ KYIV

Russian artillery struck the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson on Tuesday morning, local officials said, killing at least two people in the street as the 21-month war drags into another winter.

Regional Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin posted a video of the attack's aftermath, showing two bodies in a city center street and blood near holes in the road caused by the shelling. "The medics who arrived promptly at the scene could only declare their deaths," Prokudin said of the victims on Telegram.

The head of the Kherson city administration, Roman Mrochko, added that a medical facility also was struck, wounding two medics. Russian attacks on the Dnieper river port city have become routine since the Ukrainian army liberated the city last year, with civilian deaths reported almost daily.

With the war's front line apparently static along most of its more than 1,000-kilometre length, and amid wintry weather, both sides in the war have used aerial bombardment to keep up the military pressure.

Russian authorities said Tuesday they repelled another heavy Ukrainian drone attack on Crimea, while Ukraine officials said air defences responded to drones and missiles launched by the

Kremlin's forces. Neither side immediately reported any other casualties or damage. The Russian Defence Ministry said that air defences destroyed 22 Ukrainian drones and intercepted 13 more over Crimea and the Sea of Azov early Tuesday. Shortly after, it added that another four drones were destroyed and two were intercepted. Russian officials commonly say drones were destroyed when they were shot down and say they were intercepted when electronic jamming is used.

Military and logistics sites in Russian-occupied Crimea, annexed by Moscow in 2014, have been a frequent target for Ukraine since the full-scale invasion in February 2022. Last month, Ukraine launched one of its biggest drone attacks on Crimea, according to Russian officials, though they did not mention any casualties or damage. Ukraine's air force, meanwhile, said it downed 10 out of 17 Shahed drones that Russia launched during the night. Moscow's forces also unleashed six S-300 missiles, the air force said without providing further details.

The UK defence ministry said last month that Russia could target Ukraine's power grid again, just like last winter when Moscow aimed to break local resistance by denying civilians home heating and running water.

Toll in Indonesia volcanic eruption climbs to 22

Batu Palano (AP): Rescuers searching the hazardous slopes of Indonesia's Mount Marapi volcano found 11 more bodies of climbers who were caught by a surprise weekend eruption, raising the number of confirmed dead to 22, officials said Tuesday. One person remained missing. More than 50 climbers were rescued after the initial eruption Sunday, and 11 others were initially confirmed dead. New eruptions on Monday and Tuesday spewed more hot ash as high as 800 metres (2,620 feet) into the air, reducing visibility and temporarily halting search and recovery operations, said Abdul Malik, chief of the Padang Search and Rescue Agency. The bodies of two climbers were located on Monday and nine more on Tuesday, the National Search and Rescue Agency said.

One climber remained missing and was presumed dead because of being very close to the eruption site, said Edi Mardianto, the deputy police chief in West Sumatra province. The recovered bodies will be taken to a hospital for identification, he said.

The rescuers contended with bad weather and difficult terrain, along with winds that brought heat from the eruptions. A video released by West Sumatra's Search and Rescue Agency showed rescuers carrying an injured climber on a stretcher off the mountain and into a waiting ambulance to be taken to a hospital. Marapi has stayed at the third highest of four alert levels since 2011, indicating above-normal volcanic activity under which climbers must stay more than 3 kilometres from the peak, according to Indonesia's Centre for Volcanology.

14 killed in western Thailand bus crash



In this photo provided by Sawang Rungrueang Rescue22 Foundation, rescue workers and volunteers work at the site of a bus accident on Tuesday

AP/PTI

AP ■ BANGKOK

A bus crashed in western Thailand early on Tuesday, killing 14 people and injuring more than 30 others, officials said. The accident occurred in Prachuap Khiri Khan province as the bus was travelling from the capital, Bangkok, to Songkhla province in the deep south. It was carrying 49 people when it ran off the road and hit a tree near Hat Wanakorn National Park, a local police official said. Prachuap Khiri Khan province is located on a coastal stretch between the Gulf of

Thailand and Myanmar.

"We presume the driver might have fallen asleep," said Pol. Col. Weerapat Ketesa, the superintendent of the Huay Yang Police Station, adding that officials were waiting for the result of a blood test on the driver, who survived the accident. Police were still investigating what caused the crash, he added. Most victims were Thai and a few were Burmese, Weerapat said. Some 35 people were being treated for injuries at local hospitals, according to the Sawang Rungrueang Rescue Foundation.

Nod to bill in France to ban disposable e-cigs

Paris (AP): France's National Assembly unanimously approved a bill to ban single-use, disposable electronic cigarettes, in an attempt to protect young people drawn to their flavours and mitigate the environmental impacts of the disposable products known as "puffs."

Lawmakers adopted the bill in a late-night vote on Monday by 104 in favour, zero against. The bill, supported by the government, will then move to the Senate where it is expected to be adopted as well. It could go into effect by September 2024. Disposable e-cigarettes — which cost about 10 euros (nearly USD 11) each — are small, battery-powered devices that are especially popular among teenagers for their

sweet flavours. While they do not contain tobacco, many include nicotine, a dangerous chemical known for its addictive properties. They differ from reusable vaping devices in that they are not designed to be refilled or recharged. Their small, non-rechargeable lithium batteries often end up in landfills. This bill is part of a broader trend. The UK, Ireland, and Germany are considering similar measures. New Zealand and Australia have already implemented restrictions, with the former mandating lower nicotine levels and restrictions on vape shop locations near schools. Three years ago, the US Food and Drug Administration cracked down on kid-friendly flavoured reusable e-cigarettes like Juul.

Indian-origin filmmaker re-launches Mandela documentary

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

Internationally-renowned South African filmmaker of Indian origin, Anant Singh, has re-released on an OTT platform his special documentary on the life of the late Nelson Mandela as the country marked his 10th death anniversary on Tuesday.

After serving 27 years in prison under the minority white apartheid government, the globally celebrated leader became President of South Africa in 1994. Mandela died on December 5, 2013. Singh's documentary feature 'Viva Madiba: A Hero for All Seasons' will be seen globally on Netflix and will be available to audiences of the streaming service throughout Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands for the first time.

Initially produced as a tribute to Mandela, the documen-

tary is a celebration of Mandela's epic life and his status as an international icon. The film takes one on a journey behind the headlines and away from the public eye and looks at Madiba through different lenses - as a loyal friend, a faithful comrade, a trusted confidant, a respected mentor, and a man who has touched and transformed countless lives globally.

Mandela's life of struggle, humanity, destiny, and greatness is recalled and celebrated by those who knew him best and who worked with him and "the film takes us beyond the political and into the personal realm and features exclusive interviews with politicians, close friends and comrades," Singh said. These include Archbishop Desmond Tutu; former ANC leader Oliver Tambo; George Bizos, the lawyer who defended



Mandela and his co-accused at the infamous Rivonia Trial that sent them to prison; long-time fellow prisoner and confidant Ahmed Kathrada, and his former jailer, Christo Brand. Also featured in the documentary is current President Cyril Ramaphosa, the country's fourth after Mandela stepped down fol-

lowing just one term in office.

Singh recalled how he had been at the Royal Premiere of his movie 'Long Walk to Freedom' in London when he received news of 95-year-old Mandela's passing after a long illness. Just 15 minutes before the end of the film 'Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom', based on the autobiography of the same name, Singh got the news that Mandela had died. What was expected to be a standing ovation for Singh and the cast of the film from the celebrity audience, including Prince William and his wife Kate, turned into shocked disbelief as he waited for the end of the film to give the audience the tragic news and called for a minute's silence to honour the global icon.

"Even though we had all expected it to happen one day, it was such a shock to hear it

while sitting in the theatre watching the movie exactly as it happened," he said. A planned after-party was also cancelled as cast members left in tears. Singh had spent almost two decades planning the multi-million-rand film, which won accolades all over the world.

Earlier he explained how he had told Mandela after first reading the manuscript for the book that it had to be made into a film. "It is amazing how quickly 10 years have passed — it feels like it was yesterday that we got the dreaded news of Madiba's passing," Singh said, referring to Mandela's clan name. "Whilst the world is poorer without Nelson Mandela, despite his passing 10 years ago, the gravitas of Madiba is still respected and acknowledged not only in South Africa but around the world," Singh concluded.

Stock markets hit new record highs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

SENSEX BREACHES 69K-MARK, NIFTY EYES 21K LEVEL

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty settled at new peaks on Tuesday, rallying for the sixth straight session amid massive buying in power and utility sector shares. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 431.02 points, or 0.63 per cent, to close at a new record high of 69,296.14. The broader index Nifty also climbed 168.50 points, or 0.81 per cent to hit its lifetime high of 20,855.30.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms surged by more than Rs 2.5 lakh crore to cross Rs 350 lakh crore on Tuesday. Analysts said the positive sentiment was fuelled by unabated inflow of foreign funds on the back of robust sentiment built up over favourable macroeconomic data in the previous week and the results of assembly polls of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh that raised expectations of longer political stability in the country. Also, investors



are expecting the Reserve Bank to maintain the status quo on the interest rate in its bi-monthly monetary policy decision to be announced on Friday, they said. Among major Sensex movers, Power Grid rose the most by 4.46 per cent, NTPC by 3.89 per cent, SBI by 2.31 per cent and ICICI Bank by 2.28 per cent.

Other gainers included Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan and Maruti. On the other hand, Hindustan Unilever, HCL Tech, Bajaj Finance remained laggards with losses of up to 1.49 per cent. As many as 20 stocks of the 30-share benchmark closed with gains, while among Nifty firms,



32 shares registered gains. Foreign institutional investors purchased shares worth Rs 2,073.21 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. “The domestic market extended the gains and hit fresh highs despite cautiousness among global peers ahead of key US job data this week. The aura of the

state election results and other positive factors like above-expected earnings and GDP growth data are supporting the return of FII flows to the Indian market,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. “The RBI’s monetary policy meeting is expected to be status quo. However, the com-

mentary on economic growth, foodgrain prices and inflation trajectory will be closely watched,” he added. Meanwhile, in Asian markets, Hang Seng and Nikkei 225 were trading lower by 2.07 per cent and 1.37 per cent, respectively, while China’s Shanghai Composite was trading 1.67 per cent lower. European markets were mixed. Germany’s DAX gained 1.51 per cent and France’s CAC 40 by 0.69 per cent. London’s FTSE 100 declined 0.22 per cent. The US markets ended on a mixed note with S&P 500 registering a loss of 0.54 per cent on Monday. Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude advanced 1 per cent to USD 78.81 a barrel. On Monday, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,383.93 points, or 2.05 per cent, to close at a lifetime high of 68,865.12. The barometer logged its biggest single-day jump since May 20, 2022. Nifty also climbed 418.90 points, or 2.07 per cent, to hit 20,686.80.

Indian Chamber of Commerce unveils first overseas office in Italy

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Marking a milestone in its international expansion strategy, the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has inaugurated its first overseas office in Italy. The ICC said this strategic move underscores its commitment to fostering robust trade relations between India and Italy and its expanding opportunities for Indian businesses in the European market. ICC has appointed Vas Shenoy, a businessman and seasoned geopolitical strategist and analyst, as Chief Representative for Italy who will play a major role in driving the chamber’s engagement with the Italian business community and government entities. ICC President Ameya Prabhu said, “The opening of our first overseas office in Italy marks a pivotal step in ICC’s

global expansion strategy.” ICC Italy’s primary focus will be on promoting India as an attractive investment destination for Italian companies and facilitating the entry of Indian businesses into the Italian market. The establishment of ICC Italy aligns with the recent strengthening of diplomatic ties between India and Italy. The two countries have upgraded their relationship to a strategic partnership and signed defence cooperation and manpower mobility agreements in 2023. The growing economic ties between India and Italy are evident in the surge in bilateral trade, which reached Euro 14.88 billion in 2022. India’s exports to Italy have also witnessed a substantial increase, highlighting the deepening economic relationship between the two nations.

Banks write off ₹10.57 lakh crore in 5 years



‘Make NPA recovery worth ₹7.17 lakh cr’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Banks have written off Rs 10.57 lakh crore during the last five financial years, of which Rs 5.52 lakh crore was in respect of loans pertaining to large industries, the government informed the Parliament on Tuesday. “As per RBI data, scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) have written off an aggregate loan amount of Rs 10.57 lakh crore during the last five financial years,” Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad said in reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha. The scheduled commercial banks have also recovered Rs 7.15 lakh crore of non-performing assets (NPAs) during the five-year period. “Comprehensive steps have been taken to recover NPAs, enabled by which, SCBs have made an aggregate recovery of Rs 7.15,507 crore (RBI provisional data for FY 2022-23) in NPA accounts, including written-off loans, during the last five financial years,” he said.

In reply to a separate question, Karad said: “Scheduled commercial banks have written off an aggregate amount of Rs 5.52 lakh crore in respect of loans pertaining to large industries and services during the last five financial years (FYs), i.e. From FY 2018-19 to FY 2022-23.” He also said that this includes Rs 93,874 crore written off by all the banks on account of fraud during the five-year period. Karad said banks regularly evaluate the impact of write-offs as part of the exercise to clean up their balance sheet, avail tax benefit and optimise capital, in accordance with the said guidelines and policies of the respective boards. “Such write-off does not result in waiver of liabilities of borrowers to repay and therefore, write-off does not benefit the borrowers. The borrowers of written-off loans continue to be liable for repayment and banks continue to pursue recovery actions initiated in written-off accounts through various recovery mechanisms available to them...” Karad said.

COP28: Adani pitches for balanced approach to energy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As world leaders dwell on the language of the final outcome of climate talks, billionaire Gautam Adani on Tuesday made a pitch for adopting a balanced approach that takes into account energy costs and availability while continuing to accelerate on green ambitions. At the 28th UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai, called COP28, 118 governments pledged to triple the world’s renewable energy capacity by 2030 but have not been able to arrive at the language to be used in the outcome document for cutting the share of fossil fuels in the world’s energy production. “In the midst of initial encouraging signs from COP 28, it is relevant to remember that while in sum total (given our 1.4 bil-

lion population) we are the world’s third largest primary energy consumer, our per capita electricity consumption @ 1250 kWh is still less than one-third of the global average and less than one-seventh of the developed world,” Adani said in a post on X. India, he said, is also the only large nation ahead of its target in meeting its UNFCCC commitment to reduce its emissions intensity by 45 per cent from the 2005 level by 2030. “The fastest growing economy must balance its energy cost, energy availability and green energy objectives while continuing to accelerate its massive green ambitions,” he added. On his post, the coal-to-edible oil conglomerate he heads commented: “With a pledge of investing USD 75 billion by 2030, Adani group is playing a



pivotal role in accomplishing this” task of reducing emission intensity. To keep global warming from rising no more than 1.5 Celcius by 2050, fossil fuel use needs to be greatly reduced

and unabated coal use needs to be completely phased out, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has argued. But India is not agreeable to phasing out of coal as 73 per cent of

its current electricity is produced from burning the fossil fuel. The share of coal-fired electricity generation in India’s power mix is slated to rise to 77 per

Solar power potential 75,000 GW by 2050 possible with long-duration storage: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Solar power generation capacity can go up to 75,000 gigawatts by 2050 globally with long-duration storage capacity, a report by the International Solar Association (ISA) and LDES Council, said. The report released on Tuesday by ISA and the Long Duration Energy Storage (LDES) Council unveils a bold vision for the future of renewable energy, showcasing the pivotal role of Long Duration Energy Storage in realizing ambitious solar targets. The report, presented at COP28 in Dubai, emphasized the transformative potential of combining solar energy with LDES to ensure continuous, reliable, and affordable renewable energy, a statement said. The report emphasized the necessity of LDES to fully real-



ize the potential of solar installations for complete decarbonization and achieving a solar capacity of 75,000 GW by 2050. It presented a case study of isolated island utilities in the US, demonstrating the financial viability of LDES in areas with limited interconnectivity and high local fuel costs. The combination of solar, wind, and LDES emerges as the most

cost-effective solution for achieving 100 per cent renewable energy. The LDES Council estimates that LDES will become a USD 4 trillion industry by 2040, with an installed capacity potential of 8 TW, the statement said. This growth is essential for enabling solar energy to meet global electricity demands affordably and reliably.

The report also identified barriers to the widespread adoption of solar and LDES, including regulatory challenges, financing issues, and technical limitations, and proposed solutions to overcome these hurdles. “Solar, already the most economical source of new electricity globally, will further strengthen its competitive advantage. Combined with Long Duration Energy Storage, solar becomes a continuous, reliable 24/7 energy source,” stated Dr. Ajay Mathur, Director General ISA. “Developing long-duration energy storage is the best pathway to full decarbonization for economies worldwide. LDES provides the scaffolding for reliable, resilient, around-the-clock renewable energy for industry and the electric grid,” asserted Julia Souder, Chief Executive Office, LDES Council.



21,791 fake GST registrations

Suspected tax evasion of ₹24,000 cr detected in special drive: FM

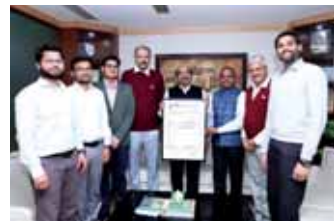
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said GST officers have detected 21,791 fake GST registrations and over Rs 24,000 crore of suspected tax evasion during a two-month-long special drive. In a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha, the minister said to safeguard the interest of honest taxpayers and avoid extreme hardship to taxpayers, instructions have been issued from time to time, directing officers to exercise due caution and care in the exercise of powers such as summons, provisional attachment of property, blocking of tax credit etc. “A total of 21,791 entities (11,392 entities pertaining to state tax jurisdiction and 10,399 entities pertaining to CBIC jurisdiction) having GST registration were discovered to be non-existent. An amount of Rs 24,010 crore (state - Rs 8,805 crore + Centre - Rs 15,205 crore) of suspected tax evasion was detected during the special drive,” Sitharaman said. The minister was replying to a question on the number of entities identified as having fake registrations, and the total amount of evasion detected during the special drive against fake GST registrations conducted by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) from May 16 to July 15, 2023. To a query on whether the government has considered the challenges faced by e-commerce enterprises in obtaining GST

registrations, especially operating in virtual spaces, Sitharaman said that considering the special nature of e-commerce operators, a simplified procedure for registration of e-commerce operators has already been notified. It provides that when an e-commerce operator applies for registration in a particular state or Union Territory where he/she does not have a physical presence, he/she can apply for registration by giving details of the principal place of business located in another state or Union Territory. Further, amendments have been made in GST Rules to strengthen the registration process, including biometric-based Aadhaar authentication, for high-risk registrants, along with the verification of the original copy of the documents. A pilot project for this was launched in Gujarat. In July, the pilot project was extended to Puducherry and in November to Andhra Pradesh. Also, details of bank account, name and PAN of the registered person are required to be furnished within 30 days of the grant of registration or before filing of the statement of outward supply, whichever is earlier. Entities who do not furnish the details of valid bank accounts within the time period prescribed will be suspended automatically by the system. However, upon compliance with this provision subsequently, by the registered persons such system-based suspension would be automatically revoked by the system.

BUSINESS BRIEF

POWERGRID LAB GETS INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION



Gurugram: POWERGRID Advanced Research & Technology Centre (PARTeC), the technology development centre of Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), Maha-ratna CPSU under Ministry of Power, Government of India, has received an UCA International Users Group (UCAIug) accreditation, to perform IEC 61850 Conformance Testing of Intelligent Electronic Devices (IEDs).

INTERNATIONAL HARDWARE FAIR 2023

New Delhi: Over 200 international exhibitors and 7000 trade buyers created a vibrant platform for cutting edge hardware products and solutions at the International Hardware Fair 2023 in national Capital last week.

RISE IN GLOBAL PRICES OF DAP FERTILISERS

New Delhi: Fertiliser industry body (FAI) pointed out that global prices of Di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) have risen in the last few months and said there will be a need to increase either the government subsidy or retail prices if the rates remain high in the international market.

DIGITAL INVESTMENT PLATFORM EXPANDING

New Delhi: Digital investment platform Vested on Tuesday said it is expanding its alternative investment portfolio by offering of Peer-to-Peer (P2P) lending via Vested Edge, and INR (Indian Rupee) bonds and solar projects via Vested Solar. With its solar offering, Vested is looking to give individuals the opportunity to earn while helping India transition to clean energy, a company statement said. Through Vested Solar, investors can own solar panels in rooftop projects and earn 10-13 per cent rate of return from the electricity generated over the panel’s lifetime. The INR bonds offer another alternate fixed income investment opportunity to Vested customers. Vested offers a curated selection of listed corporate and government bonds, with corporate bonds rated A and above, and government bonds backed by the Indian Government.

Rapido forays into cab services segment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ride hailing firm Rapido on Tuesday announced its foray into the cab services segment, where it will compete with established unicorns Ola and Uber. The company has started the service in Delhi-NCR, Hyderabad and Bengaluru with around 1.2 lakh cabs and plans to scale it to around 35 cities by September 2024, Rapido Co-founder Pavan Guntupalli said. “Over the course of 10 years not more than 25 per cent are participating in app based services. Our motive is to bring all these guys online and increase the market. “With a zero commission model, we will maximise their revenues in a way that it is not a burden on users,” Guntupalli said. The captains or the driver partners will get direct payment from customers without any commission cut by Rapido. However, they will have to pay a subscription fee after crossing a certain level of earnings. While the company claimed that it will provide the lowest price in the market, a random



check on the app showed that the fare of Rapido cab was higher compared to the prices offered by the established online players. Guntupalli said that the service has just been launched and the company will work with cab partners to get the cheapest fare across 80 per cent of the route in the city where it operates. Software-as-a-service-based Rapido will invest in adding electric vehicles to its fleet but it will operate rest of cab services at break-even level, he said. The company plans to expand the services to Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai in January-March 2024 and cover a total of 35 cities by September 2024, Guntupalli said.



Gold nosedives ₹1,050 to ₹63,250 per 10 gram

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold nosedived Rs 1,050 to Rs 63,250 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, retreating from its all-time high due to weak trends in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal settled at Rs 64,300 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also tumbled Rs 1,700 to Rs 78,500 per kilogram. “Gold prices plunged on Tuesday in the Delhi markets trading at Rs 63,250/10 grams, down by Rs 1,050, following a bearish trend in the overseas markets,” Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at

HDFC Securities, said. In the futures trade, February contract of gold climbed Rs 46 to Rs 62,415 per 10 grams on the MCX. However, silver’s March contract declined Rs 389 to Rs 75,779 per kilogram on the bourse. In the international markets, gold and silver were quoting lower at USD 2,037 per ounce and USD 24.50 per ounce, respectively. Gold retreated from its record high as the dollar and US Treasury yields advanced amid signs that traders’ believe aggressive monetary policy of Federal Reserve rate cuts may have gone too far, Gandhi said.

JUNIOR HOCKEY WORLD CUP

Araijeet scores hat trick in India 4-2 win

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Araijeet Singh Hundal struck a hat-trick as India dished out a dominant display to beat Korea 4-2 in their opening pool match of the FIH junior men's hockey World Cup here on Tuesday. Hundal scored in the 11th, 16th and 41st minutes while Amandeep found the target for India in the 30th minute in the Pool C match. Dohyun Lim (38th) and Minkwon Kim (45th) were the goal scorers for Korea. India, who had lost to France in the bronze-medal match in the last edition in 2021 in Bhubaneswar, made a strong start with Hundal scoring in the first quarter off a penalty corner. The Indians continued their domination by pumping in two goals in the second quarter through Hundal and Amandeep — both field goals — as they were 3-0 up at the half time. Korea pulled one back though Dohyun midway in the third quarter but India replied soon after with Hundal completing his hat-trick with another field goal. With a 4-1 lead in the match, the Indians appeared to have slowed down a bit. The Koreans pressed for goals and they were able to reduce the margin with Minkwon finding the target. India next play against Spain in their second pool match. Canada is the other country in the four-team Pool C. India have won the tournament twice (2001 and 2016) and finished runners-up once (1997).



JUNIOR WORLD BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS



Payal, Nisha and Akansha strike gold

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Young pugilists Payal, Nisha and Akansha won a gold medal each after dominating performances as India ended their impressive campaign at the IBA Junior World Boxing Championships in Yerevan, Armenia with 17 medals on Tuesday. The Indian contingent secured three gold, nine silver and five bronze medals from the championships. The Indian women's team finished joint second in the event. Payal handed India its first

gold when she outclassed local favourite Petrosyan Heghine of Armenia by unanimous decision in the girls 48kg final. Later, Asian youth champions Nisha and Akansha lived up to the expectations as they extended their dream runs to clinch gold medals in style. Nisha (52kg) and Akansha (70kg) thrashed Abdullaeva Farinaz of Tajikistan and Taimazova Elizaveta of Russia respectively with identical 5-0 margins. Three other Indian women in action on the final day, Vini

(57kg), Shrushti (63kg) and Megha (80kg) signed off with silver medals after suffering defeats in their respective final bouts. In the men's section, Sahil (75kg) and Hemant (80+kg) added silver medals to the Indian tally after going down 0-5 in their respective finals. Jatin (54kg) also put up a strong fight against Tulebek Nurassyl of Kazakhstan before losing 1-4 in a thrilling match. Overall, 12 Indians had entered the finals, which was more than any other country in this edition.



Changing club manager: Sheffield United owner

AP ■ SHEFFIELD

The Saudi prince who owns Sheffield United said Tuesday he has changed the club's manager after the team dropped into last place in the Premier League. Prince Abdullah Bin Mosaad Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud told British radio station talkSport that a decision has been made to part ways with Paul Heckingbottom after his two years in charge and bring back Chris Wilder, who managed Sheffield United when it was last in England's top division.

Wilder, a former player at the club, has coached at second-division teams Middlesbrough and Watford since leaving Sheffield United in March 2021.

Heckingbottom becomes the first Premier League manager to lose his job this season. His final game in charge was the 5-0 loss at Burnley on Saturday, which dropped Sheffield United to last place — where Burnley was at the start of the match — and four points from safety. The team has just one win from 14 games.

The club hasn't officially confirmed the decision to change managers. Heckingbottom took over in November 2021 and led the team into the Premier League this year, but has been hamstrung this season by the sale of key players such as Sander Berge and Iliman NDIaye before the start of the campaign.

Heckingbottom appeared to reference that after the Burnley match when saying the club had "been making financial decisions rather than football decisions."

AP ■ TOKYO

The bid-rigging trial around the Tokyo Olympics played out Tuesday in a Japanese courtroom — more than two years after the Games closed — with advertising giant Dentsu and five other companies facing criminal charges.

Seven individuals are also facing charges from Tokyo district prosecutors in the cases, including Koji Henmi, who oversaw the sports division at Dentsu at the time. Executives or management-level officials at each of the accused companies, and Tokyo Olympic organizing committee official Yasuo Mori, have been charged with violating anti-monopoly laws.

Among the companies facing charges are Dentsu Group, Hakuhodo, Tokyu Agency and event organizer Cerespo. All deal with event organizing, sports promotion or marketing. Dentsu has a long history of lining up sponsorships and advertising with bodies like World

Tokyo Olympics sullied by bid rigging

Athletics, headed by Sebastian Coe, and the Switzerland-based International Olympic Committee, led by Thomas Bach. Genta Yoshino, the lawyer for Henmi, did not deny the bid-rigging took place. Speaking in Tokyo district court, he said no bid process was ever decided upon or set up by the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee. "Even if what happened gets categorized as bid-rigging, all my client did was abide by the organizing committee's intentions, following their instructions," Yoshino told the court, presided over by a panel of three judges. Yoshino said his client merely did his best to make the Olympics a success. Henmi was under pressure from the IOC, which repeatedly expressed doubts about the ability of the Tokyo organizers, Yoshino added.



The organizing committee was headed at the time by Yoshiro Mori, a former Japanese prime minister who was eventually forced to resign as the head of Tokyo 2020. The CEO was Toshiro Muto, a former deputy director of the Bank of Japan. The maximum penalty for a

company convicted of bid-rigging is a fine of up to 500 million yen (\$3.3 million). An individual, if found guilty, faces up to five years in prison and a fine of up to 5 million yen (\$33,000). Trials take months in Japan, sometimes years. The next session in the trial was scheduled

for Jan. 15, 2024. It's unclear when a verdict may come. Dentsu was a key force in landing the Olympics for Tokyo in 2013. French prosecutors have looked into allegations that IOC members may have been bribed to vote for Tokyo. Once the Olympics landed in Tokyo, Dentsu became the chief marketing arm of the Games and raised a record \$3.3 billion in local sponsorship. Dentsu received a commission on the sales - sales that were at least twice as large as any previous Olympics. The reports of corruption surrounding Dentsu also forced the resignation in 2019 of Tsunekazu Takeda, the head of the Japanese Olympic Committee and an IOC member who headed Olympic marketing. Tokyo organizers say they spent \$13 billion to organize the 2020 Olympics, which were delayed a

year by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a government audit suggests the expenditure might have been twice that. At least 60% was public money. The Tokyo scandal ruined the chances of the northern city of Sapporo of landing the 2030 Winter Olympics. It had been a strong favorite but was forced to withdraw. The IOC last week said it favored a French Alps bid for the 2030 Games with Salt Lake City the preferred choice for 2034. Earlier this year French police searched the headquarters of the 2024 Paris Olympics in an investigation over contracts linked to the Games. In the wake of the scandal, Dentsu has been restricted from bidding on contracts for the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and by the city of Osaka and the local prefecture, which is hosting the 2025 World

Exposition. Tokyo prosecutors have also been investigating a separate bribery scandal centered around Haruyuki Takahashi, a former Dentsu executive. Takahashi was a member of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee and wielded powerful influence over the Olympic business. Takahashi's trial opens Dec. 14. He has not publicly acknowledged guilt, or made any statement, and speculation is rife he will fight the charges. The scandal involving Takahashi involves bribery allegations over Olympic sponsorships that were won by companies such as Aoki Holdings, a clothing company that dressed Japan's Olympic team, and Sun Arrow, which produced the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic mascots. Some company officials have already been convicted, but did not receive jail time. Almost all criminal trials in Japan result in guilty verdicts. The defense, including Henmi's, is trying to salvage the client's reputation and minimize any fines.

Lyon returns to Marseille

AP ■ LYON (FRANCE)

Lyon will return to Marseille amid heightened security measures Wednesday to play a game that was postponed after the team's bus was attacked by fans throwing rocks in October. The rescheduled match comes just four days after the death of a fan ahead of a French league game that marked a new low in a season marred by violence.

The match between Marseille and Lyon was initially scheduled on Oct. 29 but was postponed after fans threw rocks and other projectiles at the Lyon bus and then-coach Fabio Grosso needed stitches in his forehead after being hit by broken glass. Lyon fans have not been allowed to travel to the rescheduled game, which takes place in the wake of the incident in the western city of Nantes, where a fan was killed during a fight close to the stadium before a game between Nantes and Nice. The match in Marseille will be under close scrutiny, with local authorities under pressure to deliver an effective security plan.

On Monday, French sports minister Amelie Oudea-Castera called for "a global and extraordinarily determined response" to an upsurge of violence in French soccer that culminated with the



fan's death. "It's just not possible that police forces are so overstretched, that private property is destroyed, that buses are stoned and people injured," Oudea-Castera said. "And now, a death. That's enough." Back in October in Marseille, the Lyon team bus was hit on the way to Stade Velodrome, shattering some windows. Grosso was injured by falling shards of glass and needed medical treatment with his face bleeding heavily. Lyon assistant coach Raffaele Longo was also injured. Supporters were also targeted, five police

officers were injured, and nine people placed in custody. Grosso suffered a deep cut above his left eye that required stitches and a large bandage wrapped around his head.

Following a string of disappointing results, Grosso was fired last week and replaced by interim coach Pierre Sage. "We're waiting for transport to be secured so that the players can tackle the match in the best possible way," Sage said. According to local Lyon newspaper Le Progres, players and staff will leave for Marseille on Wednesday morning and will stay in a hotel that has been booked

in consultation with local Marseille authorities, further away from the Stade Velodrome than the one picked by Lyon in October.

Once in Marseille, the team won't be using its usual bus bearing the club's colors. Lyon will instead use an unmarked bus belonging to a local transport company, fitted with reinforced windows. The team will then be heavily escorted to the stadium.

Because the October incidents took place outside the Stade Velodrome, Marseille has escaped disciplinary sanctions from the French league.

"The situation is a bit delicate," said Lyon right-back Clinton Mata. "We didn't think we'd have to play this match again as if nothing had happened. It's a strange feeling, but we're professional players. After what happened, we're a bit worried."

In addition to the attack on the bus, racist incidents also took place before the match between Marseille and Lyon. As fans from both teams remained in the stadium and exchanged insults as they waited for the game to kick off, some fans from Lyon were filmed making Nazi gestures and mimicking monkeys.

Both Marseille and Lyon, two traditionally successful French clubs, have failed to meet expectations this season. Marseille sits ninth in the standings, 16 points behind league leader Paris Saint-Germain. The situation is even worse for Lyon, which is bottom of the league with just one win in 13 matches.



WFI election date to be announced after December 8

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The notification to hold the stalled Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) elections could be issued on or after December 8, the date set for inclusion of any changes in the electoral college published earlier this year.

The Supreme Court recently set aside the stay imposed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court, paving the way for the process to elect the new WFI governing body.

An IOA-constituted ad-hoc panel, led by Wushu Association of India chief Bhupender Singh Bajwa, is currently managing the day-to-day activities of the WFI after the sports ministry suspended the federation headed by Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh over allegations of sexual harassment levelled by top Indian grapplers.

Several wrestlers, including Olympic medallists Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik, sat in protest at the Jantar Mantar here for more than two months to protest alleged sexual harassment of female grapplers by Brij Bhushan.

The election process, which was set in motion in July, has been delayed because of court cases. This has further led to the suspension of the WFI by the international federation, United

World Wrestling, for failing to conduct fresh polls in the time stipulated by them.

Indian wrestlers continue to participate in international competitions under the UWW flag because of the suspension of the national body.

But with the Supreme Court clearing the path for the elections, the returning officer, Justice (ret'd) MM Kumar, held a meeting on November 30 and asked Bajwa if there is any change in the electoral college notified on July 25, 2023 for the polls, initially scheduled on August 12.

"The way is paved for holding elections of WFI which were stayed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court on August 11, just a day before the date fixed for holding elections," said a statement from the office of the returning officer.

"Returning officer asked Mr Bajwa to inform if there is any change in the electoral college already notified on 25.07.2023... He was asked to provide this information at the earliest. Mr Bajwa sought one week time. Let complete information be furnished within 5 days i.e. On or before 8th December so that final notification for holding elections be issued," said the statement issued by assistant returning officer Tapas Bhattacharya.

US players excited about fresh start under new coach

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Although Emma Hayes hasn't yet assumed her new role as coach of the U.S. Women's national team, she's been involved behind the scenes as the team wraps up a turbulent year and looks forward to an eventful 2024.

Hayes is currently coaching Chelsea in the Women's Super League and won't join the United States until May, a short time before the Americans play in the Paris Olympics.

She visited the team last week as they prepared for a pair of exhibition matches against China. The U.S. Defeated the Steel Roses 3-0 in the first match on Saturday in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The second match is set for Tuesday in Frisco, Texas. Hayes' fresh perspective is welcomed, especially after the

United States was eliminated from the Women's World Cup this summer by Sweden. The Round of 16 exit was the earliest ever for the four-time World Cup champions.

"I think we'll learn a lot from her and she'll learn a lot from us," defender Emily Fox said. Hayes consulted with interim coach Twila Kilgore and U.S. Soccer Sporting Director Matt Crocker on the team's roster for the final two games of the year. The U.S. Left veterans Alex Morgan, Crystal Dunn, Becky Sauerbrunn and Alyssa Naeher off the squad in favor of taking a look at younger players.

"This camp is - honestly, we've been saying it's kind of starting fresh because of the World Cup and everything. Emma, being able to meet her, and obviously having new faces in camp, younger faces," forward Trinity



Rodman said after Saturday's game. "I think it's just building an understanding, creating an identity and executing a game plan." Defender Naomi Girma echoed the sentiment that Hayes' arrival

is something of a fresh start. "We feel like we have our direction. We know what we're building towards now, and it's all very clear. I think overall we're just excited to hit the ground running with her," Girma said.

After the lackluster performance by the Americans at the Women's World Cup, U.S. Soccer parted ways with coach Vlatko Andonovski. Kilgore, one of his assistants, was named interim coach. Hayes was appointed last month. Kilgore's role will continue a bit longer than expected because of Hayes' obligation to Chelsea. But Kilgore will continue on as an assistant under Hayes.

"There's definitely a sense of belonging where the group is really excited to get back together and integrate some of the new players; and also a lot of excitement and a really new feeling just having Emma around," Kilgore said. "She has been focused on player relationships and starting to get to know them and I've been focused on the day-to-day and it's been a good mix."

Following the matches against China, the U.S. Players will get a break before the first women's CONCACAF Gold Cup. Then it's on to the Olympics in July. The United States has qualified for both tournaments. The desire is to put 2023 in the past.

"There's so much talent in the team and I don't think the world has seen enough of it yet, because we need to go out and show it, we need to be able to mesh together and show everything that we have and what we're all about, and how we can really collaborate and play together and be more of a team and be a powerhouse again," captain Lindsey Horan said. "So it's gonna be exciting for us to have (Hayes) and see what she can do with this team and how she can help us improve moving forward."

INDIA TO PLAY FEARLESS CRICKET

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India women team's new head coach Amol Muzumdar wants his players to play 'fearless cricket' while also making it clear that there would be no compromise on fitness and fielding, ahead of the three-match T20I series against England beginning here on Wednesday.

"We need to play a certain brand of cricket, which we have been known for so far. Fearless cricket is something which I have always advocated. We would be playing that brand of cricket," Muzumdar told reporters on Tuesday ahead of the team's training session at the Wankhede Stadium.

"Shafali (Verma) and Jemimah (Rodrigues) are both very important cog in the wheel. I would like them to continue what they have been doing," Muzumdar said that every step taken from here-on will be important as the team has embarked on its preparations for next year's T20 World Cup (September-October 2024 in Bangladesh).

"We are moving towards the World Cup. Every series and match will have its own importance. The series against England and Australia will count a lot," said Muzumdar who is starting his coaching stint with the women's national team during the three-match T20I series against England.

"We had a chat about it with the team and they (players) are all raring to go. Every step that we take (hereon) is (about) moving towards the World Cup.

"England and Australia will be a superb series to start the preparations (for the World Cup). (Both) will be tough series (and) will give us an indication of where we are. Going forward, the tougher the opposition, the better it is," he said.

After the contest against England, India face

NO COMPROMISE ON FITNESS AND FIELDING: WOMEN'S TEAM COACH MUZUMDAR



Australia in another home series.

Muzumdar said there will not be any compromise on fielding and fitness standards, as parameters have been set and are being followed already.

"Fielding and fitness are of highest priority. There is no compromise on fielding or fitness. There will be a lot of camps post this series - a lot of cricket will be played - at NCA or some other place," he said.

"That means more exposure. All the fringe and new players will also get an opportunity." India's record of only seven wins in 27 matches against England in T20Is (home and away) does not bother the new coach who has urged his team to leave the past behind.

"As a team, we have decided to leave the statistics and whatever has happened behind us. We are looking forward to a fresh start," said the domestic batting stalwart.

"The numbers are there to be seen, but these girls and the team are looking forward to the season ahead. We are not going to go back in history — of course it is important — but at the same time, it is also important to look forward to the season ahead. They are all raring to go."

Muzumdar informed that Troy Cooley has been named the bowling coach for the series against England (three T20Is, one Test) and Australia (one Test, three T20Is and three ODIs).

He said women's cricket in India is on 'cusp of something big' with the inaugural Women's Premier League garnering a lot of response from the fans.

"It was a fantastic advertisement for women's cricket last year. We all saw how many people turned up for the game. We all are on the cusp of getting it big in women's cricket. The crowd turning up for the game is absolutely a boost for everyone," he said.



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The T20 series in India gain significance as it will show how the young visiting players excel in conditions which will be similar to what the team will experience in Bangladesh during next year's T20 World Cup, said England women's skipper Heather Knight.

India and England are set to face off in a three-match T20 series, starting here on Wednesday.

"I learned a lot about my game playing in Indian conditions, it really tests you as a cricketer, your skill level and how you do with the noise and the heat," Knight told reporters ahead of England's training session here on Tuesday.

"It is a really good place to accelerate development, to see how our young players cope with it. We have got a T20 World Cup in Bangladesh later on in the year (2024) so this tour is going to be valuable in terms of having similar conditions."

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be hosted by Bangladesh between September and October in 2024.

A lot of members of the England's T20I squad arrived in

India two days before the start of the series which will be played at the Wankhede Stadium on Dec 6, 9 and 10.

Knight said it will be challenging for her team to silence the Indian crowd as despite their dominant record against the hosts, presence of "world-class" players make India a "brilliant" team.

"We have had some really good T20 games against them. They have got some world-class players in and in home conditions they are going to be tough (to face)," Knight said.

After winning the ODI World Cup beating India in the final, Australia captain Pat Cummins had said that he took delight in silencing the Indian fans.

Knight said passionate crowds in India can be imposing on the visiting sides and her team will look to keep its focus amid all the noise.

"Sometimes you can feel like things are accelerating; rushed actually, when there is crowd and the game is happening quite quickly. We have talked a lot about trying to get our own pace, maintain our concentration in the moment," the England captain said.

"Trying to silence the crowd will



be tougher - watching the men's World Cup it is all you see and the support and the passion that Indian fans have and having experienced that, it is a hard thing to do to silence the crowd and even if there is not many of them they are usually very loud.

"We have to have quick turnaround, adapting to conditions has to be accelerated a bit. How we do that, how we communicate, how we are going to take 10 wickets, how we are going to score runs?"

Knight said the past experience of playing in India, including the Women's Premier League (WPL) earlier this year should hold her side in good stead.

"We have got some good experience of players playing in India as well which will be valuable. It will be a brilliant series between two best teams," she said.

Having played in the WPL for Royal Challengers Bangalore

wherein Knight shared the dressing room with some Indian players like Smriti Mandhana, Shreyanka Patil and Kanika Ahuja, the England captain said knowledge-sharing works two-ways.

"It is brilliant that some of the RCB girls have got the chance to play for India on the back of what they did in the WPL. It works both ways, obviously I know those players better and they also know my game better," Knight said.

England have seven wins in nine T20Is against India in their backyard and overall 20 wins from 27 matches, but Knight said it does not feel like they have a comforting factor as far as knowledge of conditions is concerned.

"It feels like a long time actually since we have been to India, before that 2019 series we had a lot of tours here," she said.

"It is how the Future Tours Programme pans

out, and obviously, playing another WPL here in the calendar, there is going to be a lot of cricket here which is brilliant."

Bangladesh looking to secure first test series win over NZ

AP ■ MIRPUR (BANGLADESH)

Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha wants his players to guard against complacency as it tries to secure a first series win against New Zealand in the second and final test.

Bangladesh won the first test in Sylhet by 150 runs to close in on a landmark series victory. The only top-level teams that Bangladesh has ever beaten in a two-match test series are Zimbabwe and West Indies.

"I can't see complacency in the team. If I see any action of complacency, I will have one to one chat," Hathurusingha said ahead of Wednesday's opening day.

"We had a good chat inside the dressing room yesterday. Strong and experienced leaders like Mushy (Mushfiqur Rahim) and Mominul (Haque) spoke very emotionally. They spoke in Bengali. I can see there's no tall poppies in the dressing room."

The Sylhet test victory was only Bangladesh's second against New Zealand in 18 meetings, and it came courtesy of captain Najmul Hossain Shanto's second-innings century. In doing so, Shanto became the first Bangladeshi cricketer to hit a century on his debut as captain.

"Captaincy and leadership are two things," Hathurusingha said. "(Shanto's) captaincy was excellent. He was tactically on the mark. He was step ahead of the game most of the time. Very impressive field placings as well. Sometimes unorthodox, but very effective.

"(His) leadership was excellent. He led from the front with his performance. He was commanding respect, and demanding the standard. I think he has

a long future ahead."

Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, who took 10-184 in the first test, will be a Bangladesh's most crucial weapon in Mirpur, which traditionally has a slow wicket with unven bounce.

"He goes under the radar because he plays second fiddle to Shakib (Al Hasan) in most of the games," Hathurusingha said of Islam. "His record is phenomenal. He has nearly 200 wickets. He is very consistent." New Zealand skipper Tim Southee said the team's spinners need to show more consistency if they are to avoid a first series defeat against Bangladesh.

"We're expecting obviously spin-friendly conditions, but we spoke about it after the last game about being more consistent for longer as a bowling group," Southee said. "And then, obviously, partnerships as a batting unit. We've had a great couple of days of training. So, we're looking forward to getting into another test match."

While Bangladesh's spinners claimed 18 wickets at an economic rate of 2.48, New Zealand's spinners took 14 wickets at a rate of 3.73 runs. New Zealand's frontline spinners Ajaz Patel and Ish Sodhi also had a limited impact in the match, and the team could include Rachin Ravindra and Mitchell Santner in the squad for the second test.

"They're (Ravindra and Santner) obviously capable spinners. But we went with what we thought was the best side to win that first test match," Southee said. "It's just a tough one to try and get your 15 great players to fit into an 11. So, it's about picking a side that you think is going to do the job for the five days ahead of you."

Rajeshwari, Vivaan win season's first trap shooting national trials

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Paris Olympics quota winner Rajeshwari Kumari on Tuesday won the national selection trial 1 in women's trap, while Vivaan Kapoor triumphed in the men's category on a day when both the finals went into shoot-offs.

India's No. 1 woman trap shooter Rajeshwari had topped the qualification round held at the Karni Singh ranges over three days, with a score of 118.

Teenager Bhavya Tripathi of Delhi, who won silver, shot 114 to grab one of the six qualifying spots, but improved upon her fifth position to end tied at 43 hits with Rajeshwari in the final.

Bhavya then missed the first shoot-off shot as Rajeshwari made no mistake to win the match.

Shreyasi Singh was third. Vivaan's path to winning the trial was a bit different as he shot 121 in qualification to finish second to Shardul Vihaan, who shot a table-topping 122.

The Rajasthan trap shooter then hit 44 targets in the final and found himself tied with Zoravar Singh Sandhu after the regulation 50 targets. It was the second time Vivaan faced Zoravar in a shoot-off on the day.

At the end of the qualification, Vivaan had pipped Zoravar 1-0 to take the higher bib number going into the final.

In the final, Zoravar put up a better fight, but missed his third shoot-off target as Vivaan blasted all three. Former world champion Manavjit Sandhu came third.



Ebenyo, Yehualaw star attraction in Kolkata 25K run on Dec 17

PTI ■ KOLKATA

World championships 10,000m silver medallist Daniel Simiyu Ebenyo of Kenya and Ethiopian 10K world record holder Yalemzerf Yehualaw will be the star attractions in the men's and women's sections respectively in the Tata Steel Kolkata 25K run on December 17.

Ebenyo won a silver medal in 10,000m in Budapest world championships in August and then finished second in half marathon in Riga at the inaugural World Road Running Championships, before easily winning the Delhi Half Marathon in October.

Two other Kenyans, Roncer Kipkorir Konga and Bernard Biwott, with sub 60-minute personal best in half marathon (21.0975 km), are expected to challenge Ebenyo for the top

podium position.

Yehualaw, who set the 10k world record of 29:14 in 2022, will participate in the event for the first time. She also sits second on the world all-time list in half marathon with a time of 1:03:51 (clocked in 2021).

Another Ethiopian, Anchinalu Dessie and Kenya's Betty Chepkemoi Kibet will be the main challengers for Yehualaw.

ELITE FIELD: Men: Daniel Ebenyo, Eric Kiptanui, Roncer Konga, Bernard Biwott, Victor Kipruto Togom, Jackson Kiplenting (all from Kenya); Hiskel Tewelde, Afewerki Berhane (both from Eritrea); Abe Gashahun, Mulugeta Debasu (both from Ethiopia).


Women: Yalemzerf Yehualaw, Anchinalu Dessie, Sutume Assefa Kebede (Ethiopia); Betty Chepkemoi Kibet, Nelly Jepotoo (both from Kenya); Mercyline Chelangat (Uganda).



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भाकृअनुप- केन्द्रीय मीठाजल जीवपालन अनुसंधान संस्थान, सीफा कोशलयागंग, भुवनेश्वर, ओडिशा में अनुबंधन के आधार पर काम करने के लिए **01 (One) यंग प्रोफेशनल-II** पद की भर्ती हेतु दिनांक **11.12.2023** को **पू.10.00 बजे** चल-साक्षात्कार आयोजित किया जायेगा। अधिक जानकारी के लिए कृपया संस्थान की वेबसाइट <http://www.cifa.nic.in> पर जाएं।
WALK-IN INTERVIEW
A Walk-in-Interview will be held on **11.12.2023** at **ICAR-CIFA, Bhubaneswar** at 10.00 A.M. for **01(One) no. of Young Professional-II**, purely on a contractual basis to work under the project "Economic empowerment of SC fish farmers through capacity building two aspirational districts-Denkanal and Kandhamal". For further details please visit to ICAR-CIFA website: <http://www.cifa.nic.in>
मुख्य जाँचकर्ता / Principal Investigator



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e-Procurement Notice No. SE-CHWD-06/2023-24
Bid document consisting of work, estimated cost, cost of tender paper, EMD, time of completion, class of contractor, the set of terms and condition of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in e-procurement portal <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>

1	Type of the work	:- Building works, Entrance Gate, Road, Field Canal, Protection wall work.
2	No. of works.	:- 12
3	Class of contractor	:- 'D', 'C' & 'B' Class contractor
4	Bid Identification No.	:- e-CHWD-30/2023-24 to e-CHWD-41/2023-24
5	Estimated cost	:- Rs. 5.51 lakhs to Rs.42.22 lakhs.
6	Period of completion	:- 4 (four) to 6 (six) calendar months
7	Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal	07.12.2023 to 21.12.2023 upto 5.00 PM
8	Last date / time for receipt of bids in the portal	21.12.2023 upto 5.00 PM
9	Date of opening of bid	:- 22.12.2023 at 11.30 AM, in the e-procurement cell, Office of the Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, RBVN Basin, Berhampur, Dist: Ganjam.
10	Name of the office inviting bid	:- Superintending Engineer, Chhelligada Head Works Division, Mahendragada (Gajapati).

N.B.:-
1) Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can be seen in the said website.
2) Further details can be seen from Government website: <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>
Superintending Engineer, Chhelligada Head Works Division, Mahendragada (Gajapati).

OIPR-32109/11/0008/2324

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Email- ori-kakatpur@nic.in
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Bid Identification No. :- 06/2023-24/KAKATPUR BLOCK

The OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI KAKATPUR, Puri, Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites **Percentage Rate Bids** through e-Procurement in **Single Bid System** from eligible Class of Contractors for execution of **Civil Works** as per BMT and DTCN on **Percentage Rate Bids**. Bid documents consisting **Names of Work, Estimated Cost, Cost of Tender Paper, EMD, Time of Completion, Class of Contractor, the set of Terms and Conditions of contract and other necessary documents** can be seen in e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. The bid should be submitted on-line only in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in by eligible class of contractors.

1	Name of the Works: -	CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL CLASS ROOM FOR MANGALA (DEGREE)MAHAVIDYALAYA (at Commerce Block).
2	No. of Works: -	01 (One) No.
3	Estimated Cost (in Rs.): -	18,73,417/-
4	Period Of Completion: -	4 (Four) Calendar Months
5	Date and Time of availability of Bid Documents in the Portal: -	From Dt. 04.12.2023 at 11.00 PM to Dt. 11.12.2023 up to 5.00 PM.
6	Last Date/Time of receipt of Bids in the Portal: -	Dt. 11.12.2023 up to 5.00 PM.
7	Date of Opening of Bids: -	Dt. 12.12.2023 11:00 AM onwards
8	Name and Address of the OIT: -	Office of The Panchayat Samiti, KAKATPUR, Puri, Odisha.
OIPR-19393/11/0006/2324		BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER KAKATPUR, PURI

EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender No. 41-KUR-TRD-OT-2023-24
Name of Work PROVISION OF AUXILIARY TRANSFORMERS (AT) AND ONE MODIFICATION IN CONNECTION WITH AUTO SECTION IN JAKHAPURA-NERGUNDI, KHURDA ROAD-BHUSANDPUR AND GOLANTHRA-PALASA SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Advertised Value: ₹8,73,75,494.80, EMD: ₹5,86,900/-, Period of Completion: 365 days.
Bidding Start Date: 06.12.2023, **Tender Closing date & time:** 20.12.2023 at 1300 hrs.
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.
Complete information including e-Tender documents is available in website www.irops.gov.in
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD)/PR-848/O/22-23 Khurda Road

EAST COAST RAILWAY
(1) e-Tender notice No.: e-Tender-Elect-G-63-23
Description of Work ELECTRIFICATION IN CONNECTION WITH RAISING OF PLATFORMS FROM LOW LEVEL TO HIGH LEVEL IN VARIOUS STATIONS OF SOUTH SECTION OVER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of work: ₹1,75,33,268.96, EMD: ₹2,37,700/-
(2) e-Tender notice No.: e-Tender-Elect-G-64-23
Description of Work UP-GRADATION OF ELECTRICAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN SPART AND SPARME AT DIFFERENT UNITS OVER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of work ₹1,99,70,869.80, EMD: ₹2,49,900/-
(3) e-Tender notice No.: e-Tender-Elect-G-65-23
Description of Work PROVISION OF ALL IN ONE SOLAR STREET LIGHT AT LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY (LHS) IN LIEU OF THE EXISTING MANNED LEVEL CROSSING AT SPECIFIED LOCATIONS OVER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx cost of work: ₹2,41,36,000/-, EMD: ₹2,70,700/-
Completion period of Work: 6 (Six) months (for all tenders).
Tender closing date & Time: 1500 hrs of 20.12.2023 (for all tenders).
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against e-Tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website www.irops.gov.in
The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered or IREPS portal. Only registered tenderers/bidders can participate on e-tendering. All relevant papers must have to be uploaded at the time of participating on e-tendering as per instruction.
Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website ten days before the date of closing of tender to note any Changes/Corrigenda issued for this tender.
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G)/PR-851/O/23-24 Khurda Road