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SC gets 5 judges as Govt keeps pledge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A day after promising the Supreme Court that the Collegium's pending recommendations for the elevation of five High Court judges to the apex court will be cleared soon, the Centre on Saturday notified the appointments. The five judges elevated to the apex court are Justices Pankaj Mithal, Sanjay Karol, PV Sanjay Kumar, Manoj Misra and Ahsanuddin Amanullah.

Law Minister Kiren Rijiju tweeted to announce the appointment of the judges.

Justices Pankaj Mithal, Sanjay Karol and PV Sanjay Kumar are Chief Justices of Rajasthan, Patna and Manipur High Courts respectively. Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah is a judge of the Patna High Court and Justice Manoj Misra is a judge of Allahabad High Court.

On Friday, the Supreme Court had expressed displeasure and pulled up the Central Government for delaying the appointments of the five judges, who were recommended by Collegium on December 13, last year. A Bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Abhay S Oka had given the Centre an ultimatum to process the appointments within ten days, after Attorney General N Venkataramani had submitted that they would be done "soon".

When the Bench insisted for a specific timeline, the AG said that appointment warrant



will be issued on Sunday.

Justice Pankaj Mithal, currently serving as the Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court, was Chief Justice of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court. His parent High Court is the Allahabad High Court. Justice Sanjay Karol is currently the Chief Justice of Patna High Court and was Chief Justice of Tripura High Court. His parent High Court is the Himachal Pradesh High Court.

Justice PV Sanjay Kumar is Chief Justice of Manipur High Court and served as a judge of Punjab & Haryana High Court. His parent High Court is Telangana. Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah is presently a judge of the Patna High Court and was a judge at Andhra Pradesh High Court before being transferred back to Patna, his parent High Court. Justice Manoj Misra has been a judge of the Allahabad High Court for the past 12 years.

Currently, the Supreme Court has 34 judges and there

are seven vacancies. With these five new judges, its strength will up go to 32, with just 2 vacancies. On January 31, the SC Collegium had recommended the names of Allahabad High Court Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Gujarat High Court Chief Justice Aravind Kumar for elevation to the Supreme Court.

Public is 'malik', nobody can give warning: Rijiju

Prayagraj: A day after the Supreme Court warned of action for any delay in clearing transfer and appointment of judges, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday said, "Public is 'malik' (master) of this country and we are servants. We all are here for service and the Constitution is our guide.... The country will be governed under the guidance of the Constitution and wishes of the public. Nobody can give warning to anyone."

P4

India's image unaffected by Adani's FPO pullout: FM

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's economic image is not affected due to Adani Group's recent decision to pull out ₹20,000 crore FPO amid allegations of financial wrongdoings, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday.

The Finance Minister said there has been an accretion of USD 8 billion to the forex reserves in the last two days alone. "...Our macroeconomic fundamentals or our economy's image, none of which has been affected. Yes, FPOs (follow-on public offers) come in, and FIIs (foreign institutional investors) get out," Sitharaman told reporters here.

The Minister said there are "fluctuations" in every market but the accretion over the last few days establishes the fact that the perception of both India and its inherent strengths is intact.

Answering a broader question on the allegations against Adani Group, she said the country's independent financial sector regulators will be looking into the aspect and added that capital markets watchdog Securities and Exchange Board of India has the wherewithal to ensure stability in markets.

"...For keeping the market and the markets regulated in prime condition, the Sebi is the authority. And it has the wherewithal to keep that prime condition," she said.

The FM also said that the RBI has already spoken out on the issue, referring to Friday's statement, which said the bank-



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with MoS for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary addresses a press conference in Mumbai on Saturday

PTI

ing sector is resilient and stable.

About ten days ago, US-based short seller Hindenberg Research made a slew of allegations on the corporate governance front against Adani Group. The Ahmedabad-based group has denied all the allegations and termed it as a calculated attack on India. It has cancelled the FPO even after managing subscriptions to it.

Finance Secretary TV Somanathan on Saturday stood by his comment on the controversy where he called it a storm in a teacup, clarifying that this is in the context of macroeconomic terms and the stability of India's public financial institutions.

Meanwhile, on the decision to convert outstanding dues into equity at Vodafone Idea, Somanathan said the transaction is being done as a package for all telcos.

He said the Government share will be held by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) where the stake will be considered as a public shareholder.

DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said the price has been taken at ₹10 despite the Vodafone Idea shares trading lower on bourses because, as per laws, preferential allotments have to happen at the face value of a share.

The Finance Ministry officials present at the meet also made it clear that the tweaks on taxation in the insurance front will not impact the policy agenda of deepening penetration and clarified that there was sufficient data to suggest that investments were masquerading as insurance premiums due to which a decision was taken to tax the same.

Steps in place to address excess volatility: Sebi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A amid a raging controversy over a meltdown in Adani Group stocks, regulator Sebi on Saturday said it is committed to ensuring the stock market's integrity and all necessary surveillance measures are in place to address any excessive volatility in individual shares.

Without naming Adani Group specifically, the capital markets watchdog said in a statement that unusual price movement in the stocks of a business conglomerate has been observed in the past week. Officials confirmed that the statement has been issued in the wake of the Adani matter only.

"As part of its mandate, Sebi seeks to maintain orderly and efficient functioning of the market and has put in place a set of well-defined, publicly available surveillance measures (including the ASM framework) to address excessive volatility in specific stocks. This mechanism gets automatically triggered under certain conditions of price volatility in any stock," Sebi said.

BSE and NSE have put three Adani group companies under their short-term additional surveillance measure (ASM).

Tribal couple who represented State in R-Day fest 'purified'

**AK SAHOO ■** NUAPADA

A tribal couple who had gone to New Delhi to participate as guests in the Republic Day celebrations at the Kartavya Path, had to undergo a purification (Shuddhi) ceremony to return to their tribe. The fault of the couple was that they had taken their food outside their community.

The couple Bhujabal Majhi and Kunjei Dei lives in the Sunabeda sanctuary area under Komna block in Nuapada

district. They had been accompanied to Delhi by Odisha Government's Chuktia Bhunjia Unnayan Sanstha staff Himanshu Mahapatra. They received a rousing welcome at Cherechuan, Jamagaon and Sunabeda upon their return on February 2. However, as per the tradition, the couple was initially ostracised and had to go through the Shuddhi ceremony as they had consumed food cooked by people from other communities.

"We took a holy bath and offered animal sacrifice to our presiding deity. The ritual is being followed for ages," said Kunjei Dei.

The couple offered a pigeon, two hens, 21 coconuts, lemons and rice to their community. They were allowed to live with their tribe after they offered prayers at the Sunadei temple following animal sacrifice. Besides, the couple organised a feast in which the people belonging to the community took part.

Naba Das murder

BJP slams DGP for invoking Jagannath

Says he hides police failure to save Minister's life

AK SAHOO ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJP on Saturday took potshots at Director General of Police (DGP) Sunil Bansal for his remark on Friday that nobody ever anticipated that Minister Naba Kisore Das would be killed by a police officer and it was only Lord Jagannath who might have prior knowledge of this unfortunate incident.

BJP State spokesperson Golak Mohapatra, while castigating the DGP for not accepting the intelligence and police failure to protect the

Minister, said the top cop should take his uniform off and lead the life of a normal human being or spiritual person.

"A DGP is not expected to take asylum at the feet of Lord Jagannath for his department's failure. He broke his silence six days after the ghastly murder of the incident and did not pay any visit to the crime spot. Add to this, he is now trying to cover up the weaknesses of his department by invoking the name of Lord Jagannath," said Mohapatra.

Meanwhile, ruling BJD MLA Soumya Ranjan Patnaik on Saturday expressed doubt over the security provided to him. "I have also been provided with an armed Personal Security Officer (PSO). Most often, I fear if he would turn out to be one like Gopal Das, the ASI who killed Naba Kisore Das," said Patnaik on the sideline of a programme in Cuttack.

Patnaik's statement came a day after Leader of the Opposition (BJP) Jayanarayan Mishra gave up his PSO for security reasons.

When asked about the DGP's statement with respect to the incident, Patnaik wryly said, "He should worship Lord Jagannath and invoke Him to come in his dream and tell him the reason behind the murder.

It would also go a long way in ending the difficulties of Bothrababu (Crime Branch ADG Arun Bothra)."

CB questions Gopal's wife, nephew

ADG Bothra meets Justice Das

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Continuing their probe into the murder of Minister Naba Kisore Das, Crime Branch (CB) sleuths on Saturday questioned accused Gopal Das' wife and nephew in Brahmapur.

A four-member CB team reached the residence of Gopal at the Ankuli industrial area under the Baidyanathpur police limits in Brahmapur and grilled his wife Jayanti and nephew. Earlier, Gopal's elder brother had also been picked up by the CB for questioning.

The remand period of Gopal, who is in judicial custody, ended on Saturday.

In another development, CB ADG Arun Bothra on Saturday met Justice JP Das, the retired judge nominated by the Orissa High Court to monitor the probe into Minister

Naba Das' murder.

He met Justice Das at his residence and discussed the headway in the investigation. Justice Das reportedly suggested Bothra to probe the matter from necessary angles.

Justice Das said he would visit the crime spot.

On Friday, during the probe in Jharsuguda, the investigative team led by CB ADG Bothra found 22 pieces of handwritten papers from the septic tank of Jharsuguda Airport police station. Handwriting experts have been roped in to examine the retrieved notes. The accused had reportedly written the motive behind killing the Minister in the papers. He had flushed the notes at the toilet during his detention at the Airport police station, sources said.

The CB team had also seized a few documents and diaries from Gopal's Government quarters and office desk at Brajarajnagar.

Tara's Naveen-praise embarrasses Cong

**PNS ■** BHUBANESWAR

The Congress is greatly embarrassed over its MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati's lavish praise of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at a Government function at Bahinipati's

constituency Jeypore on Friday. Bahinipati not only profusely complimented the Chief Minister for the State Government's development works in the former's Koraput district, he also repeatedly chanted "Naveen Patnaik

Zindabad" on top of his voice and exhorted the audience to respond to the slogan.

Congress leaders, former PCC president Jayadev Jena and MLA Suresh Kumar Rouray, strongly disapproved of Bahinipati's act.

'AI could help deliver personalised cancer treatment'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In good news in the cancer care segment, a team of researchers have leveraged artificial intelligence (AI) technology to identify genes critical to a cancer cell's survival, and could help deliver personalised cancer patient treatments.

They analysed different types of cancer cells to understand different gene dependencies for identifying the genes, the study said.

Researchers at the University of Sussex, UK, have done this by developing a prediction algorithm that works out which genes are essential in the cell, by analysing the genetic changes in the tumour.

This can be used to identify actionable targets that in time could guide oncologists to personalise cancer patient

treatments, the study said.

"Our vision is to take advantage of the decreasing cost of DNA sequencing and to harness the power of AI to understand cancer cell differences and what they mean for the individual patient's treatment. "Through our research, we were able to identify cell-specific gene dependencies using only the DNA sequence and RNA levels in that cell, which are easily and cheaply obtainable from tumour biopsy samples," said Dr Frances Pearl, Senior Lecturer in Bioinformatics at the University of Sussex.

"This is an incredibly exciting step in our research which means that we can now work to improve the technology so that it can be offered to oncologists and help in the treatment pathways for their patients," said Pearl.



Cancer treatments are primarily prescribed on the basis of the location and type of cancer. Genetic differences in tumours can make standard cancer treatments ineffective.

Using a personalised approach to guide treatment could improve life expectancy,

quality of life and reduce unnecessary side effects of cancer patients, the study said.

In each cell, there are around 20,000 genes that contain the information needed to make proteins. Around 1,000 of those genes are essential, meaning they are required for the cell

to survive.

When normal cells become cancer cells, oncogenes, or genes with the potential to cause cancer, become activated and tumour suppressor genes become inactivated, causing a rewiring of the cell.

This causes the cell to become dependent on a new set of genes to survive, and this can then be exploited to kill the cancer cells. By using this new AI technology to target protein products of tumour-specific dependent genes, cancer cells can be killed, leaving the normal cells which are not dependent on these genes relatively unharmed, the study said.

Although dependencies can be determined using intensive laboratory techniques, it is costly and time consuming and would not be feasible to analyse all tumour samples in this way, the study said.

5T Secy visits Narayanapatna

Jagannath temple renovation master plan soon

**Jhanjavati
Minor Irrigation
wok to be
expedited**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Directed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, his Secretary VK Pandian on Saturday toured Narayanapatna block and first visited the Jagannath Mandir there.

After darshan of the lord, he spoke to priests of the temple and locals and assured to take up development of the shrine for the benefit of devotees. He asked the district administration to submit a master plan for renovation of the temple and the adjoining



areas. Pandian then visited the site of the Jhanjavati Dam and spoke to Minor Irrigation officials and asked them to expedite the tender process. He advised the Land Acquisition

Officer to take up land acquisition with immediate effect. He said the dam and the consequent irrigation programmes would have life-changing impact for people of Bandhugan and Narayanapatna. The socioeconomic landscape of the area would be transformed, he said.

He then visited the SSD School at Dandabadi and the Odisha Adarsh Vidyalaya (OAV) at Pachingi and interacted with students and teachers. He enquired about the facilities available for them. He then inspected the 5T works at OAV and inspired the students to aim big in life. He assured them of full support from the Government.

Sports Secretary Vyneel Krishna and the district Collector, among others, were present.

Pandian then made a visit to the Deomali peak in Pottangi block.

He interacted with representatives of local SHGs operating cafes and advised them to ensure quality and hygiene.

He also oversaw the ongoing work for an Eco Resort by the Forest Department and asked officials to ensure its timely completion.

He also asked the district administration to work on developing adventure sports and renewable energy sources on the mountain with Government support.

Ramacharit Manas jibe Send Bihar Edu Minister to jail: Puri seer

SAROJ KUMAR MISHRA ■ PURI

Coming down heavily on Bihar Education Minister Chandrasekhar for opposing Ramacharit Manas, Puri Sankaracharya Nischalanda Saraswati said the Minister must be sent to jail.

Daring Chandrasekhar to speak a word against the Quran and Bible, Sankaracharya said the Minister deserves immediate expulsion from the ministry for his anti-stand on Ramcharit Manas. Saraswati urged to scrap the citizenship of Chandrasekhar as the Minister lost right to stay in the Education Ministry.

He said Chandrasekhar deserves punishment and nature will punish him in future for sure. "Let him speak

against the Quran and the Bible, he would get instant results. He should be tied inside jail and his citizenship should immediately be scrapped," said Saraswati.

Sankaracharya was responding to mediapersons at Varanasi when he sought his reaction over anti-Ramacharit Manas comments of the Bihar Minister. Reacting over Manu Smriti, the seer said the Minister must read its second volume published in Hindi by Gita Press to clear a misconception.

He said the Manu Smriti is the first Vedic constitution and was prevailing even during the British rule up to the country's independence. The seer said the forefathers of Chandrasekhar had already honestly accepted it as their constitution.

'Pay Rs 5L to K'pada minor rape victim'

**NHRC to DM
PNS ■ KENDRAPADA**

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on February 2 directed the district Collector of Kendrapada to grant a compensation amount of Rs 5 lakh to a minor rape victim as applicable under the NALSA scheme.

Acting on a petition filed by RTI activist Sagar Jena of Endor village under Kendrapada Sadar police station, the apex rights panel passed the order.

Jena brought to the notice of NHRC on last 13/12/21 that

a class 6th girl student of a Pattamundai -based Ashram School was raped and impregnated in 2021. He sought action against the accused and to provide compensation to the minor victim.

Later, the Commission on its proceeding issued notice to the district Collector and SP of Kendrapada calling for report in regard to the incident.

Earlier, the Commission had received a report on 27.4.2022 from the ADM, Kendrapada on the issue and on the basis of the report had also called for comments.

Youth Cong decries Union Budget

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Union Budget is anti-youth, anti-student and anti-farmer. The Narendra Modi Government had promised employment for 2 crore persons. But there is no provision for it in the Budget, said the Youth Congress on Saturday.

During a demonstration held by the organisation at Master Canteen Square here against the Union Budget, Bhubaneswar Youth Congress president Suraj Rout said that presently more than 9.5 lakh Central Government jobs are lying vacant. The fund allocation for the MNREGA scheme, which provides



employment in the rural areas, has been decreased.

The farmers have also been neglected in the Budget as nothing has been said about the Minimum Support Price (MSP). Earlier, it had been promised that by 2022 the income of farmers would be doubled. An amount of Rs 6,000 that is being given to farmers under the PM Kisan

Rs 26L drugs seized; 4 held in Puri

**Accused include
2 women
PNS ■ PURI**

The Special Task Force of the Crime Branch seized 256 grams of brown sugar and arrested four persons in this connection on Saturday in Puri town. The estimated market value of the seized contraband was around Rs 26 lakh.

On the basis of intelligence inputs, a joint team of the STF and Baseli Sahi police conducted a raid near Sanddha Chhak on the Loknath road and seized the

narcotic drugs from the possession of four drug peddlers, police said. Among the arrested accused were two women drug peddlers of Puri. Police also seized two motorcycles and four mobile phones from the possession of the accused.

Later, all the accused were forwarded to the court of the District and Sessions Judge.

The STF registered a case against the accused under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. Further investigation in the case was on, police said.

Leos hold blood donation camp

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A mega blood donation camp was organised by the Leo Club of Technostar at CTTC here on Saturday under the patronage of the Lions Club of Bhubaneswar Youth and CTTC Bhubaneswar.

The programme was conducted with the assistance of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation Hospital Blood Bank staffs. The trainees of CTTC were impelled during the programme and donated 151 units of blood.

Lions Club and Leo Club of Bhubaneswar youth members Bimal Chandra Das, Ajay Kumar Mohanty, Lalitendu Satpathy, Sushant



Rout, Amlan Pattanayak, senior staffs of CTTC L Rajsekhar, Dr KM Rajan, Minaketan Satapathy, Sushant Rout with all the Leo

'People of country have accepted Budget'



The Union Budget is meant to provide social justice, respect and equal opportunity to the people of the country, said Union Minister Arjun Munda here at a Press meet on Saturday.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, the economic

condition of the country is robust. The 2023-24 Budget's outlay has been increased to Rs 45 lakh crore, which points out to the rapidly growing economy of the country. The people of the country have given a thumb-up to the Budget, said Munda.

The inclusion of new category Schedule Tribe is not a political rhetoric but totally a

Constitutional matter. Unfortunately, the State Government is not following the Constitutional process but writing letters to make political complaints, he said.

The Paudi and Pauri Bhuyans are coming under PVTG, but they have been excluded from the ST category. This proves the anti-tribal mentality of the State Government, alleged Munda.

Legacy of Odia literature affirmed at BBSR meet

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The second day of the seventh edition of Tata Steel Bhubaneswar Literary Meet on Saturday witnessed a galaxy of stalwarts from various fields of literature and art under one roof.

Jagadish Mohanty, who is considered as the trendsetter of Odia fictions, was fondly remembered by holding discussion about his works. Dr Himanshu Mohapatra along with Odisha Sahitya Akademi award winner Sarojini Sahoo and novelist and fiction writer Paresh Patnaik discussed the legacy of Mohanty and released an English translation of his book "Nija Nija Panipatha".

The event began with Anirudha Bhattacharjee and Parthiv Dhar, author of singer Kishore Kumar's biography "The Magic of



Kishore Kumar", sharing many unknown stories of the singer. Khushwant Singh spoke on the factors that drive him to write biographies. Emerging young Odia poets Sujit Kumar Satapathy, Sreema Satapathy, Nikhilesh Mishra and Swagatika Mishra shared their passion for literature and read out their poems.

Film personalities Pankaj Kapur and Supriya Pathak

Leader's statue in Parliament premises demanded

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The 89th death anniversary of Utkalgaurab Madhusudan Das was observed by the Utkal Sammilani by paying floral tributes to his statue at Raj Bhavan Square here on Saturday.

In a meeting presided over by Utkal Sammilani central president Basant Tripathy and attended by secretary Radhanath Praharaj, Madhubabu's invaluable contributions to the State were recalled.

Among others, Prof Kashinath Rath, Banambar Parida, Bharat Kumar Jena, Amaresh Mishra and Pathani



Jena were present.

In another memorial function, the Utkal Sammilani Mancheswar branch president Dillip Dashsharm demanded that a statue of Madhubabu be installed in the Parliament premises. Sammilani advisor Padma Charan Nayak demanded that Gora Kabir in Cuttack, where Madhubabu is cremated, be developed into a tourist spot. Among others, Sammialni branch vice-president Surendra Mishra, advisor Nimai Charan Das, vice-president Sital Chandra Mohanty, Akshay Kumar Jethi and Prasanna Rath were present.

In Baleswar

Attack on Sub-Collector: 11 including 3 women held

UBACHAK MOHANTY
■ BALESWAR

Police on Saturday arrested 11 accused persons in connection with attack on Baleswar Sub-Collector Kunal Motiram Chavan and his driver near Dahapada in the district on Friday.

Of the 11 accused persons, three were women. The search operation is underway at Dahapada and Kantabania under the Sahadevkhunta police limits to nab the others involved in the attack, police said.

Around 10-12 sand mining mafias had suddenly attacked the 32-year-old IAS officer in broad daylight while he was checking documents of a



sand-laden truck near Fuladi Kantabania on Friday. The mafias made a murderous attack with bricks and sharp weapons on him and his driver opposing the raid on the truck, which was suspected to be transporting sand without necessary papers.

However, Chavan and his

driver survived in the incident. Later, the attackers fled from the area.

The injured duo was admitted to the District Headquarters Hospital and later discharged after treatment. Speaking about the incident, Baleswar Collector Dattatreya Bhausahab Shinde

said the district administration had conducted raids in the Mandarpur and Dahapada areas on Thursday night based on an information about illegal sand mining in the Budhabalanga river and seized several tipper trucks, tractors and JCBs used in the illegal activities. Chavan was sent to the area on Friday to calculate the value of the seized sand. The mafias attacked him near Dahapada when he was checking the papers.

Taking action against illegal sand mining, the Collector directed to raze brick kilns to the ground at Dahapada on Saturday. Two platoons of police force were deployed at the site for the demolition drive.

‘Ensure Naveen as CM for 6th time’

BJD holds foundation day at Kujang



PNS ■ PARADIP

The BJD's foundation day was celebrated at Kujang. Party district coordinator Arun Sahu and district president Prashant Muduli gave guru mantra to the party workers on how to further strengthen the BJD in the district and how to counter the BJP propaganda.

Paradip MLA Sambit Routray, former MP Dr Kalmani Samal, Paradip Municipality Chairman Basant Biswal, BJD State

secretary Santosh Kumar Pattnaik, Pramod Jena, former ZP Chairman Sabita Mohapatra, block chairman Jinarani Behera were present.

Santosh Pattnaik called upon party workers and leaders to ensure that BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik becomes the Chief Minister for a sixth consecutive term. He said Naveen Patnaik continues to remain highly popular because of his untiring efforts for development of the State all these 23 years.

Joranda Mela kicks off at Mahima Gadi

PNS ■ DHENKANAL

The famous Joranda Mela or Magha Mela kicked off at Mahima Gadi, the seat of Mahima sect at Joranda in Dhenkanal district on Saturday. The three-day annual festival is being held with public participation after a gap of two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This is the 150th Prabhupurnima Utsav to be celebrated at Mahima Ggadi. While the characteristic rituals of cleaning the temple premises began, lighting of the Jhada Deepa (sacred lamp) took place by the Kaupindhari and Bakaldhari Sadhus at 5.40 pm.

Notably, this year, conduct of the mela was uncertain due to the ongoing conflict between the two sects of saints,



but the stalemate was resolved after intervention of the district administration and people's representatives.

Sources said that over three lakh devotees are expected this year from Nepal, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh, most of whom have started arriving since last week. Official sources said the district administration has put all arrangements in place including public amenities like toilets, drinking water, etc. Security too has been beefed up to manage the crowd and ensure smooth conduct of the fair.

NIT-R celebrates 20th Convocation

PNS ■ ROURKELA

The National Institute of Technology, Rourkela (NIT-R) celebrated its 20th Convocation with a graduating class of 1,717 students, including 351 women, on Saturday. While SAIL Chairman Soma Mondal was chief guest, MCL CMD Om Prakash Singh was guest of honour. NIT-R Board of Governors Chairman Prof K Umamaheshwar Rao presided over the event.

Congratulating the graduates, Mondal said, "Having a mentor in your professional journey will help you in facing unforeseen challenges. You will face failures in your life as well, but make sure you do not stop



putting efforts to achieve your goals. Aspire to become a trendsetter and a leader, flourish yourself in diverse areas to become an all-rounder."

Om Prakash Singh said, "You are now the band ambassadors of your institute. Go out there and explore the world and I am sure you will come out with flying colours." A highlight of the convocation was Distinguished Alumnus Awards to nine alumni of NIT-R.

MCL deploys drone technology in mines

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

The Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) has introduced the drone technology in its mines by launching a web-based portal VIHANGAM along with a drone and a ground control system. The portal allows an authorised person to access real time drone video from the mines through a dedicated 40-Mbps internet lease line near the mines.

There is a control station that flies the drone and the system can be operated through the portal from anywhere. The pilot project is at present operational at the Bhubaneswari and Lingaraj



opencast mines of Talcher Coalfields.

The MCL is making use of the drone technology for environmental monitoring, volume measurement and photogrammetric mapping of mines for digitalisation of

mining process.

Besides deploying the state-of-art technology to further enhance record coal production, the MCL has also stepped up the use of latest equipments to add to the safety standards.

The company has recently introduced Robotic Nozzle Water Sprayer in its coal stockyard. Coal companies use Robot-assisted fire-fighting and dust-suppression advanced technology to carry out difficult and dangerous jobs.

The equipments can spray water up to 70 meters in the form of mist. The nozzle, also termed as swivel nozzle, is installed on a water tanker of 28-kilolitres capacity. Engaged in mining activities in Sundergarh, Jharsuguda and Angul districts of Odisha, the MCL contributes more than 20% of the total coal produced in India.

6 yrs after marriage

Nepali girl ‘duped’ by hubby over his first wife

Yet forgives him, returns from S’garh without taking legal action

MALAY RAY ■ SUNDARGARH

A Nepali girl forgave a man of Sundargarh district, who lived with her for six years after marrying her in Gujrat without telling her about his first marriage.

The victim girl also did not lodge any FIR against him and returned to Gujarat with her brothers and from there she will go to her home country, Nepal.

Parul Soni(27), a native of Nepal, whose relatives stay and work in Morbi district in Gujarat, had come in contact with one Sandeep Bagar(40), a native of Chhatenpali under Lephripara police station of Sundargarh district. He posed



himself as an unmarried man and proposed her to marry him. Parul agreed and became his life partner.

Both had been living there as husband and wife for six years. Sandeep had not told Parul about her wife, son and parents living at Sundargarh all these years.

The factory in which both were working got closed following which Sandeep told Parul to go with him to stay in his Chhatenpali house at Sundargarh. Both reached Chhatenpali on January 8. When the door of the house opened, Parul found a woman standing there to welcome Sandeep. when Parul asked Sandeep about the identity of

the woman, he was reluctant to give a reply. But when Parul insisted, Sandeep told the woman was his wife and they were having a son.

Hearing this Parul got shocked and sat outside the house of Sandeep. She also noticed the first wife of Sandeep quarreling with him over Parul.

Parul came out of Sandeep's house without creating a scene and met an auto driver on the road and told about her plight.

The auto driver took her to Astha Gruha, a house for mentally challenged woman. Parul met Snehlata Patel, secretary of Astha Gruha and narrated her plight and also told how she was duped by

Sandeep.

Snehlata talked to Subhashree Pradhan, secretary, District Legal Services Authority(DLSA), Sundargarh about victim Parul. Parul met secretary, DLSA on January 9 and gave her in writing about her plight and wrote her to arrange for her return to her place in Gujrat.

On being informed, Sundargarh SP gave wireless message to Superintendent of Police, Morbi, Gujrat, on January 12, for Parul's safe repatriation. On January 27, Parul's brother Sapnel Soni from Nepal alongwith his cousin brother Jiban Singh reached Astha Gruha, Sundargarh and took Parul with them to Gujrat.

"Parul Soni was a really nice girl and she proved it after forgiving her husband," said DLSA secretary Pradhan.

Thoughts on our Constitution @74

In a pulsating interaction with Rajdeep Sardesai, Fali Nariman, the tallest living lawyer with 70 years of legal practice, brought out how the present Government needs to resuscitate the National Judicial Commission Bill of 2003 to put an end to the debate on the collegium system. The pre-collegium system worked beautifully till 1973 with hardly any appointment by the Government deviating from the advice given by the CJI in terms of Art 124(2). While Nehru was weary of the possible judicial snub and dominance, his daughter wanted judges to be committed and complicit with her social philosophy, socialism. The supersession of three senior-most judges and appointment of AN Roy on April 24, 1973 was the first decisive executive blow to browbeat the independence of the judiciary. This was the kernel of the basic structure doctrine in the iconic Keshavanand Bharati case (1973). As if this was not enough, Justice MH Beg superseded Justice HR Khanna to become CJI in January



SATYA NARAYAN MISRA

1977 as Justice Khanna dissented in ADM Jabalpur Case (1976) to uphold the right of detenu for habeas corpus against arbitrary arrest during the Emergency. The years 1973-1977 were the lowest ebb of judicial independence and executive egregiousness.

With the loss of power by the Congress in 1977, its amendment of Art 368 in 1976 to assume omnipotent powers to amend the Constitution and snuff out the power of judicial review was snubbed by the Supreme Court in 1980 in the Minerva Mills Case.

However, the power to transfer judges and appoint them remained a troubled terrain. In a rare unanimous judgment in October 1993, the Supreme Court conjured the collegium system with CJI and three other judges to decide the appointments and read consultation in Art 124(2) as concurrence. Such a diabolical interpretation had no global parallel or Constitutional sanctity.

Nariman notes in his interview that the Venkatchaliah Committee constituted by PM Vajpayee in February 2000 advised that a National Judicial Commission supplant the collegium system. The NJC would have five members with CJI chairing it, two senior judges, the other two members being the Law Minister and an eminent person nominated by the President in consultation with the CJI. Such a system would make the selection of judges participatory of executive and distinguished members of civil society. However, the majority voice would be that of the judiciary. As the Parliament was dissolved in

2003, the NJC Bill had to be shelved.

The Government resuscitated the ghost of NJC with a modified composition with three Supreme Court Judges counterbalanced by three members, Law Minister and two eminent persons in 2014. The Supreme Court struck the NJAC Act with a 4-1 majority in 2015 by using the scimitar of basic structure doctrine. Its real fear was that the two eminent persons in consort with Law Minister can checkmate the three judges. Justice Lokur was very critical of the presence of Law Minister as a representative of the executive in the commission. Justice Chalmeswar, who dissented, observed that the assumption of the primacy of judges in the appointment of judges is flawed. He also agreed with the Attorney General that the exclusion of the Government from the selection process is illogical and goes against the principle of checks and balances, a basic structure in democratic governance. The National Commission to review the

Constitution also suggested that freedom of the press and other media should be part of Art 19(1)(a) and the free legal aid provision Art 39A which is part of the directive principle should be a part of Fundamental Rights.

In the matter of selection, there are two models available globally. In the USA, the nomination made by the President is subjected to intense scrutiny by the Senate Judicial Committee and put to vote. In most cases of selection, the senators have transcended their party loyalty and voted on the basis of merit. On the other hand, South Africa follows a very broad-based committee of 25 members which includes members of the bar, teachers of the law, a Minister of Law, besides judges. Ambedkar was inclined to follow the US model but in the end pointed out that India is still not ripe enough to adopt democratic practices like the USA. When Nehru asked Setalvad, the first Attorney General on his views he observed; more than independence we should look for

judges with competence.

Nariman believes that the standards of judges being selected in recent years are decidedly inferior to the quality of judges in the first three decades. He also strongly advocates for a dialogue between the CJI and the PM/ Law Minister to end the present unsavory stalemate. He quoted how there used to be a regular dialogue between Morarji Desai as CM and MC Chagla as CJ of the Bombay High Court, though they were completely different personalities. On the face of it his suggestion to adopt NJC makes sense, though one is not sure whether it is the business of judges to select & appoint judges. Therefore, the SP Gupta judgment of 1981 which gives primacy of power to the executive, with CJI advising is the classically correct course. However, the Supreme Court having beaten the bug of supersession earlier and facing the authoritarian heat of the present majoritarian government is unlikely to bite the bullet of status quo ante. Like EM Foster's two

cheers for democracy, the NJC composition of 2002 is an acceptable middle path.

As we step into the 73rd year as a Republic, the Government should also consider making freedom of the press and free legal aid fundamental rights. The right to health and the right to shelter should become fundamental rights as has been done in South Africa. Most importantly, early childhood care & education which is in a dismal state for about 30 million children should be made a fundamental right like from ages 6-14. The ASER reports constantly lament the poor learning outcomes in our public schools. Be it Nehru, Indira Gandhi or Modi, the neglect of basic quality education remains a serious policy scar continuum. It's time to realise the promise of NEP 2020 to provide children aged of 3-9 the benefit of quality foundational learning. The prospect of a demographic dividend will critically hinge on how seriously we look at the quality of our primary years of learning. (The writer is a Professor Emeritus)

INBRIEF

EX-MLA ARJUN DAS DIES IN ROAD ACCIDENT)

Jajpur: Former Congress MLA Arjun Charan Das died in a road accident on the Kharasrota bridge in Jajpur district on Saturday. A speeding Hyva truck ran over him while he was travelling to Bhubaneswar from Jajpur by his motorcycle in morning. Arjun Das, son of former Jajpur MP Anadi Das, was the MLA from the Binjharpur constituency between 1995 and 2000. Recently, he had joined the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) led by Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. Rao in a message condoled Das' demise.



MLA BHAGIRATHI SETHY INJURED IN BEE ATTACK

Keonjhar: Anandapur BJD MLA Bhagirathi Sethy was injured when he was attacked by bees during a morning walk at Anandapur on Saturday. A swarm of bees attacked him while he was walking alone at Anandapur Block Chhak. Sethy ran to the nearby block office to save him. Sources said he has around 20 to 25 bee stings on his body. Locals admitted Sethy to the Anandapur Sub-Divisional Hospital for treatment. His health condition was stable, informed the hospital authorities.



SINGER BANI JAYARAM NO MORE

Bhubaneswar: Renowned singer Bani Jayaram passed away on Saturday. Many prominent personalities mourned her demise.



NYCA MOURNS FOR FREEDOM FIGHTER MOHARANA

Bhubaneswar: The Niladrivihar Youth and Cultural Association (NYCA) paid deep tributes to veteran freedom fighter Jogindra Moharana, who died recently at the age of



94. A condolence meeting was presided over by association president Dr Prakash Chandra Panigrahi. Natabara Barik, Prasanta Mallick, Sudarshan Sahoo, Satyabrata Mohapatra, Amrendra Das and veteran writer and actor Babaji Charan Sahoo spoke. A souvenir containing the journey of Moharana's life was released. Association general secretary Biswajit Pattanaik wanted a statue and naming of a prominent road after him. Moharana's eldest son Dushasan founded the association in 1994 to unite the youth mass.

NAYAGARH: 2 LABOURERS DIE; 3 HURT IN PIPELINE BLAST

Nayagarh: Two labourers were killed and three others sustained critical injuries while laying a pipeline at Sunalati under the Itamati police station in Nayagarh district on Saturday. The deceased were natives of Maharashtra. The mishap took place when the labourers were engaged in the laying of a GAIL India pipeline. A compressor suddenly exploded during the cleaning of the pipelines, leaving as many as five labourers grievously injured. The injured were rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital, where two of them were declared dead on arrival.

JSP FOUNDATION TO SET UP HOSPITAL IN BARBIL

Barbil: The JSP Foundation has started building of a hospital at Deojhar, Barbil. JSP chairman Naveen Jindal and JSP Foundation chairperson Shallu Jindal laid the foundation-stone for Jindal Aarogyam Hospital, which is expected to be completed in 18 months. Naveen Jindal said, "This hospital is part of our efforts to build a healthy society."



MAOIST ARMS DUMP BUSTED IN KALAHANDI

Bhawanipatna: A Maoist dump was detected by the security forces near the forest adjoining Pujaguda village under the Narla police station in Kalahandi district on Saturday and some arms and ammunitions were seized from the spot. But the ultras had fled. The Maoist hideout was busted during a search conducted by CRPF and district police personnel. According to police sources, the seized articles were intended to make weapons to target the security forces. A gun, Maoist literature, banners, posters, electric wires and other items were seized.

Agniveer recruitment through e-test

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Given the rapidly changing nature of warfighting with stress on technology, the Army has decided to conduct written examination for all the aspiring Agniveers. Once they clear the examination, the candidates will have to undergo physical endurance test followed by the medical test. The Navy and the IAF are already following the process in the same order.

The new tweaking in selection by the Army will commence mid February, sources said here on Saturday. Prospective candidates will first be required to take an admission examination online.



The physical and medical examinations will take place later.

Previously, the Army would undertake a physical and medical examination first.

Only after passing the first two tests were candidates permitted to take the written examination. They said the new method will also help in easing screening process and the

logistics involved. For the first time in 2022, the Indian Army recruited soldiers under the Agniveer programme. Agniveer recruitment followed the same procedure as regular

soldier recruitment.

A large number of candidates are said to congregate at army recruitment rallies, which occasionally causes law and order issues. Additionally, it consumes a lot of resources.

The written examination in the first step will screen out candidates. Those who pass the written exam will be authorised to take the physical and medical exams.

"The changed methodology will ensure increased focus on cognitive aspect during selection. It will have wider outreach across the country and also reduce the large crowds seen during recruitment rallies to make them more manageable and easier to conduct," sources said.

Public 'malik', says Rijiju

Min says after SC's strong remarks over judges' transfers



PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A day after the Supreme Court warned of action for any delay in clearing transfer and appointment of judges, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday said the country will be governed according to the Constitution and wishes of the people and nobody can give warning to anyone.

"Public is 'malik' (master) of this country and we are servants. We all are here for service and the Constitution is our guide.... The country will be governed under the guidance of the Constitution and wishes of the public. Nobody can give warning to anyone," Rijiju said.

"Sometimes discussions are held in the country on some matters and in a democracy everyone has the right to express their opinion. But people sitting in responsible positions have to think before saying anything, whether it will benefit the country or not," he said, referring to reported remarks of a Supreme Court bench.

The minister was addressing an event on the 150th anniversary of the Allahabad High Court Bar Association here as the chief guest.

His remarks came a day after a bench of Justices S K Kaul and A S Oka expressed displeasure over the delay in clearing recommendations for transfer of high court judges, calling it a "very serious issue", and warned that any delay in this matter may result in both administrative and judicial actions which might not be

palatable. On Saturday, the Supreme Court also questioned the government over the delay in clearing the names of five high court judges who had been recommended for elevation to the Supreme Court. The judges were elevated to the Supreme Court on Sunday.

The remarks are the latest in a tug of war between the judiciary and the executive over the process of appointment of judges of the Supreme Court and high courts.

On the pendency of cases, Minister Rijiju said, "At present, 4 crore 90 lakh cases are pending in various courts across the country. We are solving this problem." He said that in view of the huge number of pending cases, the government has made preparations to implement the Legal Information Management System so that a person will be able to get information about the status of the case in any high court on one click.

"Being the largest high court of the country, I wish that the Allahabad High Court should play a leading role in implementing the e-courts project. The government has abolished 1,486 old and outdated laws and the process of removing 65 such laws is going on in the current Parliament session," he said.

The minister also said the Arbitration Bill is in the final stages of preparation and after its passage, a parallel judicial system will be established in the country. With the system of arbitration, small cases will be settled outside the court and the burden on courts will be reduced, he said.

ED questions Rahul's aide in money laundering case against TMC functionary

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has questioned and recorded the statement of Alankar Sawai, a close aide of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, in a money laundering case in which TMC spokesperson Saket Gokhale was recently arrested by the agency in Gujarat, officials said.

Sawai was questioned and also confronted with Gokhale in Ahmedabad over three days earlier this week, they said.

A former banker, Sawai is considered to be a close aide of Rahul, a former Congress president, and is stated to be heading his research team.

The federal probe agency

summoned Sawai after it arrested 35-year-old Gokhale on January 25 while he was in the Gujarat Police's custody in connection with alleged financial irregularities in raising funds through a crowd funding platform.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), while seeking Gokhale's remand on that day, had informed a Ahmedabad court that when he was asked about Rs 23.54 lakh deposited in his bank account in cash over a year, Gokhale had told the agency that "this amount was given in cash by Alankar Sawai of the India National Congress for social media work and other consultancy".

India, UAE, France to speed up trilateral bid on climate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India, France and the United Arab Emirates on Saturday discussed the way to hasten up a trilateral initiative among the three countries on issues like climate change, protection of biodiversity and joint training and joint production of weapon systems.

These issues were reviewed during a telephonic conversation between the foreign ministers of the three countries on Saturday, ministry of external affairs (MEA) said here later. A joint statement was also issued.

Giving details of the initiative, MEA said on 19



September 2022, on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the Foreign Ministers of India, France and the UAE met for the first time in a trilateral format.

In acknowledgement of their shared desire to promote international stability and prosperity, and to further build upon the constructive and collaborative ties that exist between the three countries, the Foreign Ministers of India,

France and the UAE agreed to establish a formal trilateral cooperation initiative, with the aim of expanding cooperation in various fields of mutual interest. It is in this context that a phone call between the three Ministers was held on Saturday to adopt a roadmap for the implementation of this initiative.

The three sides agreed that the trilateral initiative will serve as a forum to promote the design and execution of cooperation projects in the fields of energy, with a focus on solar and nuclear energy, as well as in the fight against climate change and the protection of biodiversity, particularly in the Indian Ocean region.

BMC budget pro-contractor, it will spell Mumbai's financial bankruptcy, alleges Aaditya

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai civic body's budget for 2023-24 is pro-contractor and will pave the way for Mumbai's financial bankruptcy, said Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray on Saturday, while the Bharatiya Janata Party called it "truly for Mumbaikars".

The Aam Admi Party and the Congress also criticised the Rs 52,619-crore budget, which was presented by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) chief and administrator Iqbal Singh Chahal.

"The unconstitutional state Govt and the BMC governed by the administrator has been showing moral and legal bankruptcy for 6 months. Today's BMC budget shows that it has begun to pave way for Mumbai's financial bankruptcy," tweeted Aaditya Thackeray.

Until the term of the corporators got over last March, the Shiv Sena had ruled the BMC for more than two decades. The Uddhav Thackeray-led party split in June 2022 following a rebellion by Eknath Shinde, who joined hands with the BJP to form the government in the state. BMC elections are expected to be held this year.



Demanding the BMC to explain "hiked expenses" in its "pro contractor" budget, Aaditya Thackeray said, "While on one hand, we clearly see contractor friends of this unconstitutional State Govt benefitting, the MC's (Chahal's) speech finds a mention of curbing expenses, which should be told to the bosses in Govt rather than Mumbaikars."

The AAP targeted the BMC over utilisation of funds.

The Arvind Kejriwal-led party, which is trying to expand its footprints in Mumbai, said the budget is "an annual ritual" aimed at throwing big numbers but utilisation of funds year after year reveals a "sordid saga of ineptitude and incompetence".

The allocation of Rs 3,347 crore for education is a mere 6.36 per cent of the overall outlay, while healthcare saw a 9 per cent dip to Rs 6,309 crore and is 12 per cent of the overall figures, said AAP.

Attempts underway by Centre to malign Bengal, says Abhishek

PTI ■ KESHPUR

TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Saturday slammed the Centre for sending central teams to West Bengal, and said attempts are on to malign the state government as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had not bowed before it.

He also dubbed the state BJP leaders "anti-Bengal", as they have also "played a role in stopping the flow of funds" to the state.

"People here know how the BJP-led central government has halted funds for Bengal. It is doing this out of vengeance, because the party could not win the assembly elections in 2021," he said, while addressing a mega rally at Keshpur.

Abhishek Banerjee said the TMC leadership would never surrender before the "corrupt" BJP regime.

"Mamata Banerjee has never bowed her head in front of these dishonest BJP politicians, and she will never do it. She has the love and affection of the people, and they will give the answer to BJP's injustice."

"BJP leaders are sending central teams... However, they couldn't find even one case of fraud. The teams were sent to malign the people of the state," he alleged.

Doctors welcome FM's call to increase NCCD on cigarettes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Doctors and activists have welcomed the Union Finance Minister's announcement to increase national calamity contingent duty (NCCD) on cigarettes to 16 per cent in the annual Budget of 2023-24, asserting that the move would strengthen various initiatives aimed to reduce cancer causing tobacco use in India.

However, at the same time they have urged the Government to augment these efforts increasing taxes on bidis and smokeless products that are becoming health as well as fiscal burden in the country. The NCCD on specified cigarettes was last revised three years ago.

Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive, Voluntary Health Association of India hailed the decision but felt that the percentage increase is minimal. "We hope that in future, the Finance Minister

will ensure a significant increase in taxation and decrease in the affordability of all tobacco products to match the message that has been sent so strongly in this budget".

The present GST rates on tobacco products combined with the compensation cess for all tobacco products is much lower than the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended tax burden of at least 75% of retail price for all tobacco products.

The total tax burden is currently only about 53% for cigarettes, 22% for bidis and 60% for smokeless tobacco. According to international experts, raising the price of tobacco products through tax increases is the most effective policy to reduce tobacco use. Higher tobacco prices decrease affordability, encourage quitting among users, prevent initiation among non-users, and reduce the quantity consumed among continuing users.

Shah hails Naga group ENPO's decision to withdraw poll boycott call

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday lauded the decision by Eastern Nagaland Peoples Organisation (ENPO) to withdraw its assembly election boycott call, saying it is an expression of trust in the Modi government.

The ENPO, which has been demanding separate statehood – Frontier Nagaland – comprising six districts of Mon, Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphire, Shamatore and Noklak, had given the poll boycott call to press for their demand.

"It is heartening that in an expression of trust in the Modi government, the Eastern Nagaland Peoples Organisation (ENPO) in Nagaland has withdrawn its call to boycott the assembly elections. The decision will help in keeping the ongoing process of peace and development unhindered," Shah said in tweets.

The home minister said he was grateful to the group for the positive gesture reaffirming ENPO's commitment to democratic processes.

Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made untiring efforts to assure the people of Northeast India that the government is with them and the ENPO's move is an approval of these endeavours.

According to an ENPP release, the decision was taken during its executive meeting



held in Dimapur on Saturday following the request of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to review the August 26, 2022 resolution of ENPO and its constituent tribal bodies and frontal organisations to abstain in any election process.

The ENPO also requested all citizens to cooperate with the government in the conduct of the election and not create any law and order problems.

In a release, the ENPO said the meeting discussed the assurance given by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to ENPO office bearers on February 2 and after due consultation with its constituent tribal bodies and frontal organisations relaxed its resolution with immediate effect.

PNS ■ DEOGARH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday claimed that demographic change in Jharkhand has seen the percentage of the 'Adivasi' (tribal) population declining during the Hemant Soren government's tenure in power.

Addressing the BJP's 'Vijay Sankalp Maha Rally' here, the senior party leader claimed that the population of Adivasis has declined from 35 per cent to 24 per cent due to massive infiltration from across the international border, which has been 'encouraged by the Hemant Soren government for vote bank politics'.

He alleged that infiltrators were grabbing land in the state after marrying tribal women.

"The Hemant Soren government is the most corrupt in the country. Resources are being looted using railway wagons and tractors. People will unseat this government from power in the state as it failed to fulfil the 'aspirations of development' for which the separate state was created," he said.

Shah said the BJP will win all 14 Lok Sabha seats in the state in the elections next year.

Referring to the killing of a class 12 student, who was burnt alive by her stalker in Dumka last year, Shah said, "Adivasi girls are being murdered while the Hemant Soren government is indulging in politics of appeasement."

Earlier in the day, the Cooperation Minister said the Union government has decided to provide 300 services of the Centre as well as the state governments through the Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACS).

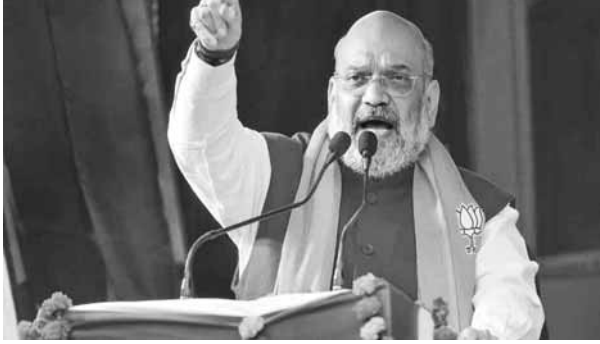
Shah said PACS would now function as Common Service Centres (CSC) and farmers can avail benefits of 300 services including no-dues certificates, birth and death registration, and many more.

"The decision was taken on Friday. The IT Ministry has supported the Cooperative Ministry in this regard," he said, while laying the foundation stone of a Rs 450-croreIFFCO nano urea

plant in Jasidih in Deogarh district.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Friday to enable the PACS to provide services offered by Common Service Centres.

According to the agreement, more than 300 services will be made available to the rural population, including 13 crore farmer members of PACS, a statement said.



HM lays foundation stone of ₹450-cr nano urea plant in J'khand

PTI ■ DEOGARH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday laid the foundation stone of a Rs 450-crore nano urea plant and township of the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO) in Jharkhand's Deogarh.

Shah said it will help in reducing the dependence on import of urea and usher in development of the eastern region, particularly the Santhal Paraganas.

"Nano urea will benefit farmers, and it is already being exported to five countries," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had inaugurated the world's first nano urea plant in Gujarat last year, according to IFFCO. This will be India's fifth such plant.

"PM Modi has given priority to all works related to land conservation across the country..."

Many urea factories were revived by Modi, and this

small liquid urea factory built on 30 acres will manufacture about six crore bottles every year, which will make India self-sufficient by reducing imports in this sector," Shah said.

The facility will prove to be useful in increasing production not only in Jharkhand but also in Bihar, Odisha and Bengal, he said.

Nano urea improves crop productivity, soil health and nutritional quality of the produce, IFFCO said.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Soldiers freed in Russia, Ukraine prisoner swap

AP ■ KYIV

Dozens of Russian and Ukrainian prisoners of war have returned home following a prisoner swap, officials on both sides said Saturday.

Top Ukrainian presidential aide Andriy Yermak said in a Telegram post that 116 Ukrainians were freed.

He said the released POWs include troops who held out in Mariupol during Moscow's monthslong siege that reduced the southern port city to ruins, as well as guerrilla fighters from the Kherson region and snipers captured during the ongoing fierce battles for the eastern city of Bakhmut.

Russian defence officials, meanwhile, announced that 63 Russian troops had returned from Ukraine following the swap, including some "special category" prisoners whose release was secured following mediation by the United Arab Emirates.

A statement issued Saturday by the Russian Defence Ministry did not provide details about these "special category" captives.

At least three civilians have been killed in Ukraine over the past 24 hours as Russian forces struck nine regions in the country's south, north and east, according to reports on Ukrainian TV by regional gov-



ernors on Saturday morning.

Two people were killed and 14 others wounded in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region by Russian shelling and missile strikes, local Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said in a Telegram update on Saturday morning.

The casualty toll included a man who was killed and seven others who were wounded Friday after Russian missiles slammed into Toretsk, a town in the Donetsk region.

Kyrylenko said that 34 houses, two kindergartens, an outpatient clinic, a library, a cultural centre and other buildings were damaged in the strike.

Seven teenagers received shrapnel wounds after an anti-

personnel mine exploded late on Friday in the northeastern city of Izium, local Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said on Telegram.

He said they were all hospitalised but their lives were not in danger.

Elsewhere, regional Ukrainian officials reported overnight shelling by Russia of border settlements in the northern Sumy region, as well as the town of Marhanets, which neighbours the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. Kyiv has long accused Moscow of using the plant, which Russian forces seized early in the war, as a base for launching attacks on Ukrainian-held territory across the Dnieper river.

China plays down Blinken's cancelled visit over balloon

AP ■ TAIPEI

China played down the cancellation of a visit by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken after a large Chinese balloon suspected of conducting surveillance on US military sites roiled diplomatic relations, saying that neither side had formally announced any such plan.

"In actuality, the U.S. And China have never announced any visit, the US making any such announcement is their own business, and we respect that," China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement Saturday morning.

Blinken was due to visit Beijing on Sunday for talks aimed at reducing US-China tensions, the first such high-profile trip after the countries' leaders met last November in Indonesia.

But the US abruptly cancelled the trip after the discovery of the huge balloon despite China's claim that it was mere-



ly a weather research "airship" that had blown off course.

The Pentagon rejected that out of hand — as well as China's contention that the balloon was not being used for surveillance and had only limited navigational ability.

Uncensored reactions on the Chinese internet mirrored the official government stance that the US was hyping up the situation.

Many users made jokes about the balloon. Some said that since the U.S. Had put restrictions on the technology that China is able to buy to weaken the Chinese tech industry, they couldn't control the balloon.

Others called it the "wandering balloon" in a pun that refers to the newly released Chinese sci-fi film called "The Wandering Earth 2."

ASEAN vows to conclude pact with China on disputed territory

AP ■ JAKARTA

Southeast Asian foreign ministers vowed to finalise negotiations with China over a proposed pact aimed at preventing conflicts in the disputed South China Sea in their annual retreat on Saturday in Indonesia's capital.

In the final session of their two-day meeting, the ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations also agreed to unite in their approach to implement a five-step agreement made in 2021 between ASEAN leaders and Myanmar's military leader, Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing,

that seeks to end that country's worsening crisis.

China and the ASEAN member states, which include four rival claimants to territories in the South China Sea, have been holding sporadic talks for years on a "code of conduct," a set of regional norms and rules aimed at preventing a clash the

50-car train derailment causes big fire, evacuations in Ohio

AP ■ EAST PALESTINE

A train derailment and resulting large fire prompted an evacuation order in an Ohio village near the Pennsylvania State line on Friday night, covering the area in billows of smoke lit orange by the flames below.

About 50 cars derailed in East Palestine as a train was carrying a variety of freight from Madison, Illinois, to Conway, Pennsylvania, rail operator Norfolk Southern said in a statement Saturday.

There was no immediate information about what caused the derailment. No injuries were reported.

The National Transportation Safety Board said Saturday that it was "launching a go-team to investigate" the derailment, and board member Michael Graham would "serve as spokesperson on scene."

Firefighters have been pulled from the immediate area and unmanned stream devices are being used protectively while crews try to determine which cars are still actively burning, village officials said in a separate statement Saturday.

They said they hoped to use drones to assess the scene in daylight, and warned that residents might hear more explosions as the fire burns.

The village notified residents that an evacuation order remained in place Saturday morning for people within a mile of the scene.

A high school and community center were opened to shelter dozens of people, while residents beyond that radius were urged to stay inside.

The few dozen residents sheltering at the high school included Ann McAnlis, who said a neighbor had texted her about the crash.

Israeli army besieges homes of fugitives in West Bank raid

AP ■ AQABAT JABR REFUGEE CAMP

The Israeli army raided a refugee camp near the Palestinian city of Jericho on Saturday, besieging houses it said were being used as hideouts for Palestinian attackers and shooting at residents who opened fire.

The fighting wounded six Palestinians, two seriously, said the Palestinian Health Ministry, and jolted a generally quiet oasis town that has seen less violence than other West Bank cities.

The army said it entered the Aqabat Jabr refugee camp southwest of Jericho in the occupied West Bank to search for suspects involved in a shooting attack last week at a nearby Israeli settlement.

Last Saturday, with the West Bank on edge after the deadliest Israeli military raid in two decades and two subsequent Palestinian attacks in east Jerusalem that killed seven people, the army said a Palestinian gunman had opened fire in a restaurant at a settlement near Jericho. After firing one bullet, the gunman



fled the scene, the army said. No one was wounded.

The army said several Palestinians had holed up in their homes after the shooting with the help of family and were planning future attacks.

To force the fugitives to surrender, a military bulldozer clawed at the walls of one of the homes as an Israeli commander shouted threats over a loudspeaker.

Camp residents reported receiving text messages urging families to keep their children inside and avoid clashing with Israeli troops.

The suspects and family members trickled out of one of the homes and turned themselves in, the military said. Security forces had leveled much of the house, leaving a pile of rubble and twisted metal.

Qatar boosts influence in Lebanon amid crises

AP ■ BEIRUT

Most wealthy Gulf Arab Nations followed Saudi Arabia's lead in recent years and ostracised crisis-hit Lebanon because of the growing influence of the Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah. The exception was Qatar.

Doha has been silently expanding its influence in Lebanon. It continued receiving Lebanese leaders and pumped tens millions of dollars into helping the country's armed forces amid a historic economic meltdown.

The small, gas-rich nation in late January began seeing the fruits of its investment, when state-owned Qatar Energy replaced a Russian firm in an international consortium that will search for gas in the Mediterranean Sea off Lebanon's coast.

And on Monday, Qatar will for the first time join a meeting in Paris along with officials from France, Saudi Arabia and the US for discussions focusing on Lebanon's political and economic crises.

Qatar portrays itself as a more neutral force in a coun-



try where for decades outside powers have used Lebanon's sectarian divisions to fight their proxy battles. Saudi Arabia long backed Lebanon's Sunni Muslim factions and tried to push out Iran's influence through Shiite Hezbollah. The rivalry repeatedly pushed Lebanon to the brink of armed conflict.

Qatar, which has good ties with Iran, has been trying to advance negotiations between Tehran and Gulf nations. Its

inclusion in the upcoming talks "is a signal that Iran will not be completely left out of that meeting and a recognition of the influence that Tehran has over Lebanon," said Mohamad Bazzi, a professor and director of the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at New York University.

"With Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states less heavily involved in Lebanon, Qatar is trying to revive its mediator role in the country," he said.

Pope encourages South Sudanese, will raise plight of women

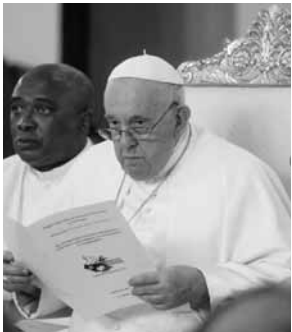
AP ■ JUBA

Pope Francis sought Saturday to console the long-suffering people of South Sudan as he opened his first full day in a country beset by conflict, poverty and humanitarian crises, encouraging priests and nuns to serve their flocks by joining in their tears.

After arriving in the world's newest country on the first-ever papal visit Friday, Francis was spending Saturday ministering first to church personnel and then to South Sudanese who have been forced by fighting, flooding and other crises to leave their homes.

Francis was highlighting in particular the plight of South Sudanese women, half of whom are married before age 18, are subject to rampant sexual violence and then face the world's highest maternal mortality rate.

"Let us ask ourselves what it means for us to be ministers of God in a land scarred by war, hatred, violence, and poverty," Francis said in St. Theresa Cathedral in the capital, Juba. "How can we exercise our



ministry in this land, along the banks of a river bathed in so much innocent blood, among the tear-stained faces of the people entrusted to us?"

Lush in oil and other natural resources but beset by years of civil war and conflict, South Sudan is one of the world's poorest countries and is responsible for Africa's worst refugee crisis: More than 2 million people have fled the country and another 2 million are displaced within its borders.

Joined by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and the Presbyterian head of the Church of Scotland, Francis is seeking to draw global attention to the country's plight.

Wikipedia blocked for not removing blasphemous content in Pak

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has blocked Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, for its failure to remove offensive or blasphemous material, the country's telecomuni-cation authority said on Saturday.

The blacklisting of Wikipedia comes days after the Pakistan Telecom Authority (PTA) degraded Wikipedia services for 48 hours, threatening to block it if the content deemed 'blasphemous' was not deleted.

Wikipedia is a free online encyclopedia, created and edited by volunteers around the world and hosted by the Wikimedia Foundation.

PTA spokesperson Malahat Obaid said the ban had primarily been imposed for non-compliance with the orders.

"The decision can be reviewed once Wikipedia removes sacrilegious content that has been identified by the regulatory authority," the spokesperson added.

The PTA spokesperson earlier stated that Wikipedia was approached for blocking/removal of the said content by issuing a notice.

13 dead in Chile amid struggle to contain raging wildfires

AP ■ SANTIAGO

At least 13 people were reported dead as of Friday night as a result of the more than 150 wildfires burning across Chile that have destroyed homes and thousands of acres of forest while the South American country is in the midst of a scorching heat wave.

Four of the deaths involved two separate vehicles in the Biobio region, around 560 kilometers (348 miles) south of the capital of Santiago.

"In one case they were burned because they were hit by the fire," Interior Minister Carolina Tohá said. In the other case, she said, the victims died in a crash, "probably trying to escape the fire."

The fifth victim was a firefighter who was run over by a fire truck while combatting a blaze in the area.

Later in the afternoon, a helicopter that was helping combat the flames crashed in the Araucania region, killing the pilot, a Bolivian national, and a mechanic, who was Chilean.

Democrats set to shake up start of 2024 presidential primary

AP ■ PHILADELPHIA

Democrats are poised to reorder their presidential primary schedule beginning next year, replacing Iowa with South Carolina in the leadoff spot as part of a major overhaul meant to empower Black and other minority voters critical to the party's base of support.

The Democratic National Committee has worked for months to revamp the start of its voting calendar, and the full membership is set to vote on the plan on Saturday.

Although changes are still possible throughout the summer and beyond, the formal endorsement during the party's meeting in Philadelphia is acknowledgement that the start of 2024's primary will look very different than the one in 2020.

The proposal has been championed by President Joe Biden and would have South Carolina hold its primary on Feb. 3. That would be followed three days later by New Hampshire and Nevada, the latter of which is swapping the caucus it used to hold in favour of a primary. Georgia would vote fourth on Feb. 13, followed



by Michigan on Feb. 27, with much of the rest of the nation set to vote on Super Tuesday in early March.

"This isn't just about us," Trev Robertson, president of the South Carolina Democratic Party, told a gathering of the DNC Southern caucus earlier this week. "This is a regional thing, and it's making us all look good."

States voting early in the primary have major influence since White House hopefuls struggling to raise money or gain political traction often drop out before visiting areas outside the first five. The move marks a major shift from the current calendar, which had started with Iowa's caucuses for the last five decades, followed by New Hampshire's primary and subsequent contests in Nevada and South Carolina.

Iranian director freed on bail after going on hunger strike

AP ■ DUBAI

Acclaimed Iranian director Jafar Panahi was released on bail Friday, two days after going on hunger strike to protest his imprisonment last summer, his supporters said.

Panahi was arrested last July and later ordered to serve six years on charges of propagandising against the government, a sentence dating back to 2011 that had never been enforced.

He is among a number of Iranian artists, sports figures and other celebrities who have been detained after speaking out against the theocracy. Such arrests have become more frequent since nationwide protests broke out in September over the death of a young woman in police custody.

Panahi, 62, had continued making award-winning films for over a decade despite being legally barred from travel and filmmaking. His latest film, "No Bears," was released to widespread praise in September while he was behind bars, a week before the protests erupted.

Pak to seek Af Taliban leader's help to control TTP

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

A desperate Pakistan has sought Afghan Taliban chief Haibuttallah Akhundzada's help to rein in the outlawed Pakistani Taliban outfit responsible for a wave of terror attacks in the country, including the recent Peshawar mosque carnage that killed over 100 people, according to a media report on Saturday.

Pakistan has been hit by a wave of terrorism, mostly in the country's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, but also in Balochistan and the Punjab town of Mianwali, which borders the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

In the Peshawar mosque attack on Monday, a Taliban suicide bomber blew himself up during the afternoon prayers, killing 101 people and injuring more than 200 others.

During the Apex Committee meeting here on Friday, Pakistan's civil and military leadership decided to seek Afghan Taliban chief Haibuttallah Akhundzada's intervention to control the



Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), according to The Express Tribune newspaper.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, who attended Friday's meeting, said the masterminds of the Peshawar Mosque attack could be in Afghanistan, and added that the federal government would raise this issue with their Afghan counterparts, the report said.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday acknowledged the failure to avert the Peshawar carnage that killed over 100 people and called for "national unity" to tackle the menace.

"There is a need for unity across the political spectrum. This act of terrorism managed to breach the security check post and reach the mosque. We should not feel hesitant in admitting the facts," Sharif said at the meeting.

Sudan demands United Nations immediately lift arms embargo

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Sudan is demanding the UN Security Council immediately lift an arms embargo and other sanctions imposed during violence in the western Darfur region in 2005, saying the punishment did not include conditions or require the military government to meet UN benchmarks.

Sudan's UN ambassador, Al-Harith Idriss Mohamed, said in a letter to the council circulated Friday that the sanctions "are no longer relevant to the magnificent reality on the ground in Darfur today compared to the situation in 2005."

"Darfur has, for the most part, overcome the state of war, as well as previous security and political challenges," he said.

Mohamed said Sudan's transitional government is committed to addressing the remaining social and security issues in Darfur, including sporadic tribal clashes. He added that efforts are being made to form and deploy a Joint



Security-Keeping Force to protect civilians.

The Sudanese government has repeatedly urged the Security Council to lift sanctions but this letter was much stronger. It said that "Sudan will accept nothing less than the immediate lifting of these sanctions without conditions or benchmarks."

The Darfur conflict began in 2003 when rebels took up arms against the authoritarian government in Khartoum then led by Omar al-Bashir, accusing it of discrimination and neglect. The UN previously estimated 00,000 people died in the conflict and 2.7 million fled their homes.

Al-Bashir is wanted by the International Criminal Court for alleged atrocities in Darfur.

India will get into global bond indices on own terms: Official

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India will not bend over backwards to get included in the global bond indices, a top finance ministry official said on Saturday.

Deploying a sartorial analogy, Finance Secretary TV Somanathan said the indices are an exclusive club or gymkhana, which insists on entry only for those wearing ties.

"...If we get into this club, it will be with our dhoti and saree. We will not change our domestic policies to suit foreign investors," he said, addressing a post-budget interaction with industry players in the financial capital.

He said there are both positives and negatives of such an inclusion, which was spoken about in a previous budget announcement, and India will not "bend over backwards" to gain entry.

India's policies will be



based on domestic requirements, and there will not be any change to the stance to suit the fancy of global bond investors, he said.

The global indices should allow entry for India only if such a stance is acceptable to them, he said.

Positives of gaining entry include higher fund flows, but the same also exposes us to risks of volatility and pullouts due to non-domestic factors, Somanathan said, pointing to the experience of "destabilisation" in some east-Asian

economies.

Ajay Seth, the economic affairs secretary, hinted that there is no immediate plan of joining the indices.

"At the moment, there is quite a bit of uncertainty at the global level both in terms of the exchange rate and interest rate etc. It is not the right time to press the pedal on that aspect."

"When the global markets are a little bit more uniform, then at that point of time this piece will have to be picked up again," he said.

Govt to push primary steel producers to use 50% of input from recycled steel by 2047: Scindia

PTI ■ KOCHI

Union Steel Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Saturday said his ministry will push primary steel producers to use 50 per cent of their input from scrapped/recycled steel by 2047 to help achieve the government target of moving into a circular economy.

Currently, the level of recycled steel usage in primary steel production is only around 10 per cent even though recycled steel contributes to 22.5 per cent of the domestic total steel production of 140 million tonnes, the minister said while addressing the last day of the three-day international conference of material recycling here.

The 10th conference is being organised by the Material Recycling Association of India and is attended by over 2,000 delegates from 38 countries.

Noting that recycling is the key cog in the wheel of manufacturing as economies move

into a circular model of development, he said, "Going forward the industry should focus on the 6Rs philosophy of reduce (exploitation of natural resources), recycle, reuse, recover, re-design and reinforce".

He said the government is committed to reducing CO2 emissions in the steel sector by 5 per cent by 2030 from the current 2.85 to 1.4 CO2/tonne of crude steel, and to achieve this recycling scrap steel is an extremely important source.

"Today, scrap usage is only 15 per cent in primary steel production. We will push the steel industry to increase this to 25 per cent in the next five years, and by 2047, this should double to 50 per cent. This means that the primary steel producers consume only 50 per cent of iron ore by then," Scindia said.

This is needed as the natural resources are finite and the demand looks infinite, he said, adding the steel industry has the biggest role to play in the whole process.



The country currently produces 25 million tonne of scrap steel and annually imports 5 million tonne of scrap steel with zero import duty, he added.

The recycling industry is highly unorganised and is worth about USD 50 billion now. There are over 25,000 recycling units in the country. However, in the metals space almost 95 per cent are organised, Material Recycling Association president Sanjay Mehta said.

He also urged the minister to extend the duty-free

imports of other scraps such as copper, aluminium, zinc and other metals as many countries are adopting no export of scrap policies now. For instance last month, the European Union imposed a ban on scrap exports, and so did the UAE.

Domestic recyclers used to import 25 per cent of their shipments from the EU markets. Similarly, the UAE is also a large source market for the country. Counties are discouraging exports of scraps as they move into the circular economy.

Godrej Properties sales bookings rise 77%: Pirojsha

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Godrej Properties sales bookings rose 77 per cent year-on-year to Rs 8,181 crore in the April-December period on strong housing demand, and will cross the target of Rs 10,000 crore for the full fiscal, its Executive Chairman Pirojsha Godrej said.

The company's sales bookings stood at Rs 4,613 crore in the first nine months of the last financial year.

In an interview with PTI, Pirojsha Godrej said: "We are very happy with the quarter gone by. Operationally, it has been a very strong quarter".

Sales booking during the October-December period jumped over two-fold to Rs 3,252 crore from Rs 1,541 crore in the year-ago period.

Not Enough: Tech industry seeks more from FM to bridge digital divide

ANS ■ NEW DELHI

Hailed as a progressive and forward-looking one by the IT and technology honchos, the Union Budget 2023-24 did fall short on some expectations by the industry, especially around consumer electronics manufacturing and bridging the digital divide in the country.

According to the India Cellular & Electronics Association (ICEA), the latest steps will have no significant impact on the final product price but are generally in the right direction.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman mentioned that the mobile manufacturing sector crossed Rs 2,75,000 crore in 2021-22. The targeted number for 2022-23 is Rs 3,50,000 crore and Rs 4,40,000 crore in 2023-24.

She also proposed the removal of 2.75 per cent basic customs duty (BCD) on camera lens; removal of duty on inputs to parts of connectors - Palladium Tetra Amine Sulphate; reduction of BCD on parts of open cell of TV panel from 5.5 per cent to 2.75 per cent; continuation of custom exemption notifications which were facing a sunset on March 31, 2023 for another one year.

According to Pankaj Mohindroo, Chairman, ICEA, a high-performing sector's genuine requests have not been addressed.



"These could have provided a significant impact on competitiveness leading to better exports, arresting the grey market and boosting revenue," he said in a statement.

For example, capping of basic customs duty (BCD) on import of high-end mobile phones is required to arrest the burgeoning smuggled market which has crossed Rs 12,000 crore in 2023.

"This measure would have boosted government revenue, reduced smuggling, ensured fair trade and helped build legal businesses in India," said Mohindroo.

Also required is the removal of input duties on resin, mesh, sponge, film, gasket, logo, cover tape, adhesive tape from 8.25 per cent to 16.5 per cent to zero level.

This was essential to promote the manufacturing of a very critical vertical -- mechanics. The government should also remove input duties of 2.75 per cent duty imposed in the previous budget on the many

inputs of PCBA, inputs of connectors and inputs of camera modules.

"Removal of duty on certain parts of the chargers is also required. While we have built a huge charger manufacturing industry, these changes would have helped us to become more competitive," Mohindroo added.

The Indian industry met the 2021-22 manufacturing target of Rs 2,75,000 crore but we may fall short of the manufacturing target of FY 2022-23 because of domestic demand shrinking in 2022-23.

In spite of a glorious performance in exports which will cross Rs 70,000 crore in 2022-23 (versus Rs 45,000 crore in 2021-22 plus 50 per cent increase), the 50 per cent increase in GST from 12 per cent to 18 per cent "has dealt a very cruel hand to this high-performing industry which kept the nation's economy moving during the pandemic," said the ICEA.

According to the Internet

and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), there have been two critical concerns for the digital industry.

"First, the growth rate of digital penetration has slowed down and secondly, there is a clearly identifiable digital divide in India with some sections getting marginalised as they are not onboarded digitally," said the IAMAI.

"While the budget announcement marks the correct intention and fiscal incentives, other ministries need to complement the Finance Minister's grand vision to help realise her vision," said the industry body.

According to Sandip Patel, Managing Director, IBM India/South Asia, it is a progressive budget that underscores technology-driven growth.

"The investment in core infrastructure will require significant thrust on digital infrastructure including digitization and automation. The budget has outlined measures to provide impetus for technology-driven accelerated change and technology will also work as a key deflationary measure," said Patel.

"India is all set for leading the change and usher in green growth which is aptly visible in the green credits to green energy to green mobility to green farming, which has found its place in the budget this year," he added.

Revival of rural economy to take time in absence of specific triggers



ANS ■ NEW DELHI

Focus on the rural economy in the budget has been waning over the years and in such a scenario a revival of the rural economy would take time, JM Financial said in a report.

In the absence of a specific focus on the rural economy in the Union Budget for 2023-24, analysts don't see immediate triggers for revival in the rural economy. Moreover in the absence of specific or enhance-ment of allocation towards the rural economy, we believe that the rural environment would have to revive on its own. Hence we would view businesses dealing with price sensitive low ticket items as less likely to benefit, JM Financial said.

An attempt is made to make the new tax regime more

attractive after getting a low response in FY23, however we believe the benefits in the form of tax saving on enhanced no-tax limit (INR 0.2mn) is unlikely to spur demand in a meaningful manner, JM Financial said in a report.

Unlike the anticipation by a section of the market, rural focus was missing in the budget announcements. The expectations of a populist budget was linked to 9 state elections in 2023, moreover with FY24 being the last full year budget before the general elections in CY24. However, we believe that the schemes relating to empowerment of women Self Help Groups, artisans and setting up of digital infra for agriculture and farmer centric solutions would provide opportunities in the rural economy to improve their livelihood, JM Financial said.

Educationists say more funds are required to meet NEP targets



ANS ■ NEW DELHI

In Budget 2023-24, the Education Ministry has been allocated Rs 1,12,899.47 crore - the highest ever. Due to this, the share of higher and school education has also gone up.

An amount of Rs 44,094.62 crore has been allocated for higher education, which was around 8 per cent higher than the previous year's allocation of Rs 40,828.35 crore. However, some educationists believe that the higher education need even more funds to meet the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) targets.

Professor Mamidala Jagadeesh Kumar, Chairman, UGC said, "his is to overcome the learning losses of the Covid-19 pandemic and inject more digital technology into higher education for more access and equity. Increased fund allocation will accelerate the implementation of NEP 2020, bringing further dividends to the students to make them employable and strengthen our efforts in

making India a knowledge-based economy, Kumar added.

Arvind Chaturvedi Pro Vice Chancellor, IILM University, Gurugram said that an 8 per cent increase in allocation to education sector is not sufficient. "A higher allocation was expected."

"Educationists were expecting a higher allocation to meet the NEP target of 6 per cent of GDP. In that sense, it is disappointing. However, the focus of budget proposals has been on IT education and skill development, which is a welcome move," he added.

Shishir Jaipuria, Chairman, Seth Anandram Jaipuria Group of Educational Institutions, and Chairman of FICCI Arise have a different opinion. He said, "The Union Budget 2023-24 spells out progressive initiatives and reforms for the Indian education sector in many areas, including skill development, teacher training, future-readiness of learners, and greater accessibility of learning content."

कार्यालय : निदेशक उत्तराखण्ड चाय विकास बोर्ड, अल्मोड़ा जिला पंचायत परिसर, धारानौला, अल्मोड़ा-263601

पत्रांक : 849/4-स्टर/निविदा सूचना/2022-23 दिनांक : 04 फरवरी, 2023

अल्प कालीन ई-निविदा सूचना

उत्तराखण्ड चाय विकास बोर्ड, अल्मोड़ा द्वारा अपने चाय बागानों में उपयोग हेतु क्रय की जाने वाली, जैविक खाद व नर्सरी सामग्री की आपूर्ति हेतु इच्छुक निविदादाताओं से ई-निविदाएं दिनांक 06-02-2023 से ऑनलाइन **Website www.uktenders.gov.in** पर दिनांक 15-02-2023 को सायं 5.00 बजे तक आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदाओं से सम्बन्धित निविदावार अलग-अलग विवरण (निविदा प्रपत्र निविदा शर्तें, सामग्री का विवरण इत्यादि) ऑनलाइन अवलोकन/डाउनलोडिंग हेतु **Website www.uktenders.gov.in** पर उपलब्ध है।

निदेशक

उत्तराखण्ड चाय विकास बोर्ड,
जिला पंचायत परिसर, धारानौला, अल्मोड़ा (उत्तराखण्ड)

RATHI STEEL AND POWER LIMITED

CIN: L27109DL1971PLC005905
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Mathura Road, New Delhi- 110044
Email ID: investors@rathisteelandalpower.com, Website: www.rathisteelandalpower.com

This is to inform you that pursuant to the Regulation 33 of SEBI (Listing Obligations And Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 meeting of the Board of Directors of M/s Rathi Steel and Power Limited is to be held on Monday the 13th Day of February 2023 at the Registered office of the Company at 4.00 PM to consider and approve following businesses as under :-

ITEM NO.	AGENDA FOR DISCUSSION
Take note and confirm the following:-	
1.	To appoint Chairman of the meeting to call the meeting to order.
2.	To Ensure Quorum of the Meeting
3.	To grant leave of absence, if any.
4.	To take note and confirm the minutes of previous meeting of board of directors of the Company.
Consider and Approve following:-	
5.	To consider and approve Unaudited Financial Results for the nine month ended and Quarter ended on December 31, 2022
6.	Any other businesses with permission of the Chair.
For and on behalf of Board Sd/- (PREM NARAIN VARSHNEY) MANAGING DIRECTOR Place: New Delhi Date: 04-02-2023 DIN: 00012709	

FM's bullishness on millets must translate into benefits for farmers

ANS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana figured just once, albeit tangentially, in the February 1 Union Budget speech by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman when she announced that the

Hyderabad-based Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), an affiliate of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), will be transformed into a centre of excellence to make India a global millets hub.

The ICAR-IIMR will share best practices, research and technologies at the international level, the Minister announced but made no financial allocation for the proposal.

This was the only announcement which brought some cheers for Telangana in what many termed as a disappointing

Budget. In tune with its focus on millets, the Centre made the key announcement in the Union Budget for 2023-24. However, the roadmap to achieve the goal of boosting production and procurement of millets was not mentioned.

Calling millets 'Shree Anna' or mother of all grains, Sitharaman quoted Prime Minister Narendra Modi to say that India is at the forefront of popularising millets, whose consumption improved food security and the well being of farmers.

The Finance Minister pointed out

that India is the largest producer and second largest exporter of millets.

"We grow several types of Shree Anna, such as Jowar, Raagi, Bajra, Ramdana, Cheena and Saama. These have a number of health benefits and have been an integral part of our food for centuries," she said.

The UN has declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYM) at the request of the Indian government to raise awareness and increase the production and consumption of millets.

The declaration has allowed the Centre to take the lead in celebrating IYM 2023. As part of this, Central Ministries, state govern-

ments and Indian Embassies will hold events throughout the year to promote and spread awareness about the benefits of millets.

Support will be provided for post-harvest value addition, enhancing domestic consumption, and for branding millet products nationally and internationally. As per the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), India is the largest producer of millet in the world with a share of 41 per cent in 2020.

Nine types of millets are grown as Kharif crops in over 20 states. Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are the leading producers.

UJVN LIMITED
(An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprise)
H.O.: "UJVNWA", Mahatma Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
Tel.: 0135-2763508, 2763808, Fax: 0135-2763507, Website: www.ujvn.com

No. 116 Date: 04.02.2023

e-Procurement Corrigendum No.-02

Due to unavoidable circumstances, e-Tender Notice Reference: NCB/17/EE(E&M)/MB-II/Barrage/2022-23 (Tender ID 2022_UJWB2_52260_1) Name of work: Design, Manufacturing, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Trashrack panels & one no. Hydraulically Operated Movable Trash Rack Cleaning Machine (TRCM) to safely handle rake capacity of 2.0 Tonne as well as log grappler capacity of 2.0 Tonne including dismantling of existing Trash rack panels & TRCM at Joshiyara Barrage, Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, India, is amended and Corrigendum No.02 has been uploaded on the e-procurement portal <http://uktenders.gov.in>. Other terms and conditions will remain unchanged.

For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal <http://uktenders.gov.in> Executive Engineer E&M

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

UJVN Limited
(An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprises)
H.O.: "UJVNWA", Mahatma Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephones: 0135-2763508, 2763808 & Fax: 0135-2763507
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvn.com

R.O. No.: 115 Date: 04.02.2023

E-Tender Time Extension Notice-4

Due to unavoidable circumstances the date of submission and opening of NIT No - NCB/17/EE(E&M)/MB-II/Barrage/2022-23: "Design, Manufacturing, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Trashrack panels & one no. Hydraulically Operated Movable Trash Rack Cleaning Machine (TRCM) to safely handle rake capacity of 2.0 Tonne as well as log grappler capacity of 2.0 Tonne including dismantling of existing Trash rack panels & TRCM at Joshiyara Barrage, Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, India" invited by the office of Executive Engineer (E&M), Joshiyara Barrage, Joshiyara, Uttarkashi is hereby extended as follows:-

Last Date/Time for receipt of bid in the portal - 10.02.2023 up to 16:00 Hrs.
Last Date of receipt of hard copy of bid - 13.02.2023 up to 11:30 hrs
Date of opening of bid on the website - 13.02.2023 at 11:30 Hrs.
Details of subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be obtained from the e-procurement portal <http://uktenders.gov.in>.
Executive Engineer

"Save Electricity in the Interest of Nation"

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed to the general public that my client Mrs. Phionema Lal (wife) Late Mr. Daniel M.Lal. R/o M.No. 38, Gali No. 5 A-2 Block, West Sant Nagar Buzar, North Delhi-110084, Evicting from her all property, house, bank balance to his son and his family. Respectively: Nathaniel Lal (Son), Premilata Lal (daughter in law) Prince Lal (grandson), Syntha Lal (Princed's wife), Fennia Lal (granddaughter) - being fed up of their ill-behavior and misbehaviour, and being out of their complete control. We have severed our relationship with them, in future our client will not be responsible for any act or transaction of these people, he himself will be responsible for it.

SATYENDRA KUMAR SHARMA (Advocate)
Enrl. No. D-9-B/03
Chamber No F-716, 7th Floor,
Karkardooma Court, Delhi- 110032

नगर निगम फरीदाबाद के भवन का रिकार्ड में वृद्धि प्राप्ति आई नं. 189FB379 व भूकान नं. 2H-22/2 एन. एच 2 फरीदाबाद श्रीमान नवीन कुमार कालरा व श्रीमान आनंद प्रकाश कालरा के नाम पर दर्ज है। श्रीमान आनंद प्रकाश कालरा पुत्र श्रीमान खेमचंद कालरा की मृत्यु दिनांक 8.02.2017 के पश्चात जो कि इस भवन के रजिस्ट्री शुदा मालिकों में से एक थे के बारे में प्राणी श्रीमान नवीन कुमार कालरा, श्रीमती राज रानी(पत्नी) व श्रीमान भवन कुमार कालरा(पुत्र) ने आवेदन किया है कि वृद्धि प्राप्ति आई नं. 189FB379 व भूकान नं. 2H-22/2 एन. एच 2 फरीदाबाद के कानूनी मालिक हैं जोर इस की मालिकता श्रीमती राज रानी व श्रीमान नवीन कुमार कालरा के नाम दर्ज की जाए। यदि इस मालिकता जिसका वृद्धि प्राप्ति आई नं. 189FB379 व भूकान नं. 2H-22/2 एन. एच 2 फरीदाबाद को प्राणीग श्रीमती राज रानी कालरा व नवीन कुमार कालरा के नाम पर दर्ज होने हेतु किसी भी व्यक्ति को कोई एवारा है तो वह वैधिक एवारा समाप्त कर भू प्रकाशित होने के 30 दिन (1 माह) के भीतर अपना एवारा अयोग्यताओं के कारणों में दे सकता है। समाचार समाप्त उपरान्त भवन का रिकार्ड में प्रस्तुत दस्तावेजों के आधार पर दिया जाएगा। नगर निगम फरीदाबाद इसका उपरादा नहीं होगा। सूचित रहे। क्षेत्रीय एवं काराधान अधिकारी-III

नगर निगम फरीदाबाद

Exposition to promote clean fuels inaugurated

PTI ■ GURUGRAM

Union Minister for Heavy Industries Mahendra Nath Pandey on Saturday inaugurated a conference and exposition here on schemes for promotion of cleaner fuels in the automotive sector.

The event, named 'Towards Panchamrit', is being organised at the International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT), Manesar.

To drive India towards cleaner mobility, the government is giving a major push to clean fuels. "Towards Panchamrit" event is an effort in this direction to promote adoption of "Panchamrit" or five clean fuels -- Hydrogen, Ethanol, Bio Diesel, Gas and Electric Vehicles.

Pandey said in line with Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's announcements at COP 26 — "Panchamrit Ki Saugat", five commitments to achieve the vision of becoming a carbon neutral country by 2070, ministries are taking comprehensive efforts to move towards fulfilling this goal.

The government is also working to achieve self-reliance in the automotive industry, he added.

Minister of State for Heavy Industries Krishan Pal Gurjar highlighted the initiatives taken by the ministry to promote clean and green mobility.

He said these initiatives will give a boost to domestic manufacturing, help in employment generation, reduce dependence on exports and thereby help in achieving the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

ARSENAL'S PREMIER LEAGUE TITLE CHARGE HALTED BY STRUGGLING EVERTON

AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Mikel Arteta said Arsenal must now show the resolve of champions after a shock 1-0 defeat to Everton dented the Gunners bid to land a first Premier League title in 19 years.

Arsenal still lead Manchester City by five points at the top of the table, but blew the chance to extend that advantage as they suffered just a second league defeat of the season.

James Tarkowski headed in the winning goal for the Toffees on the hour mark as Everton made a perfect start to life under new manager Sean Dyche to climb out of the relegation zone.

"This is not going to be a rose pathway," said Arteta of Arsenal's road to the title. "This is going to be tricky and we will have to dig in and play much better than we did today."

Everton came into the game on a run of four league defeats at Goodison for the first time since 1958.

That disastrous form cost Frank Lampard his job and Dyche's appointment got the desired bounce with a first win in 11 games.

"The minimum requirement is maximum effort and we saw that today," said Dyche.

Everton's board again stayed away due to rising tensions



between the club's hierarchy and supporters.

Protests were planned for before and after the game for fans to voice their anger at the running of the club.

The Toffees were the only Premier League club to not make any signings in the January transfer window despite their perilous position in the table.

But the home side showed there is still enough talent available to Dyche to dig themselves

out of trouble if they can harness the same level of energy and intensity on a more regular basis.

GOODISON 'ROCKING'

A first victory since October was no more than Everton deserved and it was two of Dyche's former Burnley players who combined for the only goal of the game on the hour mark as Tarkowski headed in Dwight McNeil's corner.

"The fans are going to be massive for us. I have been here when it has been rocking. It was rocking today. But we have to give the fans something," added Dyche.

"Of course I'm going to drive home and think what a great start but I'm not naive. We have to keep working and improving."

Keeping Dominic Calvert-Lewin fit will be critical to Everton's survival hopes, but the

England international showed his rustiness in front of goal in a second consecutive injury-impacted season.

Amadou Onana's surging run and ball across the face of goal just needed a finishing touch that Calvert-Lewin could not stretch to make.

Moments later Abdoulaye Doucoure, who had been frozen out by Lampard, headed a glorious chance wide when unmarked inside the box.

It took Arsenal half an hour to even threaten Jordan Pickford's goal, but they should have led when Eddie Nketiah fired high and wide with just the goalkeeper to beat.

Conor Coady then had to react quickly to turn Bukayo Saka's volley off the line as the visitors began to find their rhythm.

Arsenal were brighter at the start of the second period and Martin Odegaard will feel he should have hit the target when teed up by Nketiah.

But just as the Gunners were beginning to turn the screw, their luck at the back ran out.

Tarkowski was fundamental to Dyche overachievements in keeping Burnley in the Premier League for six consecutive seasons between 2016 and 2022 and the centre-back rose highest to power home.



Arsenal lacked composure in shock Everton defeat: Arteta

AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Mikel Arteta admitted Premier League leaders Arsenal lacked composure in their shock 1-0 defeat at struggling Everton on Saturday.

James Tarkowski's second half header condemned Arsenal to just their second league loss this term. It was a frustrating blow for Gunners boss Arteta, who had hoped to open up an eight-point lead over second placed Manchester City.

For the first time since losing at Manchester United in September, Arsenal tasted defeat and Arteta claimed his players weren't composed enough to cope with Everton's aggres-

sive game-plan under new boss Sean Dyche.

"We had loads of the ball but we lacked that purpose and quality in the final third, we generated many chances. But then we conceded and they slowed the game down and we struggled," Arteta said.

"Everton do this to every team that is their strength with the height, the physicality is their strength, if you want to control the game against them you have to control this. We did not do that today.

"We needed more composure and to control emotionally the game better. We gave away so many unnecessary free-kicks and that's what they

want." Manchester City could close the gap on Arsenal to two points if they win at Tottenham on Sunday.

But, despite his criticism of their tepid performance at Everton, Arteta backed his players to survive the tense title race.

"Today I love them much better than the week before or a month ago. It is easy to be next to someone when they are winning well. I am still so proud of all of these players, they deserve it," he said.

"This is not going to be a rose pathway. This is going to be tricky and we will have to dig in and play much better than we did today."

Bopanna-Bhambri lose in Davis Cup



PTI ■ HILLEROD (DENMARK)

Indian duo Rohan Bopanna and Yuki Bhambri lost to world number 9 Holger Rune and Johannes Ingildsen in straight sets to hand hosts Denmark a 2-1 lead after the doubles tie in the Davis Cup World Group Play-Off on Saturday. The Danish pair made short work of the Indians winning 6-2 6-4 in just 65 minutes as Rune's presence proved to be a decisive factor.

Earlier on Friday, India's number one Sumit Nagal had erased a one-set deficit to pip August Holmgren 4-6 6-3 6-4 in two hours and 27 minutes. Nagal restored the parity after Bhambri had a forgettable opening singles losing 2-6 2-6 to the rising ten sensation Rune.

Bhambri has quit singles and now plays only doubles on tour. The 25-year-old Nagal, ranked 506, dropped serve in the very first game of the match but once he got hold of his nerves, he was his usual fighting self.

He got the break back but squandered the chances when Holmgren offered them.

The Danish player, ranked 484, eventually sealed the set.

In the second set, it was Nagal who drew the first blood and went up 5-2. He served out the set in the ninth game to force a decider.

Nagal had a chance to get the first break when he made a deep return and Holmgren's forehand return sailed over the baseline at 30-all but the home player served well to save the chance. Nagal got another chance when Holmgren netted a forehand at deuce point in the third game but he himself made a forehand error on the break-point.

While Nagal preferred to hit from the baseline, Holmgren charged the net often to create chances for volley winners.

Holmgren handed Nagal another break chance when he tried to pick a low volley but could not keep the ball in the court and followed that up with

Zverev storms to Davis Cup win after being cleared of abuse



AFP ■ PARIS

Alexander Zverev defeated a three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka in the Davis Cup on Friday as the German star returned to the courts for the first time since being cleared of domestic abuse.

The 25-year-old Zverev swept past Wawrinka 6-4, 6-1 in Trier to bring Germany level with Switzerland after the opening day of their qualifier.

On Tuesday, Zverev was told by the ATP that there was

"insufficient evidence" to substantiate allegations against him of abusing a former girlfriend. Former world number two Zverev always denied the claims, describing them as "baseless".

On Friday, Wawrinka, who helped his country win the 2014 Davis Cup, was returning to the team competition for the first time in eight years. Now ranked 135 in the world, he was comfortably beaten for the fifth time in five meetings by Zverev.

a double fault, allowing the Indian to take a mini 3-2 lead.

That lead stayed with Nagal and he came out serving for the match in the 10th game. Holmgren's forehand error gave the Indian three match points and converted the first one on

home team player's unforced error.

In the opening singles, Rune broke Bhambri twice in each set. The 19-year-old converted four of the seven break chances while the Indian did not get a single chance to break his opponent.

Dipa Karmakar handed 21-month ban after failing dope test

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star gymnast Dipa Karmakar has been handed a 21-month ban for failing a dope test conducted by the International Testing Agency, contrary to claims made by Indian officials that her "suspension" last year was not related to doping offence.

Karmakar's dope sample collected out-of-competition by the ITA, an independent organisation that manages the anti-doping programme of the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG), was found to contain Higenamine, which is a prohibited substance under World Anti-Doping Agency Code.

Her ban period will, however, end on July 10 this year as it was counted from the day (October 11, 2011) the sample was collected.

"The ITA confirms that Dipa Karmakar has been suspended for a 21-month period, effective until 10 July 2023 after testing positive for higenamine (53. Beta-2 Agonists as per the World Anti-Doping Agency prohibited list)," the ITA said in a statement late on Friday.

"The positive sample was collected on behalf of the FIG in the scope of an out-of-competition control on 11 October 2021," it added.

The Switzerland based non-profit organisation works under the supervision of WADA and International Olympic Committee to implement anti-doping



programmes for various international federations. The ITA further said Karmakar's dope issue was resolved under a case resolution agreement pursuant to article 10.8.2 of the FIG Anti-Doping Rules and equivalent provision in the WADA.

"The athlete's results have been disqualified from October 11, 2021 onwards."

Karmakar, who shot to fame after finishing fourth in the 2016 Rio Olympics in the vault

event, has been struggling with injuries ever since she underwent a surgery to treat an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury in 2017.

Her last FIG event was the 2019 World Cup in Baku.

The ban on Karmakar flies on her face as well as on the Gymnastic Federation of India officials who have been claiming ignorance after she was put in the "suspended" category by the FIG in February last year.

GFI president Sudhir Mittal had then said that he had not received any communication from the FIG regarding her suspension.

Karmakar herself and her coach Bisheshwar Nandi kept quiet at that time.

Other GFI officials went to the extent of saying that the 'suspended' status could be due to other issues, like ethical or disciplinary, not related to doping violation.

Chelsea can't buy a goal in Fulham stalemate

AFP ■ LONDON

Chelsea manager Graham Potter pleaded for time to gel his expensive collection of new stars after the Blues were held 0-0 at home by Fulham on Friday.

Enzo Fernandez made his Chelsea debut after becoming the most expensive player in British football history with a £107 million move (\$132 million) from Benfica on transfer deadline day.

Mykhailo Mudryk was also given his Stamford Bridge bow, while Noni Madueke and David Datro Fofana came off the bench for their Premier League debuts.

Chelsea's record investment of over £300 million in the January window took the total spend on players in their first season under new ownership to over half a billion.

Co-owners Todd Boehly and Behdad Eghbali were in attendance, but will not have been impressed as another chance to close on the top four slipped by.

Potter's men sit ninth in the table, still nine points adrift of the Champions League places.

"New players are adapting to a new country and a new league. It's not straightforward. When the price tag is what it is questions will be asked, it's the nature of the business,"

said Potter.

"The decision we took in the window you can see the profile in terms of age. We feel we have a very strong group of players. We have to gel and become a really good team. That's where the work is."

Fulham had secured a first victory in the west London derby since 2006 when the teams met just three weeks ago.

Marco Silva's men sit two points and three places above their local rivals in the table in their first season back in the top flight.

HAVERTZ'S HAT-TRICK OF MISSES

Fulham were seeking a first ever league double over Chelsea and came close to achieving it as Andreas Pereira forced Kepa Arrizabalaga into a flying save low to his right.

For the enormous sums spent by Chelsea's new owners, their lack of a clinical goalscorer was exposed once more.

Kai Havertz had a hat-trick of big chances to break the deadlock before half-time.

The German international failed to get enough contact on Thiago Silva's brilliant pass to divert the ball beyond Bernd Leno.

Havertz then could not stretch to turn Mason Mount's dangerous



cross on target.

But his best opening came when he hit the post with a lob over Leno from Hakim Ziyech's defence-splitting pass.

Ziyech would have been a Paris Saint-Germain player this week had Chelsea not submitted the wrong paperwork in the minutes before Tuesday's transfer deadline.

The Moroccan is just one of a wealth of wide options now available to Potter and he wasted no time in hooking Mudryk despite his price tag after a disappointing first 45 minutes.

The Ukrainian joined from Shakhtar Donetsk last month for a fee that could rise to 100 million euros (\$110 million).

Madueke was introduced in his place and Potter also threw on Raheem Sterling from the bench on the hour mark in the search for a winner.

Fernandez was inches away from the perfect debut as the Argentine World Cup winner flashed a shot wide from distance 20 minutes from time.

Connor Gallagher came even closer as he hit the side-netting from the edge of the box.

But the best chance fell to Fofana as the Ivorian rounded the stranded Leno, but failed to beat the covering Tim Ream on the line.

UAE set to host Asia Cup, venue to be finalised in March



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Asian Cricket Council will decide on an alternate venue for the Asia Cup ODI tournament in March after BCCI secretary Jay Shah and PCB chairman Najam Sethi had their first formal meeting in Bahrain on Saturday. The Asia Cup was initially allotted

to Pakistan and was scheduled in September this year but Shah, who is also the ACC chairman, had announced last October that India will not travel to Pakistan.

It is understood that United Arab Emirates with three venues — Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah — are favourites to host the tournament but the decision

has been withheld for the time being.

All heads of ACC member nations attended the emergent meeting which was called at the behest of PCB chairman Sethi after ACC under chairmanship of Shah released the continental body's itinerary where Pakistan wasn't named the hosts. "The ACC affiliates met today and there were a lot of construc-

tive discussions. But the shift of venue has been postponed till March. But be rest assured that with India not going to Pakistan, the tournament will have to be shifted. A tournament without Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharmas and Shubman Gills will have the sponsors back out," a senior BCCI official privy to the development told PTI.

One ACC insider said Sethi has just taken over PCB and if he would have ceded ground on the hosting rights in the first meeting itself, then it would have led to a bad impression at home.

Pakistan is currently going through an economic crisis and inflation has hit the country very hard with the country's currency (PKR) plummeting to Rs 277 against 1 US Dollar. Organising a high profile tournament like Asia Cup, even if ACC pays a grant could burn a hole in PCB coffers. So strategically, if the tournament is held in the UAE, there is every possibility that all the member nations will also get to earn apart from the broadcast revenues.

In another decision, the ACC has decided to increase the annual budget allocated for Afghanistan Cricket Association to 15 percent from six.

The ACC has assured that it will help the Afghanistan board in all possible ways so that women's cricket can be revived in the country. Women are banned from playing sport under Taliban rule.

Carey reminds OZ of Indian pacers' reverse-swing threat

PTI ■ ALUR

Australia wicketkeeper-batter Alex Carey has reminded his team how damaging the Indian pacers could be with their reverse swing even as countering the threat from hosts spinners was the main focus in the build-up to their high profile four-match Test series starting on Thursday.

Australia abandoned the idea of "irrelevant" tour games in India and instead trained with SG balls on specially-prepared spinning pitches in Sydney before coming to India.

"Going to Pakistan it was a lot of spin talk and I found the reverse swinging ball difficult," Carey told reporters here on the sidelines of their four-day training camp.

He recalled their tour game in Bengaluru in 2018 when pacers were equally making impact as the spinners and Mohammed Siraj returned with a match haul of 11 wickets.

"I played a four-day game (for Australia A against India A)



in 2018 and a lot of the talk was about spin and probably forget a bit how damaging both team's fast bowlers are with the reverse-swinging ball, with a wicket that might be a bit up and down," said the 31-year-old.

Carey also recalled their drawn Test series in Sri Lanka in July last year where the Australians had to adapt to different pitch conditions.

"We went to Galle for two Tests and they were two different wickets. So be open-minded about what we are going to come up against, what team they put on the park and what sce-

nario I come in at," he said.

"Having the game ebb and flow between spin and fast bowling, dry periods, periods where it will score quickly... Think that's great about this team, the experience we do have."

Carey said the visiting team understands the capability of the Indian side, and will plan accordingly.

"We'll speak to the guys who have played (in India) in the past and we'll have our batters' meeting soon. We'll face a lot of different spinners throughout the next few days, our spinners (are) bowling well as well, so for everyone it's getting our feet on the ground."

"We haven't really spoken about the way we are going to play, it's the individual basis. For Travis it might be exploring that (attacking) game a bit, Renner (Matthew Renshaw) is a bit taller and can get to the pitch of the ball — he has been here and succeeded — so it's up to the individual to own their game then we back them in to do that".

WE'VE PLENTY OF OPTIONS IN SPIN DEPARTMENT: CUMMINS

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Australia captain Pat Cummins on Saturday said his team is not fretting over its spin combination as it has enough options to support veteran off-spinner Nathan Lyon in the high-profile four-match Test series against India beginning in Nagpur on Thursday. The touring Australians have named Mitchell Swepson along with finger spinner Ashton Agar to team up with Lyon.

"We've got plenty of options here (with) finger spin, wrist spin, left arm (pace) when (Mitchell) Starc comes back," Cummins told reporters in his first media interaction after arriving in India. "We'll obviously pick the bowlers that we think are going to take 20 wickets. But how we split that up, we're not 100 per cent sure yet."

Asked if it would be a two-pronged spin attack, he said: "I wouldn't say it's a given. Obviously it's very conditions dependent. Particularly in the first test, once we get to Nagpur we will see that." The Australians are here for a training camp before heading to Nagpur on Monday. "The good thing is someone like Agar was in our

last team, Swepson played the last two overseas tour, so a bit of experience. "Murphy played in the last tour. We feel that we got a lot of support in that department for Lyon." The 29-year-old Cummins pointed out that middle-order batter Travis Head also offers off-spin option.

"Travis Head also bowls really good offspin. We have to balance things. We have got a plenty of variety there to choose from. We have not locked in any bowling line-up so far."

While there is so much talk about spin bowling, Cummins said his side should not forget about their intimidating pace bowling attack. "I think sometimes, talking about a couple of spinners, you forget how good a lot of our fast bowlers have been in all conditions. "Even some of the SCG wickets, there haven't been a lot in them for quick bowlers, but the quick bowlers have found a way," he added. Cummins has come a long way since he made a Test comeback after six years in Ranchi during the last tour of India in 2017.

An injury-prone Cummins then dished out a hostile spell to dismiss the star Indian trio of KL Rahul, Virat Kohli and Ajinkya



Rahane en route to figures of 4/106. "It was my first test in six years. I just wanted to reaffirm that's where I wanted to be in Test cricket. I really enjoyed that spell, you can't be worried about your body or different things. You just got to go all out. I really enjoyed that. "Test cricket can be really, really harsh. You have got to accept that it's going to be grinding times, and you got

to be out for it and embrace that challenge. Coming here to India when a lot of the talks are around, big spinning wicket, it's not always the case. "You need to get into the grind at times. That role of the fast bowler, bowling a lot of overs for not a heap of reward but doing your job for your team. I really enjoy that aspect of the last tour. Much to play for this time," he said.

Green might have an 'outside chance' of playing Nagpur Test: McDonald



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Dashing all-rounder Cameron Green is making a quick recovery from his index finger injury and has an "outside chance" of making it to Australia's playing eleven for the opening Test against India starting in Nagpur on February 9.

The 23-year-old seam bowling all-rounder, who is recovering from a surgery on his index finger in his right hand, had a bowl at the nets in Alur.

"We haven't put a clear line through him on the team sheet. So, I wouldn't say he was in discomfort when he was bowling," McDonald told reporters here on the sidelines of their four-day training camp.

However there are still some concerns when he is batting, admitted the head coach.

"I would say one of the deliveries jarred the bottom of the bat and that can create discomfort for anyone, but there is a little bit of awareness around that finger. He has made some significant steps forward in the last couple of days, probably to my surprise. "So, there is still an outside chance, everything going well, he might be on the team sheet," McDonald kept the options open.


Skipper Pat Cummins had earlier ruled out Green from bowling in the Test should he play, but McDonald said he has

been well documented he hasn't had the series that he would like. It's always challenging.

"I think the way he is applying

himself in his downtime to really land on a method to take on the Indian spinners and also the quicks and to have a success-

ful tour, I think you will see him fully invigorated and invested and fully charged for the challenge ahead."



OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, L.I. DIVISION, CUTTACK

e-mail – eeolic_cgc@yahoo.in

e-Procurement Notice

CAD-4720


Bid Identification No.16 /OLIC (CTC) / Dt. 03/02/2023

The Executive Engineer, L.I. Division, Cuttack, At: Pratap Nagari, Po: Telengapitha, Dist: Cuttack, PIN – 754001 invites Percentage Rate bids in online mode for "Installation of New & Revival Lift Irrigation Projects" along with energisation on Turnkey basis from reputed contractors/firms having valid PWD license of required class and valid HT license issued by E.L.B.O., Odisha. Contractors can also participate in the e-Tender with **Registered Joint venture**. Proof of registrations, experience from appropriate authorities are to be uploaded along with the bid/bids. The GST @5% on tender paper will be paid by **GST No. 21AAACO5986G1ZF** on reverse charge basis.

1.	Numbers of Package	10 Nos		
2.	Estimated Cost	AS PER DTCN		
3.	Cost of tender paper	Rs. 6000 + Rs. 4000(in on-line mode) +5% GST as reverse charge basis vide challan No.21AAACO5986G1ZF of OLIC		
4.	Date & time of publication	Dt.06.02.2023 from 10.00 A.M.		
5.	Date & time of closing	Dt. 13.02.2023 at 5.00 P.M.		
6.	Date & time of opening of bid	Dt. 14.02.2023 at 10.00 A.M.		
7.	The bidders have to participate in online bidding only.			
Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in .				
Addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender if any, can be seen in the said website				

OIPR-32238/11/0019/2223

Execitue Engineer



GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,

P.H. DIVISION, BALASORE

Phone : 9437086137, e-mail-eeophbls@gmail.com

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement (Online Mode)

Bid-Identification No.EEPHBL5-54 of 2022-23 dt.02.02.2023

The Executive Engineer, P.H. Division, Balasore on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites Percentage Rate bids in Double cover system in ONLINE mode only.


Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Bid-Identification No.	Value of Work (Rs.Lakh)	Period of Completion	Availability of bid documents for online bidding	Last date and time of seeking clarification	Date & Time of opening of technical bid
1	Construction of 4 nos. 'E' type staff quarters in Balasore Municipality.(G+2)	EEPHBL5-54 dt.02.02.2023	62.42	06 (Six) calendar month	11:00 Hrs. of dt.13.02.2023	17:00 Hrs. of dt.28.02.2023	17:00 Hrs. Of 22.02.2023

The bidders shall have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website. The authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids without assigning any reason thereof.

Name and Address of the officer inviting bid :- The Executive Engineer, P.H. Division, Balasore, At-Samalpur, Post-Balia, Dist-Balasore, Pin-756056, Odisha, Phone : 9437086137

OIPR-13053/11/0019/2223

Executive Engineer, P.H.Division, Balasore



OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

BALASORE (ROADS & BUILDINGS) DIVISION-II

AT/PO- BHASKARGANJ , BALASORE

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No. dt.


CONTACT NO :- 06782-263149

E Mail ID :- eepwdbs2@gmail.com

1	The Executive Engineer , Balasore (R & B) Division-II , Balasore on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites Percentage rate bids to be received in ONLINE MODE only for Roads & Buildings works .	
2	No. of Work	: 1 No.
3	Nature of work :	: Building work of Balasore (R&B) Division-II
4	Class of Contractor :	: "B" Class of Contractor
5	Approx. value of work	: Rs.66.15 Lakhs
6	Tender Cost. : .	: Rs. 10000.00 per work
7	Availability of Bid Documents in the website :	: From 10.00 Hours of dt. 07.02.2023 to 16:00 hours of dt 17.02.2023
8	Date of Opening of Bid :	: Dt. 20.02.2023 at 11.30 Hours.
9	Other details can be seen in the Bidding documents from the website : https://tendersorissa.gov.in .	

OIPR-34155/11/0013/2223

Executive Engineer, Balasore (R&B) Division-II



A-1086

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,ROURKELA IRRIGATION DIVISION,ROURKELA

email id :- seridrk@gmail.com

e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

BID IDENTIFICATION NO. SERID-RKL-09/2022-23 DT.01.02.2023

BID documents consisting of work, estimate cost, cost of tender paper, EMD, time of completion, class of contractor, the set of terms & conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in e-procurement portal www.tendersorissa.gov.in in complete online process only.

1.	Nature of Work	: Canal work & Dam work
2.	Total Number of works	: 04(Four) nos
3.	Bid Identification No.	: SERID-RKL-09/2022-23 (Online)
4.	Estimated Cost	: Rs.8.47 lakhs to 18.41 lakhs
5.	Class of Contractor	: Referred to DTCN
6.	Cost of Tender Paper	: Referred to DTCN
7.	Earnest Money Deposit	: Referred to DTCN
8.	Period of completion	: Referred to DTCN
9.	Date & time of Availability of Bid documents in the portal	: From dt.06.02.2023 at 10.00 A.M to dt. 15.02.2023 up to 05.30 P.M.
10.	Last Date / time for receipt of bids in the portal	: Dt. 15.02.2023 at 05.30 P.M
11.	Date and time of Opening of Bids	: Dt. 16.02.2023 at 11.00 hours
12.	Last date & time of seeking of clarification	: Dt 10.02.2023 at 1.00 P.M
13.	Date of Lottery (in case of situation arise)	: Dt. 20.02.2023 at 11.30 hours
14.	Place of Opening	: Office of the Superintending Engineer, Rourkela Irrigation Division, Rourkela.
15.	Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid	: Superintending Engineer, Rourkela Irrigation Division, Rourkela.

The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. As Goods & Service Tax (GST) has Come into force with effective from 01.07.2017.

Further details can be seen from the Govt. web site www.tendersorissa.gov.in.

OIPR-32018/11/0014/2223

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER ROURKELA IRRIGATION DIVISION ROURKELA

“I never thought being famous would be wonderful, but my limited exposure to celebrity has shown me the dark side big-time”
—Marianne Williamson



THE CITY OF FLOWERS NOW AN EPICENTER OF VIOLENCE

Peshawar was a peaceful place until the early 1980s when Pakistan’s then-dictator Ziaul Haq decided to become part of Washington’s cold war with Moscow, joining the fight against the 1979 Soviet invasion of neighboring Afghanistan. Write RIAZ KHAN and MUNIR AHMED

Pakistan’s Peshawar was once known as “the city of flowers,” surrounded by orchards of pear, quince and pomegranate trees. It was a trading city, situated at the gates of a key mountain valley connecting South and Central Asia.

But for the past four decades, it has borne the brunt of rising militancy in the region, fueled by the conflicts in neighboring Afghanistan and the geopolitical games of great powers.

On Tuesday, the city with a population of about 2 million was reeling after one of Pakistan’s most devastating militant attacks in years. A day earlier, a suicide bomber unleashed a blast in a mosque inside the city’s main police compound, killing at least 101 people and wounding at least 225, mostly police.

Analysts say the carnage is the legacy of decades of flawed policies by Pakistan and the United States.

“What you sow, so shall you reap,” said Abdullah Khan, a senior security analyst.

Peshawar was a peaceful place, he said, until the early 1980s when Pakistan’s then-dictator Ziaul Haq decided to become part of Washington’s cold war with Moscow, joining the fight against the 1979 Soviet invasion of neighboring Afghanistan.

Peshawar — less than 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the Afghan border — became the center where the American CIA and Pakistani military helped train, arm and fund the Afghan mujahedeen fighting the Soviets. The city was flooded by weapons and fighters, many of them hard-line Islamic militants, as well as with hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees.

Arab militants were also drawn there by the fight against the Soviets, including the scion of a wealthy Saudi family, Osama bin Laden. It was in Peshawar that bin Laden founded al-Qaida in the late 1980s, joining forces with veteran Egyptian militant Ayman al-Zawahiri.

The Soviets finally withdrew in defeat from Afghanistan in 1989. But the legacy of militancy and armed resistance that the U.S. and Pakistan fueled against them remained.

“After the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1980s, Americans abandoned mujahedeen, Americans even abandoned us, and since then we are paying a price for it,” said Mahmood Shah, a former Pakistani army brigadier and a senior security analyst.

The mujahedeen plunged Afghanistan into civil war in a bloody fight for power. Meanwhile, in Peshawar and another Pakistani city, Quetta, the Afghan Taliban began to organize, with backing from the Pakistani government. Eventually, the Taliban took power in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, ruling until they were ousted by the 2001 American-led invasion following al-Qaida’s 9/11 attacks in the U.S.

During the nearly 20-year U.S. war against the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, militant groups blossomed in the tribal regions of Pakistan along the border and around Peshawar. Like the Taliban, they found root among the ethnic Pashtuns who make up a majority in the region and in the city.

Some groups were encouraged by the Pakistani intelligence agencies. But others turned their guns against the government, angered by heavy security crackdowns and by frequent U.S. airstrikes in the border region targeting al-Qaida and other militants.

Chief among the anti-government groups was the Pakistani Taliban, or Tahreek-e Taliban-Pakistani, or TTP. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, it waged a brutal campaign of violence around the country. Peshawar was scene of one of the bloodiest TTP attacks in 2014, on an army-run public school that killed nearly 150 people, most of them schoolboys.

Peshawar’s location has for centuries made it a key juncture between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. One of the oldest cities

DURING THE NEARLY 20-YEAR U.S. WAR AGAINST THE TALIBAN INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN, MILITANT GROUPS BLOSSOMED IN THE TRIBAL REGIONS OF PAKISTAN ALONG THE BORDER AND AROUND PESHAWAR. LIKE THE TALIBAN, THEY FOUND ROOT AMONG THE ETHNIC PASHTUNS WHO MAKE UP A MAJORITY IN THE REGION AND IN THE CITY. SOME GROUPS WERE ENCOURAGED BY THE PAKISTANI INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES. BUT OTHERS TURNED THEIR GUNS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, ANGERED BY HEAVY SECURITY CRACKDOWNS AND BY FREQUENT U.S. AIRSTRIKES IN THE BORDER REGION TARGETING AL-QAIDA AND OTHER MILITANTS

in Asia, it stands at the entrance to the Khyber Pass, the main route between the two regions. That was a source of its prosperity in trade and put it on the path of armies going both directions, from Moghul emperors to British imperialists.

A heavy military offensive largely put down the TTP for several years and the government and the militants eventually reached an uneasy truce. Peshawar came under heavy security control, with checkpoints dotting the main roads, and a heavy presence of police and paramilitary troops.

TTP attacks, however, have grown once more since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in Kabul in August 2021 amid the U.S. and NATO withdrawal from that country. The Pakistani Taliban are distinct from but allied to the Afghan group, and Pakistani officials regularly accuse the Afghan Taliban of giving the TTP free rein to operate from Afghan territory.

On Wednesday, several police officers joined a peace march organized by the members of civil society groups in Peshawar, denouncing militant attacks and demanding peace in the country. Police said they made some arrest in connection with Monday’s mosque bombing but did not provide details.

Ahead of Monday’s suicide bombing, Peshawar had seen increasing small-scale attacks targeting police. In another spillover from Afghanistan’s conflict, the regional affiliate of the Islamic State group attacked Peshawar’s main Shiite mosque in March 2022, killing more than 60 people.

Shah, the former officer, warned that more TTP attacks could follow and said that Pakistan needs to engage the Afghan Taliban and pressure them to either evict the TTP or ensure it doesn’t launch attacks from Afghan territory.

“If we are to have peace in Pakistan, we should talk to TTP from the position of strength with help from the Afghan Taliban,” he said. “This is the best and viable solution to avoid more violence.” (AP)

Pakistan reaches out to Taliban supremo

Pakistan has decided to seek the intervention of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada to control the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terror group, according to official sources.

During an Apex Committee meeting in Peshawar, the civil and military leadership held the banned TTP responsible for the carnage in the city this week, and decided to take up the matter with the interim Afghan government at the highest level, with a clear message that Pakistan would no longer tolerate cross-border terrorism, The Express Tribune reported.

Although the TTP has denied its involvement in Monday’s suicide blast at a mosque in the Peshawar Police Lines, a briefing given to the Apex Committee suggested that the banned outfit was indeed the mastermind of the attack.

The meeting at the Governor House in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) capital was held in the wake of a deadly terrorist attack in the Police Lines in which more than 100 people, mostly policemen, were killed.

The meeting was presided over by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The participants of the meeting included Army chief Gen Syed Asim Munir, DG ISI Lt-Gen Nadeem Anjum, Peshawar Corps Commander, DGMO and other military officials as well as senior cabinet members, chief ministers of the four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was invited to the all-impor-



tant meeting but it did not attend.

The marathon meeting discussed how the suicide bomber managed to enter the high security zone, who the perpetrator was and how the government would respond to the renewed threat posed by the TTP.

The meeting was informed that the TTP, indeed, carried out the attack but because of fear of backlash from the Afghan Taliban, it did not own it, publicly.

Insiders told The Express Tribune that Pakistan would seek the intervention of Akhundzada to control the banned terror outfit.

The meeting noted that despite the resurgence of terrorism in the country, terrorists did not hold any specific area, therefore there was no need for a full-scale military operations.

Instead, according to Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, the intelligence-based operations would continue. (IANS)

NIP CANCER IN THE BUD

Usually, the word cancer is equated with death. However, busting the common myth, health experts say that most cancers may be cured fully if diagnosed early. Late detection is one of the highest reasons behind poor survival rates. On the World Cancer Day on February 4, THE HEALTH PIONEER sheds light on some most common types of cancer in India and the causes behind them.

TYPES OF CANCERS

* Gall Bladder Cancer

Bladder cancer risk factors include smoking, genetic mutations, and exposure to certain chemicals. Speaking on the rise in gallbladder-related illness, Dr Sushma Bhatnagar, the head of National Cancer Institute of India said, "Cases of gallbladder cases in women have been on the rise especially in the north-eastern parts of the country and settlements beside rivers."

*Cervical Cancer

Screening tests and the HPV vaccine can help prevent cervical cancer.

*Colorectal Cancer

If you are 45 years old or older, get screened. Screening tests can help prevent colorectal cancer or find it early, when treatment works best.

*Gynecologic Cancers

Five main types of cancer affect a woman's reproductive organs: breast, cervical, ovarian, uterine, vaginal, and vulvar. As a group, they are called gynecologic cancers.

*Breast Cancer

Regular mammograms are the best tests doctors have to find breast cancer early. Talk to your doctor about when to start and how often to get a screening mammogram.

*Ovarian Cancer

Ovarian cancer causes more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system. But when ovarian cancer is found early, treatment works best.

*Uterine Cancer

Uterine cancer is the most common cancer of the female reproductive system.

*Vaginal and Vulvar Cancers

Vaginal and vulvar cancers are rare, but all women are at risk for these cancers.



PREVENTABLE CANCERS

No cancer is 100% preventable. However, managing certain controllable risk factors – such as your diet, physical activity and other lifestyle choices – can lower your chances of developing cancer. This is especially true for 9 specific cancer types, which include:

- *Breast cancer
- *Cervical cancer
- *Colorectal cancer
- *Head and neck cancer
- *Lung cancer
- *Ovarian cancer
- *Prostate cancer
- *Skin cancer
- *Testicular cancer

*Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the United States. To lower your risk, quit smoking, avoid secondhand smoke, and get your home tested for radon.

*Lymphoma

Lymphoma is a general term for cancers that start in the lymph system. The two main kinds are Hodgkin lymphoma and non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

*Myeloma

Myeloma is a cancer of the plasma cells. In myeloma, the cells grow too much, forming a mass or tumor in the bone marrow.

*Prostate Cancer

Most prostate cancers grow slowly and don't cause any health problems. Learn more and talk to your doctor before you decide to get tested or treated for prostate cancer.

*Skin Cancer

To lower your skin cancer risk, protect your skin from the sun and avoid indoor tanning.

*Thyroid Cancer

The thyroid gland is located in front of the neck. It sends out hormones that help control many activities in the body.

MOST COMMON CAUSES FOR CANCER

TOBACCO

Tobacco use is a leading cause of cancer and of death from cancer. People who use tobacco products have an increased risk of cancer because tobacco products and secondhand smoke have many chemicals that damage DNA.

Tobacco use causes many types of cancer, including cancer of the lung, larynx (voice box), mouth, esophagus, throat, bladder, kidney, liver, stomach, pancreas, colon and rectum, and cervix, as well as acute myeloid leukemia. People who use smokeless tobacco (snuff or chewing tobacco) have increased risks of cancers of the mouth, esophagus, and pancreas.

Dr SVS Deo, Professor of Surgical Oncology at AIIMS Delhi says, "Smoking and consumption of alcohol account for 30 per cent of total cancer cases. If we can somehow curb the usage of these deadly items, cancer cases will go down."

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

Environmental pollutants like arsenic, chromium, nickel, asbestos, dioxins besides tobacco are the major cause for lung cancer and gall bladder in India.

Dr Bhatnagar said, a major chunk of cancer cases are a result of air pollution, water pollution and an unhealthy lifestyle. Air pollution has also led an increase in the cases of cervical cancer. Delhi NCR witnessed 22000 cases of cancer last year of which 50 per cent of cases were treated at the National Cancer Institute, AIIMS."

Breast cancer Early detection key

Oncologists recommend breast self-examination every month around five days after the periods are over starting from the age of 20. According to them, for postmenopausal women, it can be done on a certain day/date of every month. Annual breast examination by a trained doctor after the age of 20 is also strongly recommended. Finally, regular mammograms after the age of 40-45 is also recommended for early detection of Breast Cancers and timely treatment.

With the emergence of advanced surgeries including oncoplastic breast surgery, oncologists/surgeons are now able to offer breast conservation to most patients with a good cosmetic outcome that boosts confidence and creates a positive impact on the psychological state of the patient. According to the experts, newer techniques like Sentinel lymph node biopsy and Lymphovenous anastomosis help in reducing the lymphedema rates to less than 5 percent. Chemotherapy usually consists of 6-8 cycles administered in daycare at an interval of 15-21 days.

It's not just a woman who has cancer, suffers. It has a devastating impact for the next generation. According to a study by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, an estimated 4.4 million women died of cancer in 2020, leaving nearly 1 million children orphaned. At least 25% were due to breast cancer.

DOCTORSPEAK

Dr. Bhawana Awasthy, Chief-Medical & Clinical Oncology, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre

"Cancer that develops in breast glands or ducts is called breast cancer. A lump in the breast, bloody or straw-coloured nipple discharge, recent nipple inversion, ulceration or destruction of the nipple, dimpling of skin and thickening of skin to give an appearance of orange peel are some of the symptoms of breast cancer. While identifying these signs is important, regular mammography picks up cancers even before these symptoms. Meet your doctor for a breast examination and screening advice before the disease becomes apparent. Remember, breast cancer is curable if detected early."

Dr. Suman Mallik, Clinical Director - Senior Consultant & HOD Radiation Oncology, Narayana Superspeciality Hospital, Howrah

"Confirmation of diagnosis of breast cancer usually requires a needle biopsy, which can be performed at the



WHO Roadmap on breast cancer launched recently recommends:

- Countries to focus on breast cancer early-detection programmes so that at least 60% of the breast cancers are diagnosed and treated as early-stage disease.
- Diagnosing breast cancer within 60 days of initial presentation can improve breast cancer outcomes. Treatment should start within three months of the first presentation.
- Managing breast cancer so that at least 80% of patients complete their recommended treatment.

OPD 10-15 minutes after the mammogram is done. We initially go for ultrasound, mammogram and sometimes MRI in special situations to detect early disease. Patients with larger lumps, those having enlarged glands in the armpit or symptoms suggestive of distant organ involvement (bone pain, breathlessness, headache, enlarged liver etc.) need additional tests like PET-CT scan to rule out the spread of disease to other organs."

Dr. Ronak Vyas, Surgical Oncologist at Narayana Multi Speciality Hospital, Ahmedabad

"People need to be aware of advanced treatment and facilities available in the country now. For example, our hospital has best-in-class treatment and care for breast cancer patients. It is very disappointing for us that a large number of patients come to us at advanced stages. Early Cancer or Stages I & II are usually treated by surgeries first. Locally advanced stage III requires chemotherapy first followed by surgery and radiation. Hormone and other targeted therapy are needed in the select group of patients who have certain markers present on their tumours. Stage IV (Distant organ spread) is treated either with chemotherapy or hormone therapy or both."

... Rural women caught unaware

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Even as breast self-examination (BSE) remains a feasible screening method in resource-poor settings like India, yet diagnosis in advanced stages remains a cause of concern. This is mainly because the majority of women particularly from rural India have poor awareness regarding breast cancer and poor practice of BSE.

This was found by a group of researchers while assessing the awareness of breast cancer and the practice of BSE among women in a rural area of Karnataka in South India. This speaks volumes of the awareness status among rural women across the country.

Published in the Indian Journal of Cancer, the study revealed that less than one in ten women knew that a lump in the breast is a symptom of breast cancer.

Majority 338 (81.2%) were not able to state even a single symptom of breast cancer and 365 (87.7%) not able to state even one risk factor of breast cancer.

Majority 354 (85.1%) of the women in the study had never heard of BSE. None of the women in the study performed monthly BSE. Only 40 (9.6%) of the women actually performed BSE within the last 6 months. Women with higher education and those who reported a history of a lump in the breast in self or family were significantly more likely to state at least one symptom of breast cancer and were more likely to practice BSE, noted the authors of the study led by Avita R, Department of Community Health, St. John's Medical College, Bangalore.

Awareness of at least one symptom of breast cancer was associated with an 18 fold increase in the practice of BSE,

"Evidence points out that early detection and treatment can improve breast cancer survival rates. For rural Indian women, the lack of a mammogram and breast examination by an experienced clinician makes BSE the only feasible screening method available. The poor awareness and practice of BSE could lead to delayed diagnosis and adversely affect the outcome of breast cancer. However, there are several socio-cultural barriers that continue to exist in Indian society such as negative attitude to BSE, poor health-seeking behaviour and lack of priority to the health of women as they reach the end of their child-bearing years."

study said, revealing an urgent need to focus on health awareness

regarding breast cancer and BSE among rural women.

CANCER: Close the care gap

On World Cancer Day, WHO is calling for intensified action across the South-East Asia Region to strengthen health systems to prevent and detect cancers early, to provide prompt treatment referral, to enhance access to palliative care, and to close the gap in access to quality cancer services – the theme of this year's commemoration.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death globally, accounting for an estimated 9.9 million deaths in 2020. Between 2010 and 2019, global cancer incidence increased by 26%, alongside a 21% increase in cancer deaths. An estimated one third of cancer deaths globally are due to tobacco use, high body mass index, alcohol use, low fruit and vegetable intake, and lack of physical activity.

In the WHO South-East Asia Region, an estimated 2.3 million people developed cancer in 2020, and 1.4 million died of the disease. Cancer is estimated to account for more than 20% of premature mortality from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in the Region, which stand at around 4.7 million deaths every year. In 2020, cancer of the lungs, breast and cervix accounted for 400 000 of the total number of cancer-related deaths in the Region, and almost two-thirds of people

diagnosed with cancer succumbed to the disease, highlighting the urgent need for improved early diagnosis and treatment.

Since 2014, the Region has accelerated action to prevent, detect, treat and control cancer, with increased focus on eliminating cervical cancer as a public health problem. Eight countries of the Region now have in place population-based cancer registries (PBCRs), and three countries – Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka – are focus countries for addressing childhood cancer. Ten of the Region's 11 Member States provide tertiary care services for cancer diagnosis and treatment – including surgical and chemotherapy services – and nine also offer radiotherapy services.

WHO continues to support countries of the Region to implement its new Regional Action Plan on Oral Health 2022–2030, including oral cancers, which in 2020 were among the top five most common cancers, accounting for 7.4% of new cancers. Five countries of the Region – Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand – now have in place national cancer control plans, which Maldives and Nepal are in the process of finalizing. The Region is currently on track to achieve the WHO NCD Global Action Plan tar-



DR POONAM KHETRAPPAL SINGH
WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia

get of a 30% relative reduction in tobacco use prevalence between 2010 and 2025.

On cervical cancer, the Region is achieving rapid, life-saving progress. Five Member States – Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand – have introduced nation-wide HPV vaccination, which Bangladesh, India and Timor-Leste are set to also introduce. Indonesia has introduced HPV vaccination in several provinces, covering tens of millions of girls. New evidence shows that a single dose of HPV vaccine delivers protection comparable to the 2-dose schedule, which alongside additional cost reductions, should enable countries to reach every woman and girl.

To accelerate progress and close the care gap, the Region has several priorities. First, introducing and/or expanding HPV vaccination in routine immunization to prevent cervical cancer, covering at least 90% of adolescent girls. At the same time, the Region must continue to facilitate healthy lifestyles, including by not just legislating but enforcing key tobacco control measures such as health warnings and bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, as well as by raising taxes on tobacco products.

Second, increasing capacity at the primary health care (PHC) level to detect cancers early, with a focus on intensified health workforce training, improved infrastructure and resources, and streamlined referral pathways for prompt initiation of treatment. In all countries, PHC physicians and nurses must be equipped to provide palliative and end-of-life care close to patients' homes and families, within the community.

Third, rapidly – and systematically – advancing the capacity of tertiary care facilities to provide comprehensive diagnostic and treatment services, which is critical to reduce cancer mortality. Interventions should be aimed at

Though the study was conducted in 2016, its observation still holds true keeping in mind no let up in the breast cancer cases.

The authors have called for an urgent need to focus on health awareness regarding breast cancer and BSE among rural women by exploring various mechanisms of community engagement, including involving grassroots-level health workers.

The study tool used was the Breast Cancer Awareness Measure (Breast-CAM), developed by Cancer Research UK, King's College London and University College London in 2009, and it records awareness of symptoms and risk factors of breast cancer and awareness and practice regarding BSE. It was translated into the local language Kannada for use in rural areas for study purposes.

high-burden cancers with high potential for cure. They must be accessible to all. Existing PBCRs should be improved, and where appropriate, new registries established, ensuring that policy makers can access good quality information to plan, monitor and evaluate interventions, and adjust accordingly.

Fourth, including cancer services in risk pooling or pre-payment schemes and health benefit packages. For this, national health budgets should enhance the quality and accessibility of public sector services and strengthen financial protection, with a focus on ending catastrophic health expenditure.

Action cannot and must not wait. In the last two decades, the world has made significant progress in the science of cancer control. However, much more work is needed to close the care gap, improve cancer survival, and accelerate towards the NCD 2025 and Sustainable Development Goal targets 2030. On World Cancer Day, WHO reiterates its commitment to support all countries of the Region to prevent, detect, treat and control cancer, ensuring equitable access to quality cancer services for everyone, everywhere.

Yemenis’ wait for war crimes justice lingers

The Yemen crisis continues. It has completed eight years. The country’s internal political factions and Saudi-led military intervention have spawned the catastrophe. The intractable civil war initially has gradually transformed into a full-blown tragedy leading to the deaths of millions, especially children and women. And it has added more numbers to the international refugee crisis.

The real tragedy lies in blatant violation of all universal norms set by the UN and prescribed by the international humanitarian laws. The rules and principles of the global humanitarian framework provide full protection to all civilians and others who are not participating in the war. In fact, all sets of international humanitarian law demands and normally ensures from the conflicting groups the greatest possible measures to reduce human suffering during the conduct of fighting. Therefore, these laws clearly distinguish between military objectives and civilian objectives. The final objective is to minimise harm to civil society. What has been observed in Yemen is flouting all humanitarian restrictions while pursuing military objectives. It has led to disproportionate attacks over civilian targets. Thus, many civil society organisations and global human right agencies are claiming that indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks carried out by the warring parties in Yemen are akin to war crimes.

As long as there have been conflicts and wars, attempts have been made by international jurists and other experts to define “war crimes”. However, only by the 20th century, the very concept of war crime was defined in the legal sense of the term. According to the UN, a war crime is a serious breach of international law committed against civilians or enemy combatants during an international or domestic armed conflict. So to have a war crime, there must be an armed conflict. An armed conflict, international or non-international or



Assault rifles and missiles seized by the French Navy lay on the deck of a ship at an undisclosed location on Wednesday. French naval forces in January seized thousands of assault rifles, machine guns and anti-tank missiles in the Gulf of Oman coming from Iran heading to Yemen’s Houthi rebels, officials said on Thursday, the latest such interdiction amid West Asian nation’s long-running war

AP

involving an armed international group is a prerequisite to war crimes and grave breaches (Gary D Solis 2018). In contrast to genocide and crimes against humanity, war crimes have to take place in the context of armed conflict.

Further the meaning of war crimes is clarified in four Geneva Conventions of 1949. Article 147 of the fourth Geneva Convention defines war crimes as “wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, including... wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement of a protected person...taking of hostages and extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly”. So the war crime as per this land-

mark article has been recorded in many corners of the world. The International Criminal Court established by the Rome Statute is the first international criminal court when it first started in the year 2002 with 123 member nations. This court has the authority to prosecute individuals — heads of state, military members and others — under three broad frameworks of international criminal acts: crime against humanity, war crimes and genocide. Again, the three main pillars of humanitarian law are the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. And if any one of these is violated, it could be established that a war crime has been committed.

Now the reality in Yemen is grim. In the year 2019, the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) released a devastating

report on Yemen. The report was prepared by a panel of independent experts empowered by the UNHRC to find out violations of human rights in Yemen during this war. The report clearly established the fact that though it was ostensibly a civil war, the outside powers are both direct and indirect belligerents and are responsible for war crimes. And here the main lead is taken by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The report found a litany of crimes committed by the Saudi-led coalition that has targeted civilian sites a number of times. The report strongly suggested that Saudi Arabia’s western backers, including the US, the UK and France, bear responsibility for war crimes. These global powers are consistently supplying arms and ammunition to the Saudi Arabia for carrying out the war

in Yemen. However, the US has also offered technical assistance to Saudi Arabian forces while conducting massive bombing raids over enemy targets all across Yemen.

Yemen, a small nation located in the Arabian Peninsula has become a permanent war theatre today. The country has turned out to be a grievous site of human suffering particularly of children, women and ageing population. All global governance institutions, including the UN, except delivering peace sermons and urges, have simply become mute spectators, failing to stop the human carnage. And sadly, it is led indirectly by the world’s most powerful nation, the US, on one side and the Islamic Republic of Iran by supporting Houthi Rebels on the other side. Who will be stopping them? Probably, no one until they withdraw on their own from the war field. And Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, popularly known as MBS globally, simply wants to showcase his prowess by demolishing the Iran-backed rebels which are unstoppable for now. At home, MBS remains popular for his innovative strategies to recast the regimes economic and techno visions, but internationally he has been unable to shake off the veil of suspicion for his alleged role in the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey in the year 2018. He is finding it too difficult either to withdraw or to outrightly declare his country as the winner of the Yemen War.

It is well known that the Saudis did not start the conflict. It is the Houthis who did it by marching to the historic capital city of Sanaa and overthrew the legitimate Yemeni Government in late 2014. Nevertheless, the conflict has its roots in the Arab Spring of 2011. Then an uprising of the public forced the country’s long-time authoritarian President Ali Abdullah Saleh to hand over power to his Deputy Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. The transition, as expected by interna-

tional political analysts, was supposed to bring peace and stability to Yemen, one of the poorest nations in the West Asian region.

However, unfortunately Hadi had to subsequently handle militancy, Islamic jihadists, military officers having continued loyalty to former President Saleh and most importantly an economic downturn propelled by massive corruption charges.

When the Houthi Shi rebels took over the capital city of Sanaa, President Hadi had to flee and the real existential crisis of the legitimate government of Iran began. Again, the conflict took a turn of a regional war in March 2015, when Saudi Arabia and eight other, mostly Sunni Arab nations, backed by the US, France, and the UK began strikes against the Houthis to restore the Hadi Government in Yemen. This has given the war an international angle too and the Islamic Republic of Iran openly supported the Houthi rebels. In fact, the Saudis are seriously concerned about the continued success and rampage of the Houthi militants as it would open a stronghold for its rival Iran in its southern backyard for future.

Truly, there has been disaster for everyone whosoever has been involved in the war. But for the most part, it is no other than Yemen’s impoverished and malnourished population who have become the central target of the war. The Yemenis are killing the Yemenis by taking global support for arms and ammunition from warmongering nations. And at the same time, the regional warring parties like Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the rival Iran are bleeding their own coffers simply to re-establish their superiority in West Asia. And the final sufferers are no other than the ordinary Yemenis. It’s time to stop this war crime. Enough is enough.

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MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

Budget ensures economy’s fundamentals remain solid

The 2023-24 Budget has proved all pundits wrong as they had predicted it to be a political Budget before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The last full-fledged Budget before the general elections is not populist on any parameter. It takes confidence and commitment to stick to the fundamentals of prudent fiscal management, when it makes complete sense to go all-out political. This attribute which was also visible during the handling of the Covid-19 crisis will keep the economy resilient.

The highlight of the Budget has to be the increased allocation for capital expenditure, which was hiked by 33 per cent to Rs 10 lakh crore and the total capex is expected to be around 13 lakh crore. After two consecutive years of blistering growth in Government capex, there was an expectation that the Centre would step off the accelerator and make more direct cash transfers under various social sector schemes. The increase in capex under this context is indeed a pleasant surprise.

The Budget continues to focus on the smooth functioning of the economy. Capital allocation for collateral-free lending to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector has been increased to Rs 9,000 crore. This will lead to an incremental lending of Rs 2 lakh crore to this sector. Customs duties have been reduced on a number of commodities to make manufacturing in India more competitive, with raw material availability at lower costs. These steps, together with the continued work on the ease-of-doing-business, will help the micro, small and medium enterprise sector in a major way.

Relief in personal income tax was widely demanded and the Budget has lived up to the expectation of the taxpayers. An individual can now earn up to Rs 7 lakh per annum and not pay any income tax. This is a 40 per cent increase over the current exemption limit of Rs 5 lakh per annum and has led to considerable rejoicing in the middle class. The relief has also been extended with people with very high levels of income. The surcharge on income above Rs 5 crore per annum has also been reduced and the highest marginal rate of taxation will come down from 42.75 per cent to 39 per cent. The Government has thus shown that it is not afraid to provide relief even to the rich if it believed that the rate was too high and political considerations did not come in the way.

This year’s Budget is also a document for the future. The Government has listed seven priorities that will guide policy making on the road to 2047. These have elements of green growth and energy transition while not losing sight of inclusive development and reaching the last mile. The focus and commitment to sustainable growth can be seen from schemes like Mishti, for Mangrove plantation, along the coastline and Amrit Dharohar, for preserving biodiversity in wetlands. Scrapping of old vehicles also finds a detailed mention in the Budget. Establishing a centre of excellence for Artificial Intelligence (AI) shows that the Budget has ambition. The Skill India scheme will, henceforth, include AI, robotics, 3D printing and so on. The Government plans to set up 100 labs for the development of

5G services.

The Government’s support to the agricultural sector and its commitment to the rural economy are evident from the setting up of the Agriculture Accelerator Fund and the mil-lit development programme. Schemes such as GOBARdhan yojana and facilitating natural farming are a case in point. The target for credit to the agriculture sector has been fixed at Rs 20 lakh crore. It will ensure that the agriculture sector continues to grow at a healthy rate.

A major achievement has been the management of fiscal affairs. Several challenges on the macroeconomic front that stemmed from external factors, and were unseen at the time of the presentation of the Budget last year, unfolded as the year rolled by. The actual expenditure on food and fertiliser subsidy for the current year is much more than what was initially budgeted, while the excise tax collected dipped due to excise duty cut on petrol and diesel by the Central Government. Despite this, the Narendra Modi Government has managed to achieve the budgeted target of 6.4 per cent for fiscal deficit for the year 2022-23. The fiscal deficit target for the coming financial year has been put at 5.9 per cent of GDP. Thus, the march on the path of fiscal consolidation continues and while there is an absence of a glide path, the Government has committed to bringing it down to the range of 4.5 per cent by the year 2025-26.

A Budget that is not swayed by considerations of politics shows the maturity of the Government and the confidence it has in the ability of Indian voters’ judgement to reward performance over

Point-counterpoint



rhetoric. This Budget is, therefore, a historic document and shows the nature of changing politics unleashed by the Modi Government. This Budget will ensure that the fundamentals of the economy remain solid and the next Government will be able to build upon it.

(The writer is a Supreme Court advocate)



SAMBHRANT KRISHNA

Budget ignores 90% of India’s population

that loves to claim its nationalist credentials at the drop of a hat, it is not surprising at all that the subject of defence was not mentioned in the Budget speech of the Finance Minister at all. The UPA Government under the Congress devoted more than 2 per cent of the GDP to defence and the BJP at that time used to shout that the allocation was not adequate and it will increase defence allocation when it came to power.

It must also be reminded that the India-China border was largely peaceful during that period and now that the possibility of a border clash between the two countries is a real possibility, the defence sector has been given a short shrift. It is also very likely that the subject of defence was not mentioned in the Budget so that it does not antagonise China and if that’s the case then it’s indeed shameful.

A lot of noise is being made by the Government on its target to reduce the fiscal deficit to 5.9 per cent of GDP next year. If one looks beyond the headlines, one can easily see that the fertilizer subsidy in the coming year will come down drastically as the global prices, which had spiked after the start of the Russia-Ukraine war, have cooled down. Moreover, the Government has also stopped the free food grain distribution that it had started in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic and therefore the food subsidy will also come down. The planned reduction on the fiscal deficit therefore is not a result of sound fiscal management by the Government but is a result of factors beyond its control.

Another aspect of the Budget is that the numbers pre-

sented are not honest. While the budgeted increase in capital expenditure is hogging the limelight, revenue expenditure has not been subjected to the scrutiny it deserves. The budget for 2023-24 has projected only a marginal increase in revenue expenditure over the revised estimate for the current year. In fact, if the interest payment is subtracted from the revenue expenditure, the amount is lower than revised estimates for the current year. This is clearly unrealistic and it is very likely that the actual revenue expenditure will exceed the Budget estimates. Moreover, it does not take much to puncture the claim of the Government on achieving very high Central Government capital expenditure as a percentage of GDP. The Government in its last 10 year period has raided the retained earnings of the public sector enterprises as a result of which the capital expenditure by PSUs has come down.

The Government’s only objective seems to win praise from business newspapers and industry bodies. These people dominate any post budget discussion and the concerns of rural and the poor masses are always relegated to the back-ground. The allocation to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme (MNREGA) has been reduced dramatically and the overall allocation to rural areas has come down. The Government likes to pretend that the country has fully recovered from the economic effects of Covid-19 but that is far from the truth. There is still widespread suffering in the rural areas and the Budget should have made increased allocation for the rural sector.

Unemployment is the biggest challenge facing our country but the Budget has nothing substantial for it. It seems that the youth will have no future to look forward to under the Modi Government. There was a lot of discussion on tourism in the Budget. It was projected as a magic pill to address the issue of unemployment in the country. However if one looks at the total allocation to the sector, it remains unchanged from what was allocated to it in the 2022-23 at Rs 2,300 crore.

The Budget is an all-round failure because it fails to prioritise its spending to areas that deserve urgent and continued attention of the Government. It criminally ignores 90 per cent of India’s population and Indian voters will pay back in the coming State elections and the general election in the coming year.

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DEEPAK BALUTIA

