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PLAYING UNDER
GREAT LEADERS
WILL HELP ME: GILL
12 SPORTS

Free grain to poor for five more years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet, on Wednesday, decided to extend the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) to provide 5 kilograms of free food grains per month to 81.35 crore poor people for another five years, which would cost the exchequer ₹11.80 lakh crore. The Cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, also approved the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan, which focuses on 11 critical interventions for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups. Additionally, the Cabinet approved a central scheme to provide drones to 15,000 progressive women Self Help Groups (SHGs) with an outlay of ₹1,261 crore for two years beginning in 2024-25. The Cabinet also cleared the Terms of Reference of the 16th Finance Commission to suggest the ratio for the devolution of taxes between the Centre and States. Additionally, it will review financing for disaster management initiatives for five years beginning April 1, 2026. Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur told the media, "Keeping in view the welfare of the beneficiaries and to strengthen food security in terms of accessibility, afford-



ability, and availability of food grains for the targeted population, and to maintain uniformity across the States, the decision has been taken to continue providing food grains free of cost under the PMGKAY for five years." The scheme was last extended until December 31, 2023. The PMGKAY was introduced in 2020 as a pandemic relief measure, providing 5 kg of free food grains per beneficiary per month, in addition to the 5 kg of subsidised food grain under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). In December 2022, as the PMGKAY came to an end after two years, it was subsumed under the NFSA, providing ration for free for one year. Under the NFSA, two categories are covering up to 75 per cent of the rural population and 50 per cent of the urban population — Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and priority households. AAY households, comprising the poorest of the poor, are entitled to receive 35

kg of food grains per family per month, while priority households receive 5 kg per person per month. Termed as a historic decision, the Government has stated that the extension of free grain distribution under the PMGKAY for the next five years reflects the long-term commitment and vision of the government in addressing national food and nutrition security. This move is expected to help mitigate any financial hardship faced by the affected strata of society in a sustainable manner and ensure a long-term pricing strategy with zero cost to the beneficiaries. This, according to a statement, is vital for the effective penetration of the Public Distribution System. For example, the economic cost of 35 kg of rice for an Antyodaya family is ₹1,371, while the cost of 35 kg of wheat is ₹946. These costs are being borne by the Central Government. As a result, the monthly savings of ration cardholders are significant due to the provision of free food grains, it added. Free grains will be distributed through a network of over 5 lakh fair price shops under a common logo. Beneficiaries can obtain their entitled grains from any fair price shop in the country under the One Nation One Ration Card initiative.

Global applause for Uttarkashi Rescuers Rat hole miners make India proud

PTI ■ LONDON

Human labour triumphing over machinery. This is how the world media described the climax of an incredible and perilous weeks-long rescue operation for 41 construction workers trapped in a collapsed mountain tunnel in Uttarakhand. As rescuers in India on Tuesday evening successfully pulled out all the workers after their 17-day ordeal, the global media provided live coverage of the dramatic rescue operations. "In the end it was a triumph of human labour over machinery as the specialist rat-hole mining experts managed to manually break through the final 12 metres of rubble, using only hand drills and pulleys," The Guardian newspaper wrote. The workers were pulled out through an escape pipe after the last stretch of rubble had been manually drilled by a specialist team of "rat-hole mining" experts who had been flown in to help after the mechanical drill broke down. The dramatic scenes of the first men emerging on stretchers from the entrance of the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel came after more than 400 hours, during which the rescue operation hit multiple obstacles, delays and false promises of imminent rescue, the British newspaper said in a detailed report. "Outside the tunnel, there have been celebrations at the news of the first man coming out of the



(L-R, top row) The 12-member team of 'rat-hole' miners from Rockwell Enterprises Wakeel Hassan (leader), Monu Kumar, Feroze Qureshi, Nasir Khan, Jatun, Devender Kumar, (L-R, bottom row) Munna Qureshi, Irshad Ansari, Rashid Ansari, Naseem Malik, Ankur and Saurabh who successfully rescued the 41 trapped workers from the under-construction Silkyara Bend-Barkot Tunnel in Uttarkashi on Tuesday PTI

tunnel," the BBC reported while providing regular updates on the rescue operation. They were freed after a mammoth rescue operation that overcame many obstacles, it said. "This happy conclusion came after a day filled with anticipation, as authorities announced that there had been a breakthrough in the rescue operations," the British public broadcaster said. Military engineers and miners drill 'rat hole' through debris to complete a painstaking extrac-

tion mission, said London-based daily 'The Telegraph' in its lead story. A portion of the tunnel collapsed on November 12, blocking the exit for the workers who were inside. Food, medicines and other essentials were sent to them through a six-inch pipe pushed through the rubble of the collapsed portion. So-called rat miners were brought in on Monday to drill through the rocks, gravel and metal obstacles by hand from inside a narrow evacuation pipe that pushed through the

debris after machinery failed, France 24 reported. The New York Times in its report said initial drilling efforts were hampered by additional falling debris. And by Day 13, the rescue effort appeared in disarray as an American-made auger machine broke down with less than 20 metres to go in the drilling. As workers tried to extricate it, officials initiated backup plans, including one in which workers began drilling vertically from the mountaintop. New machines were flown in

from different parts of the country. But, in the end, the rescue effort — which also involved international tunnelling experts — found success in manual drilling by "rat hole miners" in the final stretch of the path that had been mostly cleared by the auger machine. The rescue operation faced hiccups even in its final hours, threatening to derail the growing confidence of family members who waited in anticipation of their relatives being pulled to safety, it said.

SC upholds Centre call on Delhi CS tenure extension

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



In a major setback to the AAP Government, the Supreme Court on Wednesday permitted the Centre to extend the tenure of Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar, a day before he was set to demit office on November 30, for six months, holding that the Union Government's decision did not violate law or the Constitution. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra held, prima facie, the Centre has the power to appoint and extend the tenure of the Chief Secretary of the national capital territory of Delhi as the officer deals with the entire administration including police, public order and land, which fall beyond the legislative and executive powers of the Delhi Government. "We come to the conclusion that at this stage, bearing in mind the provisions of the judgment of this court in Constitution Bench 2 (2023 judgment on Centre-Delhi government services row) and the subsequent developments which have taken place resulting in the enactment of the amendment to the GNCTD Act 1991, the decision of the Union Government to extend the services of the incumbent

RBI to hold exchange melas for coins, notes

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR



Even as traders and shopkeepers are refusing to accept coins of different denominations, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday said coins ranging from 50 paise to Rs 20 are legal tenders and are exchangeable. The RBI would launch a coin exchange drive in rural areas. The exchange programme would be implemented in all 314 blocks of the State in the next three months, said RBI Regional Director Sarada Prasanna Mohanty. "We have a plan to facilitate people to exchange their coins and soiled and mutilated currency notes during the exchange drive which will be launched in next two or three months. People should not believe rumours about the ineffectiveness of some coins. Hence, there is a need for more sensitisation in this regard," Mohanty said.

People can even deposit their coins in banks. And no bank can refuse to accept coins from their customers. In case banks refuse to take coins, people can lodge their complaints in this regard at the Lokpal of the RBI and action would be taken against the banks, he added. The decision was taken in view of a huge rush of people from various parts of the State in the RBI office in Bhubaneswar every day to exchange Rs 2,000 notes, soiled, torn notes and coins.

In Keonjhar 3 get lifer for raping minor girl

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

The Additional District and Sessions Judge-cum-Special POC SO Court on Wednesday awarded life imprisonment to three persons for gang-raping a minor girl in the Patana locality of Keonjhar district in 2022. The convicts are Ranjeet Mohanty (33), Rabindra Naik (25) and Sunil Behera (32). The court also imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on each of them. In default of payment, they have to undergo a year's rigorous imprisonment. The court also ordered the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) to pay a

compensation of Rs 7.50 lakh to the victim. According to sources, the girl had gone to a place under the Patana PS to witness Jagara Jatra on March 5, 2022 along with her younger brother when taking advantage of a power cut the youths dragged her to a secluded place and raped her. The girl had narrated her plight to her family after returning home and an FIR was then lodged. A special POC SO case 41/2020 of 2022 and Patana PS case No-43/2022 were registered and a probe was initiated leading to the punishment, Special Public Prosecutor Ganesh Prasad Mohapatra said.

Cyclonic storm over BoB likely by Dec 2

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The low-pressure area over the south Andaman Sea and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal (BoB) now lies as a well-marked low pressure, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday. The system is likely to move west-northwestwards and intensify into a depression over southeast Bay of Bengal around Thursday. Thereafter, it is likely to move northwestwards and intensify further into a cyclonic storm over southwest and adjoining

southeast Bay of Bengal by December 2. The Odisha Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) has issued warnings for fishermen against venturing into sea from December 1 morning. "Under the influence of anticipated cyclonic system, squally wind speed reaching 40 to 50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph is likely over central BoB and adjoining southwest BoB from December 1 and is likely to reach 50 to 60 kmph gusting to 70 kmph on December 2. Sea condition is likely to be rough to very rough," the SRC said.

DSPL-425

BIJU SWASTHYA KALYAN YOJANA
HEALTHY ODISHA, HAPPY ODISHA

**LAUNCHING OF
BSKY
TOLL FREE NUMBER
FOR FAMILIES
LIVING OUTSIDE
THE STATE**

1800120120104

**Dedication by
SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK**
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha

30TH NOVEMBER 2023

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE

In city

Maid caught on CCTV stealing Rs 1L cash

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A CCTV in the house of a resident in the Jharpada area under the Laxmisagar police station in the city has captured a woman, engaged as maid by the owners, stealing cash.

As per reports, Bibhu Prasad Mohapatra of Jagannath Nagar Road area engaged the woman domestic help identified as Mami Patra in his house for a monthly salary of Rs 4,000.

As construction of Mohapatra's house is underway, he has been keeping

cash in his house to make payments to labourers and masons.

According to the owner, when he found that the cash of around Rs 1 lakh was missing, he checked the CCTV fixed in the wardrobe. The domestic help was seen in the CCTV footage stealing around Rs 1 lakh cash from the wardrobe. Following the theft, the family filed a complaint with the Laxmisagar police. After the incident, the accused has been absconding. Police have registered a case and started a manhunt for the accused.

In Sundargarh

Woman RI held taking bribe

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

A Vigilance team on Wednesday caught a woman Revenue Inspector (RI) red-handed while she was demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 5,000. The RI was identified as Lily Choudhuri, who is presently working in Tasaladihi under the Tangarpali tehsil limits of Sundargarh district.

According to an official source, the RI accepted the bribe



to furnish a favourable report which was required to convert the land type from farmland to homestead land.

Following this, simultaneous searches were carried out at two different locations associated with the RI in the Sundargarh district which were underway till the time when this report was filed. A case was registered at the Rourkela Vigilance PS in this connection and a probe was initiated.

Tunnel survivors watched movies on phones

Says rescued Odia worker

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The 41 workers who had been trapped inside the Silkyara tunnel in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi were watching movies on mobile phones to kill time, said Bisweswar Nayak, one of the rescued Odia workers.

"We were watching downloaded movies on mobile phones. However, we were unable to watch news due to lack of mobile network. The authorities had sent us mobile phone chargers through pipeline to keep the devices charged," said Nayak.

"Initially, we survived on

puffed rice and dry fruits. Later, the authorities provided us cooked food through the pipeline. None of us was panicking as we had established communication with the engineers outside the tunnel. We were also speaking to our family members over telephone on regular intervals," he said.

After 17 days of rescue operation, all the 41 workers trapped inside the tunnel were safely extricated on Tuesday evening.

As soon as the workers were pulled out of the under-construction tunnel, a part of which had collapsed on November 12, they were rushed to hospital.

INBRIEF

OUTR STUDENT MOWED DOWN BY TRUCK

Bhubaneswar: In a tragic mishap, a 19-year-old youth was run over by a speeding truck at Vani Vihar here on Wednesday. The deceased was identified as Pratyuparna Das, a first year BTech student at the Odisha University of Technology and Research (OUTR) here. Das was speaking on his phone while riding his two-wheeler when the truck ran him over on the over-bridge at Rasulgarh Chhakk. The driver then fled the spot.

SAMBALPUR: WOMAN FOUND DEAD IN IN-LAWS' HOUSE

Sambalpur: A body of a married woman was recovered from her in-laws' house in Kirasan village under the Kuchinda police station in Sambalpur district on Tuesday night. The woman's family alleged that that she was murdered for dowry. The deceased was identified as Juktamukhi Mohapatra (22), wife of Pradipta Kumar Mohapatra. The body was found hanging, following which Pradipta lodged an FIR that his wife died by suicide. However, the family members of Juktamukhi alleged that she was killed. The victim's father has lodged a dowry complaint and a probe has been initiated into the matter, said police.

ORNAMENTS WORTH RS 15 LAKH LOOTED FROM JEWELLER'S HOUSE

Keonjhar: Armed miscreants looted gold ornaments worth over Rs 15 lakh at gunpoint from the house of a jeweller at Tukuna village under the Nandipada police limits in Keonjhar district late on Tuesday night. Six robbers barged into the house after breaking its window and threatened Pabitra Das, the jeweller, his wife and their son with guns and knives. They looted around 200 grams of gold ornaments and more than 7 kg of silver ornaments. They forced the family members to serve them tea. They also consumed sweets kept in the house. Police reached the spot on Wednesday morning and initiated an investigation into the incident.

'Form Regional Imbalance panel'



Demands Congress

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Congress leader and former Finance Minister Panchanan Kanungo on Wednesday demanded formation of a Regional Imbalances Committee in the State.

Kanungo said the free rice distribution system has been partly successful in preventing starvation, but this can't eradicate poverty. The publicity by the Naveen Patnaik Government is an effort to hide the ground reality of poverty in the State. If one sees the Niti

Aayog report about poverty in Odisha, one can know the reality. In the State now, more than 64.3 per cent of women are suffering from anaemia. Similarly, 64.2% children between 6 and 59 months are anaemic. More than 8% children are suffering from malnutrition.

In the State, due to acute unemployment, the poverty graph is spiralling. Owing to the rising prices and unemployment, many people are not able to get nutritious food. Both the Central and State Governments have not been able to control the rising prices, said Kanungo.

VSS Nagar Parishad to meet BMC Commissioner

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In the Veer Surendra Sai Nagar Unnayan Parishad executive meeting held on Tuesday and presided over Durga Puja committee president Krupasindhu Sahu, discussions were held on different civic problems in Ward-11. The members including Corporator Prabhassini Mohanty expressed concern that no work was being carried out in the area.

Discussions were held regarding the Laxmi Vihar road, lease hold to free hold fee, garbage dumps, colony roads and sewerage problems.

A delegation of the



Unnayan Parishad and the Corporator would meet the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Commissioner and hold discussions with him. Parishad general secretary Dillip Dashsharma coordinated the meeting. Among others, joint secretary Pratap Kumar Nanda, Nimai Charan Das, Ramchandra Samal and Chintamani Barik were present.

Bijay Nayak's new short story book unveiled

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Eminent short story writer Bijay Nayak's 'Tume Jeunthi Thaa' was unveiled here on Monday. Releasing the book, Padma Bhusan Dr Pratibha Ray appreciated the writings of Nayak as a trend setter in Odia short story writing that immediately arrests the attention of the readers.

Chief speaker Odia literary critic Prof Dr Sanghamitra Mishra observed that the short stories of Nayak not only deal with contemporary modern society but also his prose is always interspersed with poignant poetry. Besides, a sense of overwhelming nostalgia is abundantly available in his writings.

Guest of honour poet Goswami Golam Devata dwelt



at length on the writings of Nayak and hailed him as a pioneering poet-turned short story writer. He opined that the present book 'Tume Jeunthi Thaa' is an authentic document of the prevailing times with lively characters and narrations enriching the eighteen stories contained in it.

Another guest of honour

poet Abhay Nayak paid glowing tributes to the author for his literary creations and narrated about the author's journey as a writer from his school days to the current times.

At the outset, publisher of the book Saroj Bal of Time Pass Publications had set the ball of discussions rolling.

Notably, Bijay Nayak, who

is currently working as the Press Secretary to President of India, despite his busy administrative career, has contributed immensely to the Odia literary tradition by his books 'Adya Asadha', 'Bhari Megha Rati', 'Aneka Dina Pare Barsa', 'Nida Nibida', 'Ara Tharaku', 'Bhara Nae', 'Srestha Galpa', 'Srestha Sathie' and 'Mayabarta'.

XIM hosts Media Conclave, COMMUNIQUE

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The XIM Bhubaneswar conducted the Annual Media Conclave: COMMUNIQUE 2023, hosted by IlluminatiX, the Media and PR Cell of XIM Bhubaneswar.

This year the theme was "Effective Communication In The Times Of Infinite Exposure". The event hosted on November 26 was graced by Vice President, Strategic Business Change, HSBC Deepak Mohanty; Ad Sales, Jio Cin-

emas Shivani Talim; Brand Manager - East Cluster, Vodafone Idea Limited Abhilasha R Gupta and Nithin Monteiro, Doctoral Scholar, School of Governance and Public Affairs, who shared their valuable insights with the audience.

The session commenced with the speakers lighting the lamp, followed by Prof Francis Thomas Castelino, moderator for the day, addressing the audience. The first speaker of the day, Shivani Talim emphasized the prevalent FOMO in the

industry.

The second speaker for the day was Deepak Mohanty. He highlighted several strategies, including adopting a push approach, leveraging pull-through advertising, developing customer profiles and segmentation, and ensuring alignment of communication with the customer's journey.

The third speaker for the day was Nithin Monteiro SJ, who showcased ads from major brands, illustrating how unique communication attempts can sometimes back-

fire.

The fourth speaker for the day was Abhilasha R Gupta. She emphasized crafting clear communication, maximizing exposure across channels, using brand banter for attention, and tailoring communication for each medium in effective brand strategy.

Following the insightful presentations by distinguished speakers, the eagerly anticipated question and answer session unfolded, featuring the inquisitive minds of XIM University.

Under Skill India Mission

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Nine people from Odisha have been successful in the exam for self-defence training under the Skill India Mission of the Government of India. They are from the Utkal Karate School, an organisation which is a certified training partner for self-defence trainers and fitness trainers' job roles under Skill India Mission.

In a special programme at the Utkal Karate School, Special Secretary, School and Mass Education Department,

Shubhashree Nanda gave certificates to them.

Utkal Karate School founder and head coach Dr Hari Prasad Pattanayak, self-defence training co-ordinator Dr Avinash Pundir, international martial art sportspersons Santosh Kumar Maharana, Anupama Swain, along with Nyasa Kumari, Priyadarsini Das, Rajni Bishi and many others were present. Chief guest Nanda expressed her best wishes and expressed that through the Skill India Mission under the Central Government, more self-defence trainers will pass and join the ongoing self-defence training in the State.

HITTING THE BULL'S EYE

Why Karthikeyan will be unstoppable as political leader

When VK Pandian joined the BJD as a core leader, many an eyebrow got raised. Critics screamed, 'Shame on the Odia community' for having failed to put up one face to lead them to political glory and joy!

Amidst this howl of disapproval, mostly by political critics and a very few media community members, sensitive about the 'Odia pride', the BJD honchos came forward to make clear that a levelheaded former administrator was badly required as they are not so fit and fine as VK who is young, superbly energetic and truly wise. They hailed boss Naveen for having chosen the perfect skipper when a majority of the BJD leaders, both elected and otherwise, were groping in dark as they were not sure what strategy would bring them back to power.

Naveen, right from day one, had made it a rule to keep rank politicians on the sidewalk and put smart, sincere, loyal bureaucrats on the centre stage. Political creatures, mostly ignorant of laws and norms, would not take one critical decision without having it endorsed by



BISWARAJ PATNAIK

bureaucrats. Naveen had known too well before entering politics that politicians were used to brazenly stuffing their private coffers with looted public money, resorting to nepotism of the worst kind to ensure family members flourished in money-making ventures and, above all, putting in best efforts to promote dynastic rule. Even today, a good number of political biggies have kids running huge profit enterprises of myriad kind as much having replaced political parents or relatives that have been forced to

quit arena.

Naveen had dismissed many with questionable track records including Bijay Mohapatra, Nalini Mahanty, Kamala Das and coalition colleague Prashant Nanda for having been difficult or corrupt, all this quite at the beginning on the advice of Pyari Mohan Mohapatra, a proven former bureaucrat who understood nuances of politics from his enviable 'Biju Patnaik days'. All those discarded individuals have been lost in oblivion except perhaps Prashant Nanda who, at an opportune moment, jumped fence and entered the BJD home through the toilet door. No one knows how he was accepted in the fold after grave charges of corruption were levelled against him.

It is quite hurting today to see most frontline political creatures are filthily wealthy. Obviously, the wealth has been acquired by abusing power and authority if not by direct stealing.

A standard thumb rule to nab political crooks is by scanning the kids and relatives with money acquired too quickly. The boss has



lately become kind-hearted to colleagues whom people term thieves and robbers.

All the same, just before Pyari's departure, the much-talked-about young IAS officer VK Pandian had been personally picked by Naveen to be at his side as private secretary for the latter somehow had marked a rare gleam of unusual sincerity, energy, efficiency and, above all, loyalty in Karthikeyan. This bureaucrat had established himself as a rare breed by having bagged several local and international-level awards of excellence to look even more impressive to Naveen.

Strangely, as the BJD boss was beginning to rely on him more and more, the world outside had no inkling of this situation at all. VK, for many, was another routinely-placed bureaucrat with a boss who is known to be a stubborn pro-poor and anti-politician statesman handing over wish-lists without listening to excuses of any kind.

A decade or so ago, many political analysts did not rate Naveen so high as a political leader. They considered him plain lucky and the masses were somehow persuaded to believe that Naveen is a sweet simple messiah who would not steal a rupee from the public coffers by good or guile. This image turned even stronger as he delegated most of the sensitively critical tasks to trusted bureaucrats now necessarily based on VK's assessment. Thus, the young private secretary assumed the proportions of a 'string puller' with unbridled power and authority. The boss told him to keep an eye on the politicians too. That is how VK was forced to look up the political sce-

nario and suggest to the boss what best steps to take immediately.

More than a decade has passed meanwhile. Incidentally, 2014 and 2019 elections were keenly overseen by VK under compulsive situations as boss would expect critical findings from him. He had to become a political analyst as he had no reason to say 'No' to boss. Naturally therefore, he began enjoying enormous power and authority like any ordinary mortal would do. He eventually came to control both bureaucratic administration and political affairs equally well as varied experience had made him truly smart.

Lately around 2019, he was the de facto decision maker. Political biggies would crawl up to him as slaves for self survival and bureaucrats would not normally put their foot down in disapproval of his proposals or desire. Thus, God made VK a very powerful politically-clever bureaucrat whom the opposition party leaders found extremely difficult to contain or tame. The 2019 elections bore great results only because of his strategic

support to the BJD planners, though clearly under instructions from Naveen.

So, not surprisingly, VK became the target of all who oppose BJD and the system of bureaucratic supremacy in any manner. However, Naveen, now an older man with the usual health issues, would depend heavily on the private secretary who has proven to be the fittest guy at all junctures down the line.

VK wakes up before the sun and gets down to business by 5 am, which compels politicians and other state officials to remain on toes. Believeably, Naveen has no other face in mind who can match up to VK's calibre on anyfront. That is perhaps why he is mentoring VK to take over in good time.

No matter how much opponents and detractors keep yelling or shrieking, VK is here to call shots as all his political colleagues are in awe of him. The elected representatives find him extraordinarily talented. VK, therefore, is likely to succeed Naveen after the 2024 electoral victory.

INTACH, GITAM ink MoU for Heritage Club

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Gandhi Institute of Technology and Management (GITAM) for the formation of a Heritage Club at the institute. The MOU was signed by INTACH State convener Amiya Bhushan Tripathy and Secretary of GITAM Subasish Patro at GITAM.

The Heritage Club has been formed with the intent of educating and involving students in the heritage and culture of the State and nation. Tripathy spoke of the Fundamental Du-



ties enshrined in Art 51 of the Indian Constitution which exhorts every citizen to protect the heritage of the nation. Former State Election Commissioner Sanjib Hota said that the marvels of Odishan temple architecture epitomised both engineering and management skills. Chairman South Asia,

Greenpeace International Dr Biswajit Mohanty spoke of the rich intangible and tangible heritage of the State.

Mentor of GITAM Prof RN Satapathy said that the New Education Policy mandates respecting India's cultural heritage and values through heritage awareness education

across all levels of education. GITAM principal Dr Ajaya Kumar Pradhan said that a separate hall has been assigned for the Club. GITAM secretary Patro proposed that the institute will adopt a heritage monument in the vicinity and ensure that proper conservation is done.

GZBPSCF GB meet: Various demands raised

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The General Body meeting of the Ganjam Zilla Biju Patnaik Senior Citizens Forum (GZBPSCF) was held on Friday under the presidency of Prof Jayant Mohapatra.

Forum general secretary Simanchal Prasad Bisoyi welcomed the dignitaries and read out the last meeting's resolutions.

Eye Specialist Dr Nageswar Rao Subudhi was the chief guest for the meeting who advised the senior citizens to take care of their health. Prof Mohapatra welcomed all the members of the forum. He raised a few demands

like regular direct train from Brahmapur to Puri and Vande Bharat Train to Hyderabad and Bengaluru via Brahmapur.

Eight new members were present. This year's picnic will be held on December 29, it was disclosed.

Acting President Surjya Kanta Patro, vice president Indubhusan Pattanayak, secretary Purna Chandra Moharana, Auditor Narayan Kar, executive body members Prasant Mohapatra, Rabindra Nath Moharana, Devraj Kothia, Bhaskar Behera, D Appa Rao, Dr Banamali Panigrahi and HT David among others were present.

Dileswar gets Akademi Yuva Puraskar



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Dileswar Rana has been selected for the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar 2023 in Odia language.

Rana won the award for the book of short stories titled 'Senrra'. 'Senrra' is the first book of 29-year-old Rana, who hails from Dhanramal village under Narla block of Kalahandi district and works as a primary school teacher at Kutenpadar under Bhawanipatna block.

The book was selected on

the basis of recommendation made by the jury comprising three members. Bibhuti Pattnaik, Gobinda Chandra Chand and Dash Benhur were the members of the jury.

The award relates to a book published by an author of the age of 35 or below as on 1st January of the year of the award. The award in the form of a cassette containing an engraved copper plaque and a cheque of Rs 50,000 will be presented to the awardee at a special function to be held at a later date.

IYDP begins in CS College, Champua



PNS ■ CHAMPUA

The Integrated youth Development Programme (IYDP) directed by the Odisha Government was inaugurated at CS College, Champua (both Degree and Higher secondary wings) on Saturday.

The event saw the presence of senior journalist and secretary Champua Vikas Parishad, Santanu Kamar Dash as the chief guest. He commended the Government initiative aimed at discovering latent talent among the students.

Principal Rajendra Kumar Kar presided over the meeting urging students to actively participate in the cultural competitions, sports, athletics and social activities. The event saw a significant turnout of students and staff members, who expressed their support for the successful execution of the programme. The overall coordination of the programme was led by lecturers Champeswar Mishra, DB Mahanta, Santosh Giri Purna Chandra Giri, Dr SK Sahu, S Kulu, P Haro, R Chattar and L Pradhan.

Yuva Sangam IIM Sambalpur hosts Kerala delegation

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

The IIM Sambalpur, hosted a Kerala delegation, comprising 50 students under the Yuva Sangam Phase-III, an initiative under Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat Programme by the Union Ministry of Education (MoE).

The initiative aims to promote cultural exchange and youth empowerment across the nation. Students from NIT Calicut and other prominent higher education institutes of Kerala such as Calicut University and Cochin University of Science and Technology participated in the cultural exchange.

The delegation will visit



Bhubaneswar, and the neighbouring districts until December 2. Similarly, a delegation of 50 students from Odisha will be visiting Kerala in December.

Director, IIM Sambalpur, Prof Mahadeo Jaiswal ex-

tended a warm welcome to the guests.

Chief guest Rengali MLA Nauri Nayak highlighted the Yuva Sangam initiative's core objectives.

Guest of Honor, renowned Sambalpuri poet - Padma Shri

Haldhar Nag, inspired the Kerala delegation with his poetry.

Later, Professor Jaiswal took the lead on the campus tour, which was followed by an industry visit to the Hindalco plant in Lapanga.

Int'l Film Fest in Hinjili: Best movies awarded

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The Nrutyam Kala Gabesana Kendra, Hinjili, organised the 2nd International Film Festival and its 6th Annual Day, in a grand way at Hinjili Mini Stadium.

Vice Chancellor of Berhampur University Professor Gitanjali Dash attended as chief guest and inaugurated the function by lightening lamp. Cine critic and director Dr Dillip Pani attended as chief speaker. Ganjam Collector Dibyajyoti Parida and Ganjam SP Jagan Mohan Meena attended as guests of honour. President of the institution Neelamani Patnaik delivered the welcome speech and officially started the programme.

Among other guests, Grid Unlocked chairman Pitabas Panigrahi, Hinjili Municipality Chairman Subash Chandra Palei, Vice Chairman Suchitra Panda, BDO Subrat Kumar Jena, Tehsildar Dibyajyoti



Smruti Ranjan Deo, Municipal Executive Officer Jublee Charan Behera and local PS IIC Srinivas Sethi were present. As guest, artists from USA, cine director Dani Suliwan and Theen Mahnai from Vietnam participated in the programme. On the occasion guests and

invitees were happy and praised Krishna DK, Director Nrutyam for conducting the international level cine festival in Hinjili.

President Neelamani Patnaik declared that this is the result of dedicated hard work of director and students of the

institution. Few short films from various countries were screened and reviewed by the Jury. Selected films were awarded. Short film 'Magunira Sagada' occupied first position. Similarly 'Unlocked' and 'Pratikshya' secured second and third position, respectively.

Rotary K'nagar felicitates teachers, students



PNS ■ JAJPUR ROAD

In the 'Nation Builder Award Ceremony', the Rotary Club, Kalinganagar felicitated 10 teachers and 10 matric toppers of both Odia and English Medium schools of Vyasanagar Municipality here on Sunday.

Rtn. Akshaya Kumar Pati presided over the meeting in which Rotary PDG Sibabrata Dash attended as chief guest and Rtn. Mrunalkant Nayak attended as guest of honour. Club president Prasant Kumar Parida and secretary Manoj Kumar Barik gave information

about the objective of the programme.

Chief guest Dash advised the teachers to properly carry out their assigned responsibilities and advised the students to learn not to earn but to return to society. Rotarians Sudeep Kumar Mishra, Loknath Rout, Suryakanta Biswal, Arun Kumar Behera, Sibananda Nayak, Mahendra Panda, Dr Debasmita Sahu, Achyutananda Mohanty and Kamal Lochan Sahoo among others attended.

Rtn Gopinath Sahoo gave vote of thanks.

World Diabetes Day Hundreds join awareness rally held in B'pur

KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA ■ BRAHMAPUR

On the occasion of the World Diabetes Day and National Pharmacy Week, the Diabetes and Endocare Clinic, Brahmapur led by Consultant Endocrinologist and Diabetes Superspecialist Dr Sunil Kumar Kota in association with Roland Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences organised a diabetes awareness rally at Brahmapur.

Around 200 participants registered for the event, where Associate Director cum Principal Scientist from Jagadeesh Tangudu was the chief guest with Director, Roland Group of Institutes Dr Sruti Jammula, Principal, Rolund Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences Dr BVV Ravi Kumar, Principal, Delhi Public Senior Secondary School BN Pattanayak as the guests of



honour.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Kota underscored the theme of the event i.e. "Know your risk, know your response." It is important on the part of various Government and non Government agencies to come together and enhance the lo-

gistic support to tide over the ever expanding demon of non communicable disorders like diabetes, obesity and hypertension, especially the vulnerable rural populace, who are not spared by these disorders need special attention in from of testing, treatment and moni-

toring of complications, Kota said.

The guests flagged off the walk, where people participated with a uniform dress code conveying the theme and carried blue coloured balloons placards carrying the message of healthy living in diabetes.

Kalinga Bali Yatra Fest kicks off in Paradip

Celebrating ancient maritime trade legacy of Odias

PRASANTA ROUT ■ PARADIP

The vibrant Kalinga Bali Yatra Festival-2023 was officially inaugurated on the evening of Sunday at Biju Maidan, Paradip Beach, with the esteemed presence of Industries Minister Pratap Keshari Deb as chief guest.

The inaugural ceremony, presided over by Kalinga Bali Yatra Committee chairman and Jagatsinghpur District Magistrate Parulu Patuwari, featured a welcome speech and guest introduction by Paradip Additional District Collector, and Deputy Chairman of the Bali Yatra Committee Niranjan Behera.

Distinguishing guests, including Government Chief



Whip and Jagatsinghpur MLA Prashant Kumar Muduli, Jagatsinghpur MP Dr Rajashree Mallick, Balikuda Erasma MLA Raghu Nandan Das, Paradip MLA Sambit Routray, District Council Chairman Manoj Bhoi, Paradip Municipality Chairman Basant Kumar Biswal, Central Revenue Commissioner Suresh Chandra Dalai, IFFCO Paradip Unit MD KJ

Patel, IOCL Paradip Chief General Officer Kaushik Basu, PPL Chief Executive Director Nilesh Desai, and AM/NS Chief Executive Director Suresha Ji, graced the event as guests of honour.

They shared insights into the significance of Bali Yatra, expressing gratitude to the Bali Yatra Committee for organising the cultural extravaganza. Paradip Muni-

pality Executive Officer Pradeep Saha gave vote of thanks.

With a total of 800 stalls, including the Pallishri Mela, this year's Baliyatra Mahotsav promises a delightful experience for visitors. Alongside traditional amusements like Ram Doli, various entertainment programmes are scheduled, adding to the excitement of the people of Paradip.

1,500 km of train route gets Kavach

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Wednesday said the indigenously-developed automatic train protection system 'Kavach' has been fully installed on 1,500 km of train route and a significant progress has been made to increase its coverage. "We started our journey with the Kavach system in 2016 and till 2020, its pilot work, testing, modification and version enhancement were done. It was in the beginning of 2022, its production and installation started on a large scale," Vaishnaw said during an inter-act with media. "Today, we have installed the system on 1,500-km route and a significant progress has been made (for its installation) on another 3,000-km route on the Mumbai-Howrah and the Delhi-Howrah route," he said.

'Kavach' is an automatic train protection system for enhancing safety of running trains. It has been developed indigenously by the Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO) in association with three Indian vendors. 'Kavach' not only helps loco pilots to avoid signal passing at danger and over-speeding but also helps in train running during inclement weather such as dense fog, leading to enhanced safety and efficiency of train operations. Some features of the system are controlling speed of trains by automatic application of brakes in case loco pilot fails to apply the brakes and repeating line-side signal in cab which is very useful for higher speeds. Vaishnaw said that with continuous efforts, the railways has made a significant capacity enhancement to install 'Kavach' on 1,500-km route every year. Elaborating about the system,



he said that it is not a device which can be installed in locomotives only. Instead, according to him, it is a complete system which has multiple components to install at stations, locomotives, tracks and along

the routes in the form of towers and radio equipment. "We floated the tender for 3,000 km installation in December 2022 and the progress report is very encouraging. Radio survey and radio

design, which is the most critical part of the system, is 98 per cent complete. Station Kavach installation is 33 per cent complete, 58 per cent of tower installation along the track has been done," the minister said.

He added that the Kavach next generation, which is a 4G- and 5G-based system, has also been developed and in December 2023 or January 2024, the railways will float a tender for its installation on 3,000 km tracks. "In May-June 2024, we will float another tender for 6,000 km of installation of Kavach," Vaishnaw said. The minister added that as his focus is capacity enhancement, he has set a target of achieving 2,500 km of 'Kavach' installation in 2024-25 from the present capacity of 1,500 km. "In the year 2025-26, we will take the capacity to 5,000 km per year. With this rapid progress of Kavach, we will cover the entire network within a short period of time. For Kavach installation, the Golden Quadrilateral-Golden Diagonal (GQGD) route has got top priority followed by high-density and high-utilisation network areas," he added.



Modi to interact with beneficiaries of Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with beneficiaries of the 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra' on Thursday via video conferencing, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said here on Wednesday. Prime Minister Modi will also launch Pradhan Mantri Mahila Kisan Drone Kendra, it said. The kendra will provide drones to women Self Help Groups (SHGs) so that this technology can be used by them for livelihood assistance, the statement said. The Yatra is being undertaken across the country with an aim to attain saturation of flagship schemes of the government by ensuring that the benefits of these schemes reach all targeted beneficiaries in a time bound manner, a statement issued by the PMO said. Modi will interact with beneficiaries of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra on November 30 at 11 am via video conferencing, it said. It has been the constant endeavour of the prime minister to ensure women led development, the statement said. In yet another step in this direction, Prime Minister Modi will launch Pradhan Mantri Mahila Kisan Drone Kendra, it said. The kendra

will provide drones to women Self Help Groups (SHGs) so that this technology can be used by them for livelihood assistance, the statement said. It said 15,000 drones will be provided to women SHGs in the course of the next three years. Women will also be provided necessary training to fly and use drones. The initiative will encourage the use of technology in agriculture, the statement said. Making healthcare affordable and easily accessible has been the cornerstone of the prime minister's vision for a healthy India. One of the major initiatives in this direction has been the establishment of Jan Aushadhi Kendra to make medicines available at affordable prices. During the programme, the prime minister will dedicate the landmark 10,000th Jan Aushadhi Kendra at AIIMS, Deogarh. Further, the prime minister will also launch a programme to increase the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras in the country from 10,000 to 25,000. Both these initiatives of providing drones to women SHGs and increasing the number of Jan Aushadhi Kendras were announced by the prime minister during his Independence Day speech. The programme marks the fulfilment of these promises, the statement said.

Illuminating lives of drug addicts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In keeping with its efforts to curb drug menace in the country, the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment under the Union Social Justice and Empowerment has signed a pact with Ramchandra Mission under Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA) to reach out the maximum people in the society. Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment Dr Virendra Kumar said that the collaboration with the Ramchandra Mission will go a long way to illuminate the lives of individuals and restrict them from

moving towards the path of addiction and help in making a mentally, emotionally and physically strong society. He also talked about various initiatives undertaken through the NMBA that have helped make this Abhiyaan a mass movement. Kamlesh D Patel (Daaji), President, Ramchandra Mission stressed on the importance of a conducive familial and social environment that would help prevent as well as overcome substance use. Through their 5000 centers and 16+ crore people connected with the Ramchandra Mission, Daaji affirmed the participation in the NMBA contributing

towards a Nasha Mukti Bharat. As per report of comprehensive National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India conducted by the Ministry through National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC), AIIMS, New Delhi, Alcohol is the most common psychoactive substance used by Indians followed by Cannabis and Opioids. Till now through the various activities undertaken on-ground, under the NMBA, 10,72+ crore people have reached out so far while 8,000 master volunteers have been selected and trained to lead the activities in the NMBA districts.

Create culture of quality: Rajnath to makers of military hardware

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday called upon the Indian defence manufacturers to create a culture of quality in defence production, terming it as a prerequisite to compete in the international market. Addressing the plenary session of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Quality Conclave on the theme 'Quality Odyssey for self-reliance in defence products', he stated that only quality products create global demand, and it will help in realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India a global manufacturing hub and a net defence exporter. Rajnath pointed out that those countries, which manufacture quality products, export their equipment to countries across the globe. He added that due to the good quality, the prices of



these platforms are quite high; but it should be kept in mind that importing countries are ready to pay even the highest prices for state-of-the-art products. Stressing that top-quality products bring credibility to the domestic defence industry, the defence minister said manufacturing such equipment within the country will generate increased global demand and bolster India's reputation in the international market. He also underscored the importance of cost control while manufacturing quality defence products. "Cost control should be given utmost importance; however it

should not be at the expense of quality. We have to be globally cost-competitive, but it has to be done by remaining in the top-quality segment. We must move forward with this idea," said Rajnath. He underscored the need to manufacture high-quality military systems which are effective, reliable and safe and can enable the Armed Forces to accomplish the missions successfully. Speaking on the occasion, DRDO chief Samir V Kamat reaffirmed the organisation's commitment towards delivering quality systems. He requested all stakeholders to have firm resolve and synergise towards self-reliance in high-quality indigenous military systems. The conclave provided an opportunity for stakeholders to network with experts to create an ecosystem in the country for producing high-quality indigenous systems, and implementation of standards, policies and global best practices.

Ship Sajag arrives at Muscat for 3-day visit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ship Sajag, an Offshore Patrol Vessel, arrived at Port Sultan Qaboos, Muscat, Oman, on Wednesday for a three-day visit as part of the overseas deployment of ICG ships to West Asia, Coast Guard officials said here. The primary objectives of the visit are to strengthen long-standing diplomatic ties, enhance maritime cooperation, and promote interoperability with the Royal Oman Police Coast Guard (ROP CG) and other maritime agencies, they said. The itinerary includes professional interactions such as onboard training and lectures on Visit, Board Search and Seizure (VBSS) and Maritime Search

and Rescue (M-SAR), cross-deck visits, joint yoga sessions, planning conferences, and table-top exercises for Marine Pollution Response (MPR). Activities during the port call involve courtesy calls by the Commanding Officer on various dignitaries and government officials of Oman, including the Royal Oman Police Coast Guard. Oman and India have historically maintained warm and friendly bilateral relations, sharing common values and diverse cultures. Regular interactions between ICG and ROPCG occur through annually conducted High-Level Meetings (HLM) and ICG ship visits, guided by the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The overseas deployment of

ICG ships aligns with the organization's plan to foster bilateral relationships and strengthen international cooperation with Foreign Friendly Countries (FFCs). During this West Asia deployment, the ship is also scheduled to make port calls in Ad Dammam, Saudi Arabia, and Mina Rashid, UAE. This visit plays a crucial role in strengthening bilateral relationships with key maritime agencies, including the Royal Oman Police Coast Guard (ROPCG), Saudi Border Guards and Naval Forces, and UAE Coast Guards. These relationships, developed over the years, aim to ensure the safety, security, and cleanliness of the seas in the region while addressing contemporary maritime issues.



Contribute to Armed Forces Flag Day Fund, corporate sector told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday appealed to the corporate sector to contribute generously to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund (AFFDF) and ensure the well-being of the brave soldiers who spend their lives safeguarding the sovereignty and integrity of the country. He made this appeal here while addressing the corporate heads during the AFFDF Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Conclave organised by the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare, Ministry of Defence. Expressing gratitude to the retired and serving Armed Forces personnel for their unmatched valour and sacrifice, Rajnath asserted that it is the collective responsibility of the entire nation to ensure the welfare of the soldiers and their families. He stated that the soldiers fulfill their duties in difficult circumstances and deal with challenges with courage and promptness. The defence minister described the heads of businesses, industries and the corporate sector as wealth creators who contribute to the economy and ensure prosperity



and security of the nation. He urged the corporate sector to share the created wealth or profit with other people in the society, especially the Armed Forces personnel, beyond their tax paying obligations. He emphasised that voluntary contributions hold more importance than compulsory obligations. "When the tax money reaches the soldiers, it is like a legal obligation. But, it is not the same with voluntary contributions. A soldier will feel attached to even ₹5 given as voluntary contribution more than ₹100 given as tax," he said. On the occasion, Rajnath also

felicitated the prominent CSR contributors to the AFFDF, including State Bank of India, ICICI Bank Limited, Indus Towers Limited, General Insurance Corporation, BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited, ECGC Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, LIC Golden Jubilee Foundation, Container Corporation of India Limited and Security Printing & Minting Corporation of India Limited. A number of initiatives have been taken by the government for the welfare of the ex-servicemen. Recently, Medical Treatment Grant for the veterans/dependents was increased to ₹50,000 from Rs 30,000, Vocational Training Grant for Widows was enhanced to ₹50,000 from ₹20,000 and Serious Diseases Grant was raised to ₹1.50 lakh from 1.25 lakh, which is a continuous process. During the Financial Year 2022-23, a grant of approximately ₹250 crore was distributed to more than 99,000 beneficiaries. Apart from this, institutional grants have also been given to Paraplegic Rehabilitation Centre, Kirkee and Mohali, Cheshire Home, Dehradun, Lucknow and Delhi and 36 War Memorial Hostels across the country.

ITBP chief given charge of CRPF also

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) Director General (DG) Anish Dayal Singh has been given the "additional charge" of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) after the retirement of incumbent S L Thaosen on November 30, an official order said Wednesday. A Union Home Ministry order said Singh, an IPS officer of 1988-batch from Manipur cadre, will hold the CRPF DG charge "till the appointment of a regular incumbent or until further orders, whichever is earlier." Thaosen, also from the 1988-batch of the IPS from Madhya Pradesh cadre, was appointed as CRPF chief in October last year. Singh was appointed the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) DG at the same time. The CRPF is the country's largest central armed police force (CAPF) with about 3.25 lakh personnel and it is deployed for rendering a variety of duties in the internal security domain of the country, including conducting anti-Naxal operations.

Boosting pollination to improve crop yield

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Planting flowers such as marigold and red gram beside food crops on farms in India has been found to attract bees and consequently boosts pollination and improves crop yield and quality, researchers have said. The first Indian study of its kind undertaken in the Kannivadi region of South India's Tamil Nadu in 24 moringa orchards is published in the Journal of Applied Ecology and was carried out by ecologists from the University of Reading, UK, and the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, India. The scientists worked with smallholder farmers and helped them plant red gram and marigold besides the Moringa crop. Moringa crop is a nutrient-rich "superfood," and its essential pollinators are bees. The research team increased the abundance and diversity of flower-visiting insects, ultimately improving pollination and boosting crop yield. Dr Deepa Senapathi, of the University of Reading, said: "Planting wildflowers on agricultural land is a tried and tested method seen in many arable fields and orchards in the UK and across Europe. This farming technique is known to boost insect pollinator



numbers. "We worked with farmers in South India to design the best co-flowering crops and boost the numbers of native bees and other insect pollinators visiting the moringa orchards." They helped them plant red gram and marigold flowers in 12 orchards while the other 12 had no co-flowering crops planted in them. Flower visitor numbers and diversity were 50% and 33% higher in sites with red gram and marigold flowers compared to those without. Sites with higher numbers of flower visiting insects also showed better quality of crops, with bigger moringa pods. The sites with red gram and marigold flowers which had previously suffered from a lack of pollination saw higher yields. Numbers of harvestable moringa fruits increased by 30% in the

orchards with co-flowering crops, compared to those without. "Greater yields and higher quality fruit will translate to a healthier and better food supply for smallholder communities. The farming communities can also use the red gram as a protein source in their diets and receive extra income from selling the marigold flowers." The study was produced as part of the TROPICAL project, led by the University of Reading team using UKRI funding from the Global Challenges Research Fund to investigate how research evidence from the UK could be used in tropical landscapes where pollinator dependent crops are grown. India has many crops of high economic and nutritional value, such as mango and moringa, where there is potential to significantly increase and improve crop pollination services. Intensive farming practices, using large amounts of chemical pesticides and fertilisers, and loss of natural habitats have negatively impacted biodiversity in India, including native bees and other pollinators, said the researchers. Since smallholder farmers in the tropics, whose crops depend on native pollinators, are particularly vulnerable to these impacts, the study results show how farmers can boost yields while also managing their lands in a more sustainable manner.

Technology solution for Geospatial domain

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India will soon have a Centre of Excellence to foster the Geospatial Innovation & Research and to cater to emerging technology solution requirements of the Geospatial domain in the country. A tripartite MoU was signed in this regard between National Geospatial Programme- DST, National Institute of Geo-informatics Science & Technology (NIGST), Survey of India, and IIT Tirupati Navishk'r I-Hub Foundation on Wednesday to establish this Centre of Excellence-a Pilot. The Geospatial Innovation & Research Centre of Excellence (CoE) as a pilot aims to cater for the emerging technology solution requirements of the Geospatial domain in

the country. The Centre would support and encourage innovative geospatial technology-based start-ups, industries, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) that have an application and impact in the core sectors of the economy. Professor Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, DST highlighted that this is perhaps the first step in the direction of implementing some aspects of the National Geospatial Policy. "After liberalising the Geospatial Guidelines and bringing in the Policy, we are in the process of reforming the Survey of India. There is a plan to set up a geospatial data exchange. Incubators will also be set up to work both on developing the geospatial technology as well as support startups that can focus on applications," he added. Professor Karandikar pointed out



that geospatial data science is an emerging interdisciplinary field which includes geospatial engineering, computer science and information technology. He also added that setting up focused incubators and carrying out capacity building through dedicated CoE will

translate to implementation of the recommendations of the geospatial data policy. "Using data science and AI model, this whole concept of World Wide Web (WWW) may change in next 10 years and may centre around the geospatial platform, through which we can get both contextual and location-based information by combining AI and machine learning in linear fashion for future searches," Prof Karandikar said. Dr KN Satyanarayana, Director, IIT Tirupathi, briefed about the Technology Innovation Hub (TIH) developed under NM-ICPS and said that the TIH has four major activities — technology development, capacity building, creating startup ecosystem and international cooperation, focusing on these new areas.

Action initiated to attach Atiq’s two ‘benami’ properties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Action has been initiated to attach two benami properties of slain mafia Atiq Ahmed. Reports have been sent to the high-level officials. Both the assets will be attached under the Gangsters Act as soon as the Police Commissioner gets permission. The police came to know about the possession of Atiq on half of the Bengal Hotel in Shahganj a few months ago.

It is learnt Atiq had ‘captured’ it on the strength of bullying and documents related to this property were collected. In Minhajpur area itself 200 square yards land of Atiq was detected. Investigation of documents revealed that this land was bought by Atiq in the name of his wife Shaista Parveen. Police teams were engaged in preparing a report to attach both. Now this report has been prepared and it has been sent to high officials. Sources revealed that it has been said in the report that both the above properties were acquired by crime and in such a situation it will be appropriate to attach it under Section 14 (1) of the Gangsters Act. Now on the basis of this report, the Police Commissioner will take

a decision after observation of the court documents etc.

The police team, which is trying to find out the benami property of the mafia, has also gathered information about a house in Delhi. This house is located in Batla House in Delhi. The mafia bought a flat in Sector-36, Noida. It is priced in crores. The flat in Mahanagar Colony in Lucknow in which Atiq’s son Asad lived with his companions has been identified. Police sources said that these three properties are also planned to be attached under the Gangsters Act. The police is preparing the report for this.

UMESH PAL MURDER CASE: Even after nine months of the sensational Dhoomanganj shootout case, Prayagraj Commissionerate cops are yet to arrest six key accused, including slain gangster Atiq Ahmed’s wife Shaista Parveen, despite announcing hefty cumulative cash reward of Rs 15.50 lakh. On February 24, lawyer Umesh Pal, a prime witness in 2005 BSP MLA Raju Pal murder case, along with two of his police gunners, were killed outside his residence in Sulemsarai area under the limits of Dhoomanganj police station. Although police claimed to have gunned down four of

the key accused allegedly involved in the shootout including Asad, son of Atiq Ahmed, Gulam (shooter), Usman alias Vijay (shooter) and Arbaaz in separate encounters, cops are yet to ascertain the whereabouts of six more wanted persons including Sabir, Guddu Muslim, Arman, Shaista Parveen, Jainav and Ayesha Noori. While Guddu Muslim, Arman and Sabir are carrying Rs 5 lakh cash reward each on their heads, Shaista Parveen is also carrying Rs 50,000 on her head.

There is no cash reward on the heads of Jainav (wife of slain Khalid Azeem) and Ayesha Noori (sister of Ashraf). Police records claimed that two of the key accused -- Arbaaz of Kaushambi and Vijay Chaudhary alias Usman of Kaudhiyara, each carrying Rs 50,000 cash reward, were killed in separate encounters on February 27 and March 6 respectively. Moreover, a team of Special Task Force (STF) of UP police also gunned down Asad (son of Atiq Ahmed) and Gulam both carrying Rs 5 lakh cash reward on their heads, in an encounter in Jhansi in April 13.

On April 15, a group of

three assailants killed gangster Atiq Ahmed and Khalid Azeem alias Ashraf inside the Colvin hospital campus under Shahganj police station.

However, despite a series of raids and target oriented operations, cops failed to gather information about current whereabouts of three key shooters, including Guddu Muslim, Sabir and Arman, since the sensational shootout. Undoubtedly, cops have not only denied the economic empire of slain gangster but also managed to tighten the noose around gang’s key operatives and sympathisers.

Recently, cops arrested a key associate of slain gangster Atiq Ahmed, named as Mohd Nafees alias Nafees Biryani, a resident of Khuldabad in an encounter near Anapur on Prayagraj – Lucknow highway and claimed to have received vital clues about gang’s modus operandi after Atiq’s elimination. A senior cop preferring anonymity said “Apart from STF, special constituted police teams are closing in on absconders and would be soon scripting success stories. Cops have some vital information to act upon. Separate police teams have been assigned separate tasks in this regard”.

Mahakumbh: Construction of inner ring road to start soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The construction of an inner ring road, one of the important projects of Mahakumbh 2025, will start within the next seven days. For which work has been started at the construction site and other types of activities have been started. The mapping from Sahson to Mirzapur Road has also been completed. On the basis of this, 95 per cent land acquisition work was also completed.

The work of the first phase of this 65 km project is to be completed before Mahakumbh. In which 30 km long inner ring road will be constructed in three parts. Preparations have also been started for the bridge on Ganges river to be built from Karchana to Phulpur.

In the first phase of inner ring road, the project will start from Lavayan Kala village in Naini. The first phase of the project is divided into three parts by the National Highway Authority (NHAI). The tender process has been completed for

the old Grand Trunk Road and the tender process for the 7.50 km long inner ring road in the subsequent part. As many as 29 companies took part in the tender for this project. For the first phase of the project, 195 hectares of land of 4,000 farmers of 45 villages of the district has been acquired. Compensation has been issued for ownership of land, buildings, gardens, wells of farmers affected in the project.

This ring road will be taken forward by taking Mahuari, Lavine Kala on Old GT Road

from Rewa Road to Mahuari, Lavine Kala and will be connected to NH-2 near Sahson. Preparations have been made to start the work of Ring Road in the first week of December without delay. The construction of the bridge of the Ganga will also be started.

Project Director, National Highways Authority, Prayagraj Pankaj Mishra, said there is a plan to start the construction work of Naini Lavayan Kala and Old GT Road from inner ring road for which almost all preparations have been made.

Conference on protected cultivation of horticultural crops

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A two-day international conference on protected cultivation of horticultural crops, post-harvest handling and digital agriculture started at Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology And Sciences (SHUATS) on Wednesday. It is being organised by the Department of Horticulture, Naini Agricultural Institute, SHUATS.

Giving this information organising secretary Dr Devi Singh said the chief guest was Dean of Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu Dr Kishor Chandra Dahal who inaugurated it at the university auditorium on Wednesday followed by an opening prayer led by Director (Research) Dr Alok Milton Lall. SHUATS Pro-V-C (PMD) Prof (Dr) Antony J Raj was the guest of honour. Faculty Dean Prof (Dr) Gautam Ghosh welcomed the chief guest. Director (Extension) Prof Arif A Broadway shared the extension activities of the university. Dean NAI Dr Biswarup Mehra gave a brief sketch

about the international conference. Joint Registrar and convenor Dr C John Wesley briefed the delegates about the importance of protected cultivation of horticultural crops.

Chief guest Dr Kishor Chandra Dahal shared standardised production technologies under protected cultivation including use of drip irrigation, fertigation and super absorbents for improving water and nutrient use efficiency. On the first day of the technical session various issues regarding critical review of the status with respect of designing of infrastructure like greenhouse, net houses, shade net, nursery, drip-irrigation system for protected cultivation in different agro-climatic locations etc were discussed.

The vote of thanks was proposed given by HoD Dr Vijay Bahadur Rajwade. Various national and international delegates along with SHUATS faculty members and research scholars attended the workshop.

KIDNEY TRANSPLANT: After Lucknow now preparations are being made for kidney transplant here

also. This facility will soon start at Swaroop Rani Nehru (SRN) Hospital of Moti Lal Nehru Medical College (MLNMC). Till now for kidney transplant, patients had to go to SGPGI, Ram Manohar Lohia Institute and King George’s Medical University of Lucknow or other big cities, but now within a month, kidney transplant facility will be available here.

Experts from the team constituted by the government have reached SRN Hospital to find out whether the resources required for kidney transplant are available or not.

Complete preparations have been made for this in its superspecialty building. The team from Lucknow and Delhi is gathering information on each point.

Dr Dilip Chaurasia, Chairman of the Urology department of MLNMC while talking to journalists said that patients from here as well as many other districts come to SRN Hospital for treatment but they have to be referred to Lucknow etc. Now having this facility here will provide relief to them.

Dr Arvind Gupta, Chairman of the Nephrology department said a large number of kidney transplant patients come to this hospital, but due to lack of this facility here the patients face a lot of inconvenience.

Efforts were being made for this for 20 years. Now the green signal is about to be received from the government.

Before giving green signal for kidney transplant at SRN Hospital, the government is getting its investigation done by a four-member team. A four-member team including Professor Suresh Kumar of the Surgery department of KGMU, Lucknow, reached here on Tuesday.

Prof Suresh Kumar said he has inspected the blood bank, OT, wards etc. in this hospital. They will report this to the government.

Urologist Dr Shirish Mishra of SRN Hospital said serious patients come to this hospital and are referred from nearby districts. With the introduction of kidney transplant system, the patient will get the benefit at minimal cost.

Vishwakarma, is a resident of Semri Sarayamrej. He is conductor in e-bus. After the video of Lareb surfaced, the angle of religion came in the attack on the conductor. The investigation was started by the ATS. It was learnt that Lareb used to listen to the arguments of Pakistani Maulana Khadim Hussain Rizvi in his mobile. This was revealed by YouTube’s search history. ATS CO Vipin Rai questioned Lareb in the hospital. According to sources, the accused Lareb Hashmi said that he is influenced by Pakistani Maulana Khadim Hussain Rizvi. Maulana is the founder of Tehreek-e-Labbek..

CAS praises efforts of air warriors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, Chief of the Air Staff, Indian Air Force (IAF) presided over the Central Air Command (CAC) commanders’ conference on Tuesday. All the commanders of the stations under CAC AoR, including Command Staff, attended it.

In his address to Commanders, the CAS praised the efforts of all the air warriors for the successful conduct of the Air Force Day parade at Prayagraj along with the air display at Sangam and Bhopal. The CAS highlighted the lessons learnt from Russia-Ukraine war and recent military operations carried out by Israel and the need for high state of readiness in the current volatile geo-strategic environment. He emphasised upon commanders to sharpen their focus on self-reliance and indigenisation towards the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. He stressed on realistic training and constant updating of knowledge as the focus area for



the training of Agniveer Vayu.

Later, the CAS presented trophies in various categories to the stations of CAC AoR. The CAS appreciated the level of operational preparedness and HADR operations undertaken in CAC AoR in the recent past and added that a well trained air warrior who is technologically sound and able to adapt to technological disruptions,

would serve as a force multiplier.

The Chief of the Air Staff interacted with all personnel involved in the conference. The CAS complimented all during his address for their response and immense efforts in undertaking the mandated tasks.

Meanwhile, Neeta Chaudhari President AFFWA

attended the Board of Management meeting and was apprised by Dr Suneeta Kapoor President AFFWA (R) about various welfare measures undertaken by AFFWA (R) in CAC AoR.

Neeta Chaudhari also interacted and addressed all Sanginis and appreciated the welfare activities undertaken by the AFFWA(R).

12-day Shilp Mela from tomorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The 12-day Rashtriya Shilp Mela (National Crafts Fair) is going to start here from December 1. It will be organised till December 12.

Indian crafts, handmade products among others will be put on display in the Shilp

Mela. Artists from all over the country will also brighten it up with their melodious voice and music every evening. Centre Director Prof Suresh Sharma said handicrafts have been invited from every corner of the country, in which about 151 stalls of traditional crafts and cuisine of India will be set up.

It will also have food stalls of every major state.

The folk artistes of various states will display their art on the stage and there will also be a gathering of local handicrafts. The shobha yatra will be taken out at 1 pm on December 1. Along with entertainment, visitors will also be able to enjoy

food. The Rashtriya Shilp Mela will also have the confluence of fragrance of dishes of different provinces of the country.

The cultural programmes will be held on the Muktakashi stage of Shilphat every evening. Padmashri Malini Awasthi will sing on December 1.

Transgenders teach traffic rules to commuters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The kinnars of Kinnar Akhara took to the road with the traffic police to enforce traffic rules here on Wednesday. The transgenders taught traffic rules to the passersby. Under the leadership of senior member of Uttar Pradesh Kinnar Welfare Board, Mahamandaleshwar Swami Kaushalyanand Giri (Tina Maa), a large number of transgenders also took out an awareness rally. Bike riders going without helmets were given roses and asked to wear helmets. Helmets were provided to 251 people.

Mahamandaleshwar Swami Kaushalyanand Giri said today more deaths are occurring in the country due to road accidents than due to diseases.

The most worrying situation that more youths are dying in road accidents therefore we all should follow all traffic



rules so that we remain safe and our family members do not face any problem.

The two-wheeler drivers must wear helmets and car drivers seat belts. One should avoid overtaking while driving because most of the acci-

dents occur due to overtaking and drivers falling asleep.

Traffic inspector Pawan Kumar Pandey also made people aware about traffic. Additional Commissioner Police Traffic Sitaram and TI Manoj Singh also expressed

their views. A large number of people, including Shri Mahant Sanjananand Giri of Kinnar Akhara, Naina, Shobha, Chhaya, Palak, Neha, Sana, Rani, Sangeeta, Chavanni, Devi, Saloni, Narmada, Srishti, Sushma were present.

Security arrangements in banks inspected

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Superintendent of Police (SP) Abhinandan while inspecting the security arrangements in banks on Tuesday said special training will be given to the staff of cash van as well as bank guards regarding safety issues. During the inspection the SP took the bankers to task who failed to make security arrangements as per the direction given by him during previous inspection. He gave tips to the security staff for better security. He added that he was planning to train the security staff to counter the threats of current crime situation. During the inspection station house officers (SHOs) of Katra Kotwali and City Kotwali the police force were also present.

CAR CATCHES FIRE: Panic prevailed on Tuesday evening when a car caught fire on Shastri bridge under Chilil police station. As a result the entire traffic came to a halt and with the help of people Chilil Station Officer (SO) Reeta Yadav tried to extinguish the fire but to no avail. The driver somehow managed to save himself and left the car in a burning condition which ultimately reduced to ashes. On information the Katra Kotwali police reached the spot and assisted the Chilil police in traffic control. After the hard labour of cops normal traffic could be restored.

MAHOTSAV: Chairman Zila Panchayat Raju Kanaujia on Tuesday while addressing



Chairman Zila Panchayat Raju Kanaujia addressing the Shri Anna Mahotsav on Tuesday

the Shree Anna Mahotsav at Piparadaand organised under the aegis of Agriculture department as the chief guest said millet is not just an edible grain it is a nutritious full of elements capable of keeping human life free from various diseases. He said the government is committed to doubling the income of farmers and the policies are made in their interest. He said promotion of millet is one of the ways to minimise the expenditure of farmers. He appealed to farmers to give priority to millet and use organic fertiliser in the larger interest of the health of the people. If the production cost is minimised without affecting the production of the grain it will increase the income of farmers, he added. The chief guest visited the stall of agri products. On the occasion he honoured some

farmers who had got the success in farming through innovative farming. Deputy Director (Agriculture) Vikesh Patel threw light on government schemes which were useful for farmers. He exhorted the farmers to get benefits of schemes. Referring the ongoing Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra he said it is the right time to get benefits of schemes.

MEETING : Chief Development Officer (CDO) Srilaxmi VS while holding the meeting of the officials related to five aspirational blocks of the district at the Collectorate on Tuesday issued directions to withhold the salary of five CDPOs and issued show cause notice to a medical officer for laxity in work. Halia, Patehra, City, Pahadi and Rajgarh have been selected as aspirational blocks in which 75 points had

been fixed on which work is to be done. The points include the matters related to health, nutrition, education, skill development, water resources, financial adjustment etc. In the meeting CDPOs were taken to task for tardy progress in completion of new Anganwadi buildings. The DDO was asked to submit the proposal to fill up the vacancy of ASHAs so far and start the process for new appointments. The DDO was asked for withholding the salary of CDPOs for laxity and issue show cause notices to the medical officer imcharges for slow progress in works. The medical officer incharge Halia was directed to identify cent per cent TB patients and their verification.

CLASH: One person was injured in firing during a group clash under Kachhawaan police station on Wednesday. A ‘barat’ of Baraini village was returning when a vehicle collided with a tractor in Kevtabeer village adjacent to Baraini under Kachhawaan police station. On information about the clash in which a bullet hit Awadhesh of Kevtabeer village in his arm during the firing by one of the ‘baratis’ the police reached the spot and brought the situation under control. Additional Superintendent of Police Niteshwar Singh told said the injured was given primary treatment and Satish Singh along with one other person have been taken into custody on the complaint of the other party. As a precautionary measure force had been deployed.

Plantation drive organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A plantation drive was organised by 111 Infantry Battalion (Territorial Army) Kumamon at Prayagraj on Tuesday to promote nature conservation and raise awareness about environment.

A total of 180 saplings were planted by children along with Army personnel. The entire exercise emphasises that even small efforts count and collective action can make a substantial difference in creating a healthier and more sustainable environment.

ATTACK CASE: Bus conductor Harikesh Vishwakarma does not even recognise Lareb Hashmi, the accused who

A total of 180 saplings were planted by children along with Army personnel.

allegedly attacked the former with a chopper on November 24. He does not know who Lareb Hashmi is. He told this to intelligence agencies during interrogation. The medical report of Harikesh Vishwakarma states that he has a total of 38 stitches, 18 are in the throat, 15 in the hand and five in the chest. He is undergoing treatment at Swaroop Rani Nehru (SRN) Hospital and is being told out of danger. Principal of SRN Hospital Dr SP Singh

said the medical report of Harikesh Vishwakarma has arrived and now his condition is improving and is out of danger. He has been shifted from ICU to the general ward. A panel of three doctors is treating him. According to police sources, Harikesh Vishwakarma has been under high security. B.Tech student Lareb had allegedly attacked bus conductor Harikesh Vishwakarma on November 24 at 9 am. Harikesh, son of Ram Shiromani

Out, with lessons

The evacuation of 41 workers tells us a few things about what went right and what we must set right

Life be frail and ephemeral but it is the human grit, determination, resilience and collaborative spirit that makes it explore space, navigate seas, move earth, climb mountains and challenge the mighty Nature. On the same theme, the Silkyara tunnel rescue operation in Uttarkashi stands out as a shining example of effective crisis management. After 400 hours of intense effort, the trapped workers can see the sun again. It was arguably the nation's biggest rescue operation – international experts, local authorities, Army and big machines all worked in tandem to pull off this feat. And the rat miners, part of the Army operations, deserve a special mention as finally they managed to reach the miners after digging continuously for 24 hours. Rat mining is now banned in India, yet their skills did the trick. Celebrations apart, this is also the time to ponder over the lessons learned from the oversights and mistakes made during the mission. For 17 days, the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel became a site of frenzy after 41 workers were trapped



in the tunnel. The rugged terrain and inclement weather compounded the challenges; the remote location added a degree of difficulty to the mission, necessitating a swift and coordinated response. While the rescue operation ultimately succeeded, it is important to examine our shortcomings to improve future crisis responses. One notable oversight was the initial delay in deploying specialised equipment to the site. This lapse, attributed to logistical challenges and communication gaps, underscored the importance of a rapid and efficient response in emergencies. Another lesson learned was the need for enhanced coordination among the agencies involved in the rescue.

Effective communication channels and seamless collaboration are essential for streamlining efforts and ensuring a cohesive response. It would have been better had the Army been called in earlier, given its expertise in such operations. Initially, delays and confusion arose due to inadequate coordination, highlighting the need for improved inter-agency cooperation which was, however, made good after it became a national top story. While the operation showcased the prowess of specialised units in handling complex crises, it also emphasised the importance of addressing logistical challenges and improving coordination among agencies. It also highlighted how protocols and standard working procedures are flouted by the companies involved. There must be a Government agency to ensure that safety procedures are followed. The life of every individual matters but the companies often cut corners when it comes to worker safety. Even the multinational companies operating in India do not follow the same safety protocols they follow in Europe and America, as was amply proved by the Bhopal gas disaster. They know safety at the workplace is not a priority. In Silkyara, there was no plan in place to evacuate workers in case of an emergency. By continuously refining our emergency response strategies, we can better prepare for challenges.

PICTALK



Girls wearing traditional Punjabi dress perform 'giddha', in 11th Amritsar International Folk Festival

PTI

Democracy: Restoring the dignity in public life

Poll campaigns are becoming toxic with unrestrained campaigns; no one is sacrosanct, and all political parties must shoulder the blame for it

The campaign for the last phase of the election to the Telangana assembly has come to an end with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Mega Road Show" at Hyderabad on Monday evening. It is once again silence in the state. But this is a temporary silence and a prelude to the much bigger cacophony that is all set to unfold in days to come. Poll pundits describe the election to the five State assemblies as the semi-final. While elegance and aristocracy were the catchwords of speeches made inside and outside the parliament, of late the quality of the language used by our lawmakers has degenerated to a level lower than the Bharani Pattu sung by a section of pilgrims at the Devi Temple in Kerala's Kodungallur. For those who are not familiar with the Bharani Pattu ritual, Bharani is one of the 27 stars used by astrologers for scientific calculations while Pattu means song/hymn. The self-styled Dravidians pay their obeisance to Bhagawathy (Devi/Goddess, the presiding deity of Kodungallur)



by singing obscene hymns on Bharani day in the Malayalam month of Chingam. It is a tradition whereby the farmers of yore days complain to the Goddess about their hardships in the typical Dravidian style. The elections that were held after India became an independent country stand out for its methodical and systematic campaign. The enthusiasm and fervour seen in the people from metropolises to villages elevated the democratic process into a festival-a festival of democracy. The campaign speeches delivered by the leaders were a learning process as they were packed with information, wisdom and knowledge. There are no records of leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel,

Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Sastri, Balraj Madhok, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee and Morarji Desai crossing the Lakshman Rekha and verbally assaulting their rivals. The political discourse took a nasty turn with Indira Gandhi attacking the Opposition parties alleging them of trying to finish her off in their bid to capture power. All her speeches were centred around this one-point agenda and were seen by political pundits as an attempt to divert the attention of the electorate from real issues. She belittled the corruption charges against her party colleagues and ministers by stating that "corruption was a global phenomenon". The stand-off between the then Congress Chief Sonia Gandhi and the then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi made it to the global news headlines. Sonia Gandhi began addressing Modi as 'Maut Ka Saudagar' (the wholesale merchant of death), Fascist, Dictator and whatnot! Modi retorted by calling her Antonio Maino (her Italian

name) and 'Congress widow' to which the Congress and the Communists cried foul. The name-calling continued unabated as Rahul Gandhi opened a new battle front in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. 'Chaukidar Chor Hai' was the new war cry of the Congress scion. This is one of the main reasons for having a One Nation, One Poll system. With the One Nation, One Poll system, we need to bear with this abnormal situation only once every five years and not every alternate month. The silent campaign has its virtues and elegance. Election Campaigns should not upset the rhythm of one's daily life. The dignity and harmony of democracy could be sustained by a silent campaign and not by discordant notes. (The writer is a special correspondent with the Pioneer, views are personal)



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Tunnel between science and spirituality

The successful rescue mission in the Silkyara, shows how coordinated efforts and a compassionate approach can achieve the impossible

The march of science, the heart of man must beat in unison with the heart of God. The future belongs to spirituality over science, to metaphysics over physics. These profound words of Swami Vivekananda gripped my attention after a friend of mine shared it on my WhatsApp with a photograph of tunnelling expert Arnold Dix bowing down before God (read Almighty) outside the Silkyara tunnel.

The successful completion of the rescue mission to extricate 41 workers trapped inside the Silkyara tunnel on Uttarakhand's Char Dham route was achieved on Tuesday evening of November 28, 2023. Rat-hole mining experts employed manual drilling techniques to navigate through the final 10-12-meter stretch of debris from the collapsed section of the under-construction tunnel. It was on the morning of Diwali, November 12, that a landslide occurred at approximately 5:30 AM, causing a section of the Silkyara-Dandalgaon tunnel under construction on the Brahmakal-Yamunotri highway at Uttarkashi to collapse. The tunnel, a critical part of the Char Dham all-weather road project led to the trapping of 41 workers inside the tunnel, specifically at the Silkyara Bend – Barkot tunnel, situated about 200 meters from its entrance, which triggered a challenging rescue operation, as the entire nation joined in unison praying for the safe exit of the trapped workers. Action by officials and district administration began immediately and meticulously to bring out the trapped workers unhurt. Twelve skilled rat-hole mining experts played a crucial role in this intricate operation. The successful rescue operation in the Silkyara tunnel – after the 17-day ordeal of life and death – involved a collaborative effort from various entities, including the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) at the national level, state rescue agencies, international drilling experts, and even local rat-mining labourers – whose crucial contribution had often been overlooked by many. The district administration swift-



ly initiated rescue operations with approximately 200 disaster relief personnel employing drilling equipment and excavators. Simultaneously, oxygen, electricity, and food were provided to the trapped labourers through air-compressed pipes. Other than NDRF, the other agencies included SDRF BRO, NHIDCL, and ITBB, who collaborated in the rescue efforts. In the Odisha train disaster, the NDRF played a crucial role in rescue operations. During the Sudan crisis, India launched 'Operation Kaveri' facilitating the safe evacuation of 3,000 stranded Indians. Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar engaged with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, while the Indian Air Force and Navy conducted flights and sorties, evacuating nearly 3,900 Indians. After the release of the 41 trapped workers, in a message, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that their "courage and patience" was inspiring. In a post on 'X', he wrote, "I want to say to the friends who were trapped in the tunnel that your courage and patience is inspiring for everyone. I wish you all well and good health. It is a matter of great satisfaction that, after a long wait, our friends will now meet their loved ones." Coming back to the profound words of Swami Vivekananda, as mentioned at the beginning, it emphasises the harmony between the march of science



AFTER THE EVACUATION OF THE 41 TRAPPED WORKERS, IN A MESSAGE, PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI SAID THAT THEIR "COURAGE AND PATIENCE" WAS INSPIRING

and the spiritual essence of humanity. The idea that "the future belongs to spirituality over science, to metaphysics over physics" suggests a balance between the material and the spiritual dimensions of human existence. In the context of the successful rescue mission in the Silkyara tunnel and other instances mentioned, this balance is evident in the coordinated efforts and compassionate approach adopted by various entities involved. The challenging rescue operation in the Silkyara tunnel serves as a practical manifestation of this balance. One could say that the use of manual drilling techniques, led by skilled rat-hole mining experts, symbolises the human touch, perseverance, and skill beyond mechanised technology. The collaboration of different entities, from local rat-mining labourers to international drilling experts, reflects a holistic approach. Arnold Dix, bowing down, serves as a poignant reminder of the humility required in the face of the unknown. Tunnelling through the Earth, Dix, a master of physical engineering, found himself compelled to bow before a force greater than himself – a force that perhaps transcended the limits of his scientific understanding. This gesture encapsulates the essence of surrendering to the supreme,

acknowledging that there are realms beyond the grasp of human intellect. Amidst the grandeur of our discoveries, there exists a yearning for meaning and purpose that science alone cannot satiate. This is where spirituality steps in, offering solace to the searching soul and providing a framework for understanding the metaphysical aspects of our existence. However, the act of surrendering to the supreme does not imply abandoning reason or forsaking scientific inquiry. Instead, it encourages a harmonious coexistence where the intellect bows to the infinite wisdom that transcends empirical understanding. Moreover, surrendering to the supreme allows us to navigate the uncertainties of life with grace and resilience. In moments of adversity, the recognition of a higher power provides a source of strength and comfort, where one understands a sense of purpose. The integration of spirituality and science may find a deeper understanding of our existence and our place in this grand arena of the cosmos, where our greed and wants need to be self-checked and demand self-restraint. (The writer is a programme executive, Gandhi Snriti and Darshan Samiti, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HC REJECTS PIL ON LOUDSPEAKERS

Sir—Dubbing it a "wholly misconceived PIL," a Division Bench of the Gujarat High Court on Tuesday rejected a public interest litigation (PIL) that had sought a ban on the use of loudspeakers in mosques during azaan. It's a good decision that came from HC. India is a democratic country where people follow different religions; that's called 'unity in diversity.' Different kinds of flowers beautify a bouquet of flowers; in the same way, having various religions prettifies India. All citizens should live together, loving and supporting each other. With everyone's support, our country will develop; otherwise, our country will be scattered, society will be destroyed, and evils and devils will flourish. United we stand, divided we fall.

Tauqueer Rahmani | Mumbai

BRUTAL MURDERS CREE PANIC IN UP

Sir—As per the report, the murders of eight women in the past few months, in a similar pattern, have created panic among people and anxiety for police in the BJP-ruled state of Uttar Pradesh. All the victims were aged between 35 and 60 years and were strangled to death with a saree or chunari, said officials. Seven of these murders were reported from different villages within Shahi police station limits. The most recent one was reported from Sheeshgarh police station on November 26. Bareilly ADG PC Meena, along with IG (Range) Rakesh Singh, visited the crime spot and directed officials to work out the cases at the earliest. He asked them to do the crime mapping of incidents and analyse the crime pattern to nab the assailants. "It is still not clear whether these murders are interconnected or not. I am also not sure whether it is the work of one person or different people. But residents suspect the involvement of a psychopath in the region," said ASP (crime) Mukesh Pratap Singh. ASP Mukesh Pratap Singh issued an advisory to villagers to not allow women to go out of their homes alone and

Mission impossible!



The seventeen-day ordeal is finally over after rescuing 41 workers trapped in the Uttarkashi tunnel. The impossible is made possible. Man succeeded where foreign machines failed. The auger drilling machine was broken many times and could not complete the work. Removing it's broken blades from the rescue pipe was a great technological achievement. The 'Rat Miners', who emerged as heroes in this great escape, gave the required breakthrough

step out in groups of three-four, if necessary. This advisory also stands for daytime, as all these murders happened between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. with women working in the field or at deserted places. The murder of a woman in the same pattern was reported from a village under adjoining Sheeshgarh police station limits on Sunday. Urmila, 55, wife of one Ved Prakash of Jagdishpur village in Sheeshgarh, had gone out to collect fodder for cattle around noon and did not return home. The woman's body was later found lying near the field of one Dori Lal, around 500 metres from the village. Earlier last year, three women aged between 60 and 64 years were killed in December in Barabanki district. With this, women are living under the fear of getting targeted and are not going out.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

MEMORABLE TALES OF 'THE GABBA'

Sir—The iconic Australian cricket stadium, 'The Gabba' in Brisbane, is said to be demolished and rebuilt for the 2032 Olympics. Renowned for hosting one of

to insert the pipe in the final stages through which all the trapped workers were pulled out. India has now developed a 'Desi Technology' to rescue workers trapped in tunnels. Providing food and oxygen to keep them alive for more than two weeks was unbelievable. The patience, courage, and confidence of trapped workers and their family members, as well as the efforts put in by all the rescuers from different organisations, are beyond appreciation. The personal interest taken by the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister was exceptional. The government needs to investigate thoroughly the reasons for the mishap, and the lessons learned can be useful for safety in the number of tunnels under construction and proposed in the Himalayas. It is not advisable to stop construction activities in the Himalayan region because of this mishap.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

the fastest tracks in world cricket, the Gabba became a household name in India and across the world after India breached what was Australia's fortress until 2021. For good measure, Gabba, the bastion of the Australian cricket team, is bordered by 'Vulture Street,' which cricket aficionados will famously know as one of the two ends of the ground. Gabba may not stir emotions and enthuse romantics like the storied Australian cricket grounds of Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide, but its very mention would strike fear in the minds of visiting teams. For the Indian fans, starting the day by listening to former Australian great Bill Lawry's cheerful voice early in the morning was music to the ears when he would start with, "very good morning to all our viewers wherever you are." Again, when action gets tense on the field, one will find Lawry saying, "It is all happening here at the Gabba."

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

THE ANCIENT ART OF MUDRAS

Yogic hand gestures channel energy and help connect to higher spiritual realms



Mudras, a Sanskrit word that translates to "gesture," are ancient hand positions that have been practised for thousands of years in various cultures, particularly in the realms of yoga, meditation, and traditional dance. These symbolic gestures are believed to channel energy within the body and connect the practitioner to higher spiritual realms. The philosophy behind mudras lies in the idea that different parts of the hands represent different elements and energies, and by bringing them together in specific ways, one can harmonise and channel these energies for various purposes.

Major Mudras and Their Significance:

Anjali Mudra (Prayer Gesture):
How to perform: Bring the palms of your hands together in front of your chest, fingers pointing upward.
Anjali Mudra is a gesture of reverence and gratitude. It is commonly used as a greeting and is often performed at the beginning and end of yoga classes. This mudra symbolises the connection between the individual self and the universal consciousness.

Gyan Mudra (Knowledge Gesture):
How to perform: Touch the tip of the thumb and the index finger, forming a circle, while keeping the other fingers extended.
Gyan Mudra is associated with knowledge, wisdom, and concentration. It is believed to enhance memory and improve concentration during meditation. This mudra is commonly used in various meditation practices to quiet the mind and promote inner peace.

Chin Mudra (Consciousness Gesture):
How to perform: Touch the tip of the thumb and the index finger, forming a circle, and let the other three fingers remain extended.
Chin Mudra is a gesture of consciousness and is often used during meditation.

Prana Mudra (Life Force Gesture):
How to perform: Join the tips of the ring finger and the little finger to the tip of the thumb, while keeping the other fingers extended.
Prana Mudra is believed to increase the vital life force energy within the body. It is associated with improving vitality, reducing fatigue, and boosting the immune system.



Apana Mudra (Digestive Gesture):
How to perform: Touch the tips of the thumb, middle finger, and ring finger together, while keeping the index finger and little finger extended.
Apana Mudra is said to balance the Apana Vayu, one of the five vital forces in the body related to elimination and downward movement. This mudra is believed to support digestive health, assist in detoxification, and promote a sense of groundedness.

Huni Mudra (Seal of Patience):
How to perform: Join the tip of the middle finger with the tip of the thumb, while keeping the other fingers extended.
Shuni Mudra is associated with patience, discernment, and discipline. It is believed to help cultivate a sense of patience and focus. Practising this mudra is thought to bring balance to the air element within the body and mind, promoting a calm and reflective state. Shuni Mudra is often used to enhance one's ability to make wise decisions.

Incorporating mudras into your meditation or yoga routine can provide a deeper dimension to your spiritual journey, promoting physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Mudras are powerful tools that bridge the physical and spiritual aspects of our being. Incorporating these symbolic hand gestures into your daily life or meditation practise can deepen your connection with yourself and the universe. As with any ancient practice, it's essential to approach mudras with respect and an open mind, allowing yourself to explore their potential benefits on a personal level.

(The writer is a spiritual guide, views are personal)

India's G20 Presidency: Towards a better future

NARENDRA MODI

Today marks 365 days since India assumed the G20 Presidency. Let us reflect, recommit, and rejuvenate the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'



As we undertook the responsibility of G20 Presidency last year, the global landscape grappled with multifaceted challenges: recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, looming climate threats, financial instability, and debt distress in developing nations, all amid declining multilateralism. In the midst of conflicts and competition, development cooperation suffered, impeding progress. Assuming the G20 Chair, India sought to offer the world an alternative to status quo, a shift from a GDP-centric to human-centric progress. India aimed to remind the world of what unites us, rather than what divides us. Finally, the global conversation had to evolve - the interests of the few had to give way to the aspirations of the many. This required a fundamental reform of multilateralism as we knew it. Inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive—these four words defined our approach as G20 president, and the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration (NDLD), unanimously adopted by all G20 members, is testimony to our commitment to deliver on these principles. Inclusivity has been at the heart of our presidency. The inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a permanent member of the G20 integrated 55 African nations into the forum, expanding it to encompass 80% of the global population. This proactive stance has fostered a more comprehensive dialogue on global challenges and opportunities.

The first-of-its-kind 'Voice of the Global South Summit', convened by India in two editions, heralded a new dawn of multilateralism. India mainstreamed the Global South's concerns in international discourse and has ushered in an era where developing countries take their rightful place in shaping the global narrative. Inclusivity also infused India's domestic

INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY USHERED IN A DAWN OF NEW MULTILATERALISM; A BEGINNING OF A NEW WORLD ORDER

approach to G20, making it a People's Presidency that befits that world's largest democracy. Through "Jan Bhagidari" (people's participation) events, G20 reached 1.4 billion citizens, involving all states and Union Territories (UTs) as partners. And on substantive elements, India ensured that international attention was directed to broader developmental aims, aligning with G20's mandate. At the critical midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, India delivered the G20 2023 Action Plan to Accelerate Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), taking a cross-cutting, action-oriented approach to interconnected issues, including health, education, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

A key area driving this progress is robust Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Here, India was decisive in its recommendations, having witnessed the revolutionary impact of digital innovations like Aadhaar, UPI, and Digilocker first-hand. Through G20, we successfully completed the Digital Public Infrastructure Repository, a significant stride in global technological collaboration. This repository, featuring over 50 DPIs from 16 countries, will help the Global South build, adopt, and scale DPI to unlock the power of inclusive growth.

For our One Earth, we introduced ambitious and inclusive aims to create urgent, lasting, and equitable change. The Declaration's 'Green Development Pact' addresses the challenges of choosing between combating hunger and

protecting the planet, by outlining a comprehensive roadmap where employment and ecosystems are complimentary, consumption is climate conscious, and production is planet-friendly. In tandem, the G20 Declaration calls for an ambitious tripling of global renewable energy capacity by 2030. Coupled with the establishment of the Global Biofuels Alliance and a concerted push for Green Hydrogen, the G20's ambitions to build a cleaner, greener world is undeniable. This has always been India's ethos, and through Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LIFE), the world can benefit from our age-old sustainable traditions.

Further, the Declaration underscores our commitment to climate justice and equity, urging substantial financial and technological support from the Global North. For the first time, there was a recognition of the quantum jump needed in the magnitude of development financing, moving from billions to trillions of dollars. G20 acknowledged that developing countries require \$5.9 trillion to fulfil their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2030. Given the monumental resources required, G20 emphasised the importance of better, larger, and more effective Multilateral Development Banks. Concurrently, India is taking a leading role in UN reforms, especially in the restructuring of principal organs like the UN Security Council, that will ensure a more equitable global order.

Gender equality took centre stage in the Declaration, culminating in

the formation of a dedicated Working Group on the Empowerment of Women next year. India's Women's Reservation Bill 2023, reserving one-third of India's Parliament and state legislative assembly seats for women epitomizes our commitment to women-led development.

The New Delhi Declaration embodies a renewed spirit of collaboration across these key priorities, focusing on policy coherence, reliable trade, and ambitious climate action. It is a matter of pride that during our Presidency, G20 achieved 87 outcomes and 118 adopted documents, a marked rise from the past.

During our G20 Presidency, India led deliberations on geopolitical issues and their impact on economic growth and development. Terrorism and the senseless killing of civilians is unacceptable, and we must address it with a policy of zero-tolerance. We must embody humanitarianism over hostility and reiterate that this is not an era of war. I am delighted that during our Presidency India achieved the extraordinary: it revitalised multilateralism, amplified the voice of the Global South, championed development, and fought for the empowerment of women, everywhere.

As we hand over the G20 Presidency to Brazil, we do so with the conviction that our collective steps for people, planet, peace, and prosperity, will resonate for years to come.

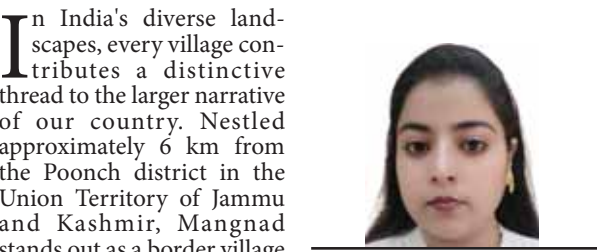
(This is an exclusive writup by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi)

Cultivating a unique economic identity in the border areas

Mangnad is not merely a supplier of milk and vegetables; it's a testament to how a community can carve its niche, even in challenging landscapes

In India's diverse landscapes, every village contributes a distinctive thread to the larger narrative of our country. Nestled approximately 6 km from the Poonch district in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Mangnad stands out as a border village that is slowly etching its identity in the realms of agriculture and animal husbandry.

Over the years, Mangnad has earned a reputation for its unique approach to animal husbandry. It's a village where livestock is not just a part of the scenery; it's a way of life. Yet, it's not a place where dependence solely rests on animal husbandry. Even government employees here take a keen interest in



BHARATI DEVI

both animal husbandry and agriculture. Consequently, Mangnad not only meets the local demand but also supplies milk and vegetables to the broader Poonch region. Every morning, vehicles laden with litres of milk make their way to the city, with city-dwellers acknowledging the village as a vital source for their daily dairy needs. This tradition has been sustained for years, but in the last 8-10 years, Mangnad has also emerged as a significant player in vegetable production, adding another layer to its unique identity.

Today, the village engages in diverse occupations, from private businesses to government employment, but one common thread binds them



all—cultivating vegetables. Observing the burgeoning interest in agriculture, the local agriculture department has stepped in to support the villagers. This collective effort has equipped the village with essential resources, including

small tractors, quality seeds, agricultural camps, and water tanks, transforming Mangnad into a beacon of self-sufficiency. Considering the hilly terrain of Jammu and Kashmir, this transformation is a testament to the resilience and determination

of its people. Mangnad is not merely a supplier of milk and vegetables; it's a testament to how a community can carve its niche, even in challenging landscapes. The villagers have not only embraced agriculture but have also diversified into vegetable production, a feat worth celebrating. 54-year-old Murti Devi, a resident of the village, shares that their approach to vegetable cultivation has evolved. Initially, they planted a single type of vegetable for six months and then another for the next six months. However, with experience, they have streamlined their efforts, categorising vegetables into four distinct seasons. They now synchronise their

planting with the weather, ensuring a continuous supply of diverse vegetables throughout the year. Sushil Kumar, 40, asserts that apart from vegetable production, they have no other business. With some patches of land, they ventured into vegetable farming, selling produce worth lakhs every season. This entrepreneurial spirit extends to several farmers in the village, illustrating how Mangnad has become an agricultural powerhouse.

Harish Kumar, 29, emphasises the enduring interest in animal husbandry among the villagers. While some are dedicated to daily milk supplies to the city, others have expanded their focus to vegetable cultivation. The

villagers are not just cultivating vegetables; they are champions of organic farming, ensuring not only flavorful produce but also contributing to the nutritional well-being of consumers. This border village's success story is not just about agriculture; it's about community resilience, innovation, and a collaborative effort with the agriculture department. The department's support, including providing specialised sheets for transforming cow dung into fertilizer, has not only improved lives but has also bestowed a distinctive identity upon Mangnad.

(The writer is Charkha's volunteer trainer from Poonch, J&K. Views are personal. Charkha Features)

Mediators look to extend truce in Gaza on its final day

AP ■ RAFAH (GAZA STRIP)

International mediators worked on Wednesday to extend the truce in Gaza, hoping the territory's Hamas rulers will keep freeing hostages in return for the release of Palestinian prisoners and further respite from Israel's air and ground offensive. It will otherwise expire within a day. Israel has welcomed the release of dozens of hostages in recent days and says it will maintain the truce if Hamas keeps freeing captives. But its other major goal — the annihilation of the armed group that has ruled Gaza for 16 years — could be slipping out of reach.

Weeks of heavy aerial bombardment and a ground invasion have demolished vast swathes of northern Gaza and killed thousands of Palestinians. But it seems to have had little effect on Hamas' rule, evidenced by its ability to conduct complex negotiations, enforce the cease-fire among other armed groups, and orchestrate the smooth release of hostages.

Hamas' leader in Gaza, Yehya Sinwar, and other commanders have likely relocated to the south, along with hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians who have packed into overflowing shelters.

An Israeli ground invasion of the south could eventually ferret out Hamas' leaders and demolish the rest of its militant infrastructure, including kilometres of tunnels, but at a cost in Palestinian lives and destruction that the United States, Israel's main ally, seems unwilling to bear.

The Biden administration has told Israel that if it resumes the offensive it must operate

with far greater precision, especially in the south. That approach is unlikely to bring Hamas to its knees any time soon, and international pressure for a lasting cease-fire is already mounting.

"How far both sides will be prepared to go in trading hostages and prisoners for the pause is about to be tested, but the pressures and incentives for both to stick with it are at the moment stronger than the incentives to go back to war," Martin Indyk, a former US ambassador to Israel, wrote on X.

DIPLOMACY RAMPS UP

CIA director William Burns and David Barnea, who heads Israel's Mossad spy agency, were in Qatar on Tuesday to discuss extending the cease-fire and releasing more hostages. Qatar has played a key role in mediating with Hamas, hosted the talks, which also included Egyptian mediators.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was set to visit the region this week, and was also expected to push for a longer truce.

A joint statement from foreign ministers of the G7 group of wealthy democracies, which includes close allies of Israel, called for the "further extension of the pause" and for "protecting civilians and compliance with international law."

The war began with Hamas' October 7 attack into southern Israel, in which it killed over 1,200 people, mostly civilians. The militants dragged some 240 people back into Gaza, including babies, children, women, soldiers, older adults and Thai farm labourers. Israel responded with a devastating air campaign



Palestinians cook bread by their destroyed homes in Kuza'a Gaza Strip during the temporary ceasefire between Hamas and Israel on Wednesday.

AP/PTI

across Gaza and a ground invasion in the north. More than 13,300 Palestinians have been killed, roughly two-thirds of them women and minors, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants.

Israel says 77 of its soldiers have been killed in the ground offensive, and it claims to have killed thousands of militants, without providing evidence.

The plight of the captives, and the lingering shock from the October 7 attack, has galvanised Israeli support for the war. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is also under intense pressure to bring the hostages home, and could

find it difficult to resume the offensive if there's a prospect for more releases.

Hamas is still believed to be holding around 150 hostages — enough to extend the cease-fire for another two weeks under the current arrangement of releasing 10 each day. But it is expected to drive a harder bargain for the release of Israeli soldiers, likely demanding the release of Palestinian prisoners convicted of deadly attacks.

TWELVE MORE HOSTAGES FREED

In the latest swap, nine women and a teenager, as well as two Thai nationals, were freed on Tuesday and returned to Israel. The 17-year-old girl

could be seen walking alongside Hamas militants to a waiting Red Cross Jeep with her small, white-haired dog named Bella. Soon after, Israel released 30 Palestinian prisoners.

After being extended by one day, the truce is due to end after one more exchange on Wednesday night.

A total of 60 Israelis have been freed as part of the truce, most of whom appear physically well but shaken. Another 21 hostages — 19 Thais, one Filipino and one Russian-Israeli — have been released in separate negotiations since the truce began. Before the truce, Hamas released four hostages, and the Israeli army rescued one. Two other hostages were found dead in Gaza. The latest swap

brought to 180 the number of Palestinian women and teenagers freed from Israeli prisons.

Most have been teenagers accused of throwing stones and firebombs during confrontations with Israeli forces.

Several were women convicted by Israeli military courts of attempting deadly attacks. Palestinians have celebrated the release of people they see as having resisted Israel's decades-long military occupation of lands they want for a future state.

TENSE CALM IN GAZA

The cease-fire has brought calm to Gaza and increased deliveries of humanitarian aid, allowing people to stock up on food, water and fuel after weeks of severe shortages. Some have been able to sift through the rubble of their homes and bury relatives, but Israel has barred people from returning to the north.

On Tuesday, Israel and Hamas blamed each other for a brief exchange of fire in northern Gaza, but it did not appear to endanger the truce. Palestinian militants have halted rocket fire into Israel, as has Lebanon's Hezbollah, which had repeatedly traded fire with Israeli forces along the northern border since the start of the war. Israel's bombardment and ground offensive have displaced more than 1.8 million people inside Gaza, nearly 80 per cent of the territory's population, and most have sought refuge in the south, according to the UN. The cease-fire has allowed increased aid delivered by 160 to 200 trucks a day into Gaza, but that is less than half what Gaza was importing before the fighting, even as needs have soared.

Blinken heads again to Middle East

Brussels: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken says the Biden administration would like to see a new extension of the cease-fire agreement in Israel's war with Hamas after the current one expires to secure the release of additional hostages held by the militant group and to ramp up humanitarian aid deliveries to Gaza.

As he prepared to make his third visit to the Middle East since the war began with Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks in Israel, Blinken said Wednesday that in addition to discussing short-term logistical and operational planning, the Biden administration believes it is imperative to discuss ideas about the future governance of Gaza if Israel achieves its stated goal of eradicating Hamas.

Israel and Arab nations have resisted such discussions about future governance, with Israeli officials concentrating on the war and Arab leaders insisting the immediate priority must be ending the fighting that has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians.

The extension of the current deal expires later Wednesday.

"Looking at the next couple of days, we'll be focused on doing what we can to extend the pause so we can continue to get more hostages out and more humanitarian assistance in," Blinken told reporters in Brussels, where he was attending a NATO foreign ministers meeting. "And we'll discuss with Israel how it can achieve its objective of ensuring that the terrorist attacks of Oct. 7 never happen again, while sustaining and increasing human-

itarian assistance and minimizing further suffering of Palestinian civilians."

He added before leaving Brussels for Israel and the West Bank: "Everyone's focused on the day of, on what's happening in Gaza right now, but we also need to be focused at the same time — and we are in conversations with many other countries — on what I call the day after' and the day after the day after': I mean, what happens in Gaza once the campaign is over?"

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made clear that Israeli forces will eventually restart military operations after the conclusion of the current, temporary cease-fire that has allowed for an exchange of hostages taken by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

US President Joe Biden has said he would like to see the pause continue for as long as feasible. Biden and Blinken have also stressed the importance of planning for post-conflict Gaza as well as the need to resume negotiations for the eventual creation of an independent Palestinian state. Netanyahu is opposed to a Palestinian state and has said he is the only Israeli leader who can prevent one from being formed.

"We believe that that is the only path to enduring peace, to enduring security, to the preservation of Israel as a strong secure, democratic Jewish state and Palestinians having their legitimate aspirations for a state and self determination," Blinken said. **AP**

US military aircraft with 6 aboard crashes off southern Japan

AP ■ TOKYO

A crew member who was recovered from the ocean after a US military Osprey aircraft carrying six people crashed on Wednesday off southern Japan has been pronounced dead, coast guard officials said. The cause of the crash and the status of the five others on board were not immediately known, coast guard spokesperson Kazuo Ogawa said. Initial reports said the aircraft was carrying eight people, but the US military later revised the number to six, he said. The coast guard received an emergency call from a fishing boat near the crash site off Yakushima, an island south of

Kagoshima on the southern main island of Kyushu, he said.

Coast guard aircraft and patrol boats found one person, who was later pronounced dead at a nearby hospital, and gray-colored debris believed to be from the aircraft, Ogawa said. The victim was only identified as a male. They were found about 1 kilometer (0.6 mile) off the eastern coast of Yakushima. An empty inflatable life raft was also found in the area.

The Osprey is a hybrid aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter, but during flight can rotate its propellers forward and cruise much faster like an airplane.

Versions of the aircraft are flown by the US Marine Corps,

Navy and Air Force.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said the Osprey disappeared from radar at midafternoon, a few minutes before the coast guard received the emergency call.

The aircraft requested an emergency landing at the Yakushima airport about five minutes before it was lost from radar, NHK public television and other media reported.

NHK quoted a Yakushima resident as saying he saw the aircraft turned upside down, with fire coming from one of its engines, and then an explosion before it fell to the sea.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said he planned to seek a further explanation from

the US military, but declined to say whether he would seek a temporary suspension of Osprey operations in Japan.

Ospreys have had a number of accidents in the past, including in Japan, where they are deployed at both US and Japanese military bases.

In Okinawa, where about half of the 50,000 American troops in Japan are based, Gov. Denny Tamaki told reporters Wednesday that he will ask the US military to suspend all Osprey flights in Japan.

Ogawa said the aircraft had departed from the US Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi prefecture and crashed on its way to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa.

COP28 leader denies report that UAE wanted to seek oil deals in summit

AP ■ DUBAI

The Emirati president-designate for the upcoming United Nations COP28 climate talks forcefully denied Wednesday a report alleging his nation planned to use the summit to strike oil and gas deals, a day before the summit was due to begin.

Sultan al-Jaber, who also leads the massive state-run Abu Dhabi National Oil Co., called the allegations from a BBC report "an attempt to undermine the work of the COP28 presidency" before the talks begin Thursday. The report cited what it described as "leaked briefing documents" the broadcaster said showed the Emirates planned to discuss fossil fuel deals with 15 nations. "These allegations are false, not true, incorrect and not

accurate," al-Jaber told a small group of journalists gathered for a news conference that also was aired live. "I promise you never ever did I see these talking points that they refer to or that I ever even used such talking points in my discussions."

He added: "So please for once, respect who we are, respect what we have achieved over the years and respect the fact that we have been clear open and clean and honest and transparent on how we want to conduct this COP process."

The BBC did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Adnan Amin, the conference's chief executive and a top lieutenant of al-Jaber, said he wasn't concerned about the possible fallout of the report and said he believed Emirati officials

were determined to make progress toward limiting climate change.

"I think they're focused on delivering a transformational COP. ... They're focused on creating a platform for everybody to have the ability to discuss ambitious climate action," Amin, a veteran U.N. official and longtime proponent of renewable energy, told The Associated Press after hosting a pre-conference meeting with delegation chiefs. Immediately after al-Jaber's remarks, a faked news release sent to The Associated Press described al-Jaber as having agreed to resign as CEO of ADNOC. COP28 organizers with the UAE delegation later confirmed it was false and al-Jaber would continue in his role.

Nepal first country in South Asia to register same-sex marriage officially

Kathmandu (PTI): Five months after the Supreme Court legalised it, Nepal on Wednesday formally registered the first case of same-sex marriage, making it the first South Asian country to do so.

Trans-woman Maya Gurung, 35 and Surendra Pandey, 27, a gay, got legally married and their marriage was registered at Dordi Rural Municipality of Lamjung district in Western Nepal, according to Sanjib Gurung (Pinky), president of Blue Diamond Society, an organization working for the rights and welfare of the sexual minorities in Nepal.

Way back in 2007, Nepal's Supreme Court had allowed same-sex marriage. Even the Constitution of Nepal, adopted in 2015, explicitly states that there can be no discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

On June 27, 2023, the Supreme Court issued an interim order to legalise same-sex marriage in Nepal in a writ petition filed by multiple people, including Gurung. But despite the historic order to temporarily register same-sex marriage, Kathmandu District Court four months ago rejected the move citing a lack of necessary laws.

Surendra Pandey and Maya's marriage application was rejected at that time.

"It's a great pleasure to learn about this, it is a great achievement for us, the third gender community of Nepal," Pinky told PTI. "This is the first case not only in Nepal but also in the whole of South Asia, and we welcome the decision."

Trump embraces Jan 6 rioters

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump has embraced the rioters who attacked the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 as patriots, vowed to pardon a large portion of them if he wins a second term and even collaborated on a song with a group of jailed defendants.

In his election interference case in Washington, his lawyers are taking a different tack. Despite losing a bid to strike from the indictment references to that day's violence, defence attorneys have made clear their strategy involves distancing the former president from the horde of rioters, whom they describe as "independent actors at the Capitol." At the same time, special counsel Jack Smith's team has

signalled it will make the case that Trump is responsible for the chaos that unfolded, and point to Trump's continued support of the January 6 defendants to help establish his criminal intent. The competing arguments highlight the extent to which the riot serves as an inescapable backdrop in a landmark trial set to begin on March 4 in a courthouse just blocks away from the Capitol. It also reflects a point of separation between Trump and his legal team in the case accusing the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination of conspiring to overturn his 2020 election loss. While Trump's glorification of January 6 defendants may boost him politically as he vies to retake the White House in 2024, his lawyers'

approach lays bare a concern that arguments linking him to the rioters could harm him in front of a jury. Though Trump is not charged with inciting the riot, any success he hopes to have at trial may turn in part on his defence team's ability to neutralise, or at least minimise, the ghoulish images of the violence that prosecutors cite as a natural extension of the former president's repeated lies about a stolen election.

Much may depend as well on the evidence permitted by US District Judge Tanya Chutkan. Trump's lawyers have signalled they will try to block prosecutors from presenting at trial evidence related to the actions of the rioters, who sent lawmakers running into hiding.

‘US work visa renewal programme launch in December, Indians to benefit most’

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

In a move that will benefit a significantly large number of Indian technology professionals, the US is set to begin a pilot programme for domestic renewal of certain categories of H-1B visas in December.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

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

China. The pilot programme which will be limited to 20,000 participants initially comes months after the White House announced the plan during the state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June.

In an interview with PTI, Julie Stuft, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Visa Services, said, "In India, the demand (for US visas) is still very high. The wait time of six, eight and 12 months is not what we need and (it is) not indicative of how we view India."

"We want to make sure that Indian travellers can get appointments as quickly as possible. One way we are doing that

is through the domestic visa renewal programme, which is focused very much on India. We are piloting that," she said.

Over a period of three months, beginning in December, the State Department will be issuing 20,000 visas to foreign nationals who are already inside the country. "We will do 20,000 in the first group. The vast majority of those will be Indian nationals living in the US and we will expand as it goes on."

"Because Indians are the largest skilled group of workers in the United States, we hope that India will benefit quite a bit from this programme and it will

prevent people from having to travel back to India or anywhere for a visa appointment to get their visa renewed. It will allow our missions in India to concentrate on new applicants," Stuft said. While the State Department has been working on launching such a programme on a pilot basis for quite some time now, it was formally announced during Modi's visit.

The plan, which was mentioned in the joint statement and announced by Modi during his address to the Indian diaspora at the Ronald Reagan Centre, has been cheered and welcomed by the Indian community in the US.

Ailing Pope Francis says, he’s not well

AP ■ VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis presided at his weekly audience with the public at the Vatican, but he said that he's still unwell and asked an aide to read his remarks for him on Wednesday, a day after cancelling an overseas trip. Francis, who will turn 87 on December 17 and had part of one lung removed as a young man, coughed near the end of the hourlong audience in a Vatican auditorium as he made some final comments, then stood up from his chair on the stage to give his blessing. With a soft voice, barely above a whisper, Francis told the public that "since I am not well," his reading of his speech wouldn't sound "pretty." He then hand-



ed the printed speech to the aide.

But Francis did speak at the end of the audience, voicing his contentment over the truce in fighting between Israel and Hamas, and saying he hopes it continues "so that all the hostages are released and access necessary to permit humanitarian aid" to reach Gaza is provided. "They lack bread, water,

the people are suffering," Francis said. On Tuesday, the Vatican announced that doctors had asked the pope, who has a lung inflammation causing breathing problems, to skip a three-day trip to a UN climate conference, known as COP28, in Dubai.

The trip would have begun on Friday and have seen the pontiff return to Rome on Sunday. The Holy See's announcement of the cancelled trip also said that his medical condition had improved, but noted that the pope had the flu and "inflammation of the respiratory airways."

The pontiff, who has made caring for the environment a priority of his papacy, wants in some way to participate in the discussions in the United Arab

Emirates, according to the Holy See. It was unclear if Francis might read his address to the climate conference by videoconference or take part in some other form.

The Vatican said the pope had acquiesced to the doctors' request "with great regret."

Toward the end of Wednesday's audience, circus performers came on stage to entertain the pope with an acrobatic act. Francis looked amused as he watched the performers, including acrobats and a juggler.

He posed with the group for a photo. "I want to say thanks for this moment of joy," Francis said, adding that the circus expresses the human dimension of "simple joy," and asking the audience to applaud.

Jetliner, without fossil fuel, makes trans-Atlantic crossing

AP ■ LONDON

The first commercial airliner to cross the Atlantic on a purely high-fat, low-emissions fuel flew on Tuesday from London to New York in a step toward achieving what supporters called "jet zero."

The Virgin Atlantic Boeing 787 flight was powered without using fossil fuels, relying on so-called sustainable aviation fuel made up largely of tallow and other waste fats. "The world will always assume something can be done, until you do it," said Virgin founder Richard Branson, who was aboard the flight with others including corporate and government officials, engineers and journalists. The UK Transport Department, which provided 1



million pounds (USD 1.27 million) to plan and operate the flight, called the test a "huge step towards jet zero" to make air travel more environmentally friendly, though large hurdles remain in making the fuel widely available.

While governments have

long talked about decarbonizing air travel, the transition has been moving at the pace of a dirigible.

Sustainable aviation fuel, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions by about 70 per cent, is the best near-term way for the international aviation

industry to achieve its net zero target by 2050, the US Energy Department said, though it called the goal aspirational.

The US Government Accountability Office said that while domestic production of the fuel had jumped from about 2 million gallons in 2016 to 15.8 million gallons in 2022, it accounted for less than 0.1 per cent of the jet fuel used by major US airlines. It was also a drop in the bucket compared to the goal of producing 1 billion gallons a year set in 2018 by the Federal Aviation Administration. The White House, meanwhile, set a goal two years ago to produce 3 billion gallons of sustainable aviation fuel per year by 2030 and 100 per cent of domestic commercial jet fuel by 2050.

Imran not to contest for PTI chairman’s post

Nominates close aide to lead party

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan will not contest the organisational polls of his party and has instead nominated his close aide Gohar Khan for the post of Pakis-tan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman to lead the party in the upcoming general elections, a top leader said on Wednesday.

Barrister Ali Zafar said that Chairman Imran Khan would not be contesting intra-party polls scheduled for December 2 due to his legal problems, hence Barrister Gohar Khan had been nominated for the slot of the party chairmanship in a temporary arrangement. Imran Khan had been convicted in the Toshakhana case.

His statement comes a day after confusion erupted with-in Imran Khan’s party after it dismissed a statement by one of its own senior leaders, who claimed that the jailed leader would not contest for the chairman’s post in the upcoming intra-party polls.

“Imran Khan was, is and will continue to be the chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf... I will carry out my responsibility till Khan returns,” said Gohar Khan, a member of PTI chairman’s legal team.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is set to conduct intra-party elections within the 20-day time frame set by the election commission to retain the ‘bat’ as its electoral symbol, ahead of general elections scheduled to be held on February 8.The party was asked by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) last week to hold polls within 20 days or it would be deprived of its election symbol of cricket bat. Zafar said that the party discussed the issue of election with Imran Khan who said that he did not want to give the ECP any “excuse” for not giv-



ing the party the bat symbol in the upcoming general elections.

“The public is with us. We will win the elections when they happen. I want to take part in the general election. Intra-party polls hold no meaning for me. I want the Toshakhana case to be decided as soon as possible. When it is decided, I will contest intra-party polls as chairman,” Zafar quoted Imran Khan as saying. The ex-premier also directed the party to hold intra-party polls while making it clear that he would not contest intra-party polls until the Toshakhana case was decided.

“With his (Gohar Khan) nomination, you will realise that this is not a minus-one formula, that this is not a coup. He is Imran Khan sahib’s own nominee and is appropriate for the temporary arrangement we are doing,” Zafar said. He also said that the new chairman would be a “caretaker chairman” and work on a temporary basis until Khan was re-elected as head of the party after his acquittal. He further said that PTI and Imran Khan were synonymous.

“PTI is Imran Khan and Imran Khan is PTI. PTI is nothing without Imran Khan. It doesn’t matter if you’re the chairman on paper. The leader, and the continuous leader, is Imran Khan sahib,” he added.

Khan has been in jail since Aug 5 when he was arrested

after a conviction in the Toshakhana case. He was also disqualified by the ECP in the same case for failing to disclose the proceeds from the sale of gifts he got from the state repository.

The party’s Core Committee on Monday gave formal approval to hold the intra-party polls within the time frame of 20 days given by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). If the party does not follow the orders, it will lose its bat symbol.

Khan, being a former iconic international cricketer, is considered synonymous with the (cricket) bat.

This will be a huge development for the party as the country moves towards general elections, set to take place in February.

Meanwhile, Sessions court judge Muhammad Mureed Abbas on Wednesday rejected Imran Khan’s request for acquittal in the intimidation of a female judge case.

The former prime minister was booked under terrorism charges in August 2022 at Margalla police station in the federal capital for his remarks at a rally in F9 Park where he warned Additional District and Sessions Judge Zeba Chaudhry and police high-ups of dire consequences for their “biased” attitude towards his party. However, after personally visiting Judge Zeba at an Islamabad lower court to apologise last year, Imran Khan had submitted an affidavit to the Islamabad High Court, assuring that he would not repeat actions that would hurt the dignity of the judiciary.

The IHC, after disagreements between Justice Babar Sattar and Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, quashed the terrorism charges against him and the case was transferred from an anti-terrorism court to a sessions court in December 2022.

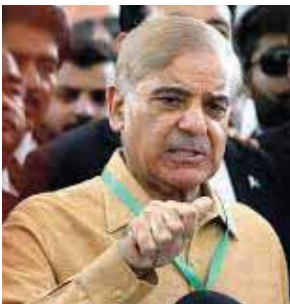
May 9 violence was an attempt to topple Army Chief : Ex-Pak PM

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan’s former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday that the unprecedented violence, including the attacks on key military installations, following ex-premier Imran Khan’s arrest in May was an attempt to topple Army Chief Gen Asim Munir. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party President made the remarks while addressing reporters after his appearance in the accountability court here in a corruption case.

Taking an indirect dig at the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party chief Khan, who is in jail in the cipher case, for trying to topple the incumbent army chief through a planned conspiracy on May 9, Sharif said the facilitators of the unprecedented attacks are the “state enemies”.

“On May 9, an attempt was made to topple the army chief. No one...be it (a) democracy or



dictatorship tolerates treason. Thereby, the action is being taken against the May 9 culprits,” Sharif, 72, said.

Sharif further said no concession should be given to the facilitators of May 9 as they were “state enemies”.

Thousands of PTI supporters stormed military and government installations across the country following Khan’s arrest in an alleged corruption case in early May this year. Subsequently, police arrested over 10,000 party leaders and workers, who have been languishing in jail since then.

The military also took

action against more than a dozen high-ranking officers for being part of the conspiracy to oust Gen Munir.

“Three officers, including a lieutenant-general, have been removed from their jobs. Strict disciplinary proceedings against officers, including three major generals and seven brigadiers, have been completed in connection with the May 9 incidents,” the military had said earlier. The PML-N party has declared Khan the mastermind of the attacks on military installations and demanded that the “PTI leadership involved in this crime should not be allowed to contest upcoming general elections on February 8, 2024.”

General elections in cash-strapped Pakistan general elections are scheduled to be held on February 8. The military establishment has already carved out two parties — Istehkham-i-Pakistan Party (IPP) and PTI-Parliamentarian — from the PTI. It is also not allowing Khan’s party to partic-

ipate in any political activity. In a fresh round of action against the PTI party, police in Punjab alone arrested over 500 of its workers in connection with attacks on state buildings.

The PTI Core Committee has strongly condemned the state’s coercive tactics and reprisal actions against the party workers and leaders that continued even after the announcement of the poll date.

“The nation will not accept rigged polls held in such an uneven electoral field and with state interference,” it said. Khan is currently detained at the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi in the cipher case in which he is accused of making public the content of a diplomatic cable from Pakistan’s embassy in Washington in March, 2022. The former-cricketer-turned-politician was ousted through a vote of no-confidence in April 2022. More than 150 cases have been registered against him since his ouster from power.

Pak court acquits Nawaz Sharif in Avenfield case

Islamabad (PTI): In a major relief to Nawaz Sharif ahead of elections, a top Pakistani court on Wednesday acquitted the former prime minister in the Avenfield corruption case while his acquittal in another case was maintained after an appeal by the anti-graft body challenging it was withdrawn.

A two-member Islamabad High Court bench comprising Chief Justice Ameer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb announced the verdict after hearing the appeal filed by Sharif against his conviction in the Avenfield corruption case in which he was sentenced to 10 years in jail in 2018.

In the same year, the 73-year-old Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo was acquitted by a trial court in the Flagship corruption case but the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the anti-corruption watchdog, had challenged his acquittal in the IHC.

Xi goes on inspection tour of Shanghai

PTI ■ BEIJING/SHANGHAI

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday inspected key commercial establishments in Shanghai, home to some of the biggest foreign firms, as he attempted to shore up business confidence in China amid dwindling inflow of foreign investment and the movement of supply chains out of the country.

This is his first visit to Shanghai since the city was hit hard by COVID-19 leading to the harsh two-month-long lockdown in 2022 during which its 25 million population was confined to their dwellings under Xi’s ‘zero COVID’ policy. He visited the gleaming eastern Chinese city last in 2021.

Xi, 70, in the last two days, inspected the Shanghai Futures Exchange, an exhibition on Shanghai’s sci-tech innovations, and a government-subsidised

rental housing community, learning about the city’s efforts in strengthening its competitiveness as an international financial centre, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. His visit was aimed at building the city into an international sci-tech innovation centre, and constructing government-subsidised rental housing projects, it said.

Shanghai is the home for top foreign firms like Tesla, General Motors, Walt Disney and the 10-year-old Shanghai Free-Trade Zone (FTZ), a testing ground for China’s economic reforms.

Since, 2021, the world’s second-largest economy has been hit hard by recurring and prolonged lockdowns of various cities which exacerbated China’s economic woes, denting the business confidence including its once-booming property sector. Xi’s first visit came close on his successful visit to the US this

month where he had a “strategic and historic” summit with US President Joe Biden during which the two leaders agreed to tone down their harsh policies and rhetoric against each other.

While their summit sparked speculation of a subtle shift in US-China power dynamics, Xi in his address to the APEC CEO summit in San Francisco pledged to tear down foreign investment barriers and promised to invite foreign capital with “heart-warming” measures.

“We will strive to tear down the barriers to the flow of innovation factors, deepen reform of the digital economy, and promote free and orderly flow of data in compliance with the law,” he said in his speech aimed at raising sagging business confidence in China leading to shifting of supply chains.

Ahead of his inspections in

Shanghai, Xi ordered greater protection for international firms’ rights and intellectual property in a bid to address concerns of foreign companies over crackdowns and raids on multinationals and favourable treatment for domestic competitors.

On Tuesday official media quoted him telling a high-powered political bureau of the ruling Communist Party of China that id China must ensure “comprehensive, open and transparent” legal treatment of foreign entities.

The country’s legal system should “strengthen protection of intellectual property rights,” he said, as well as “safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of foreign enterprises,” China must “create a market-oriented, legal and international first-class business environment,” Xi said.

“It is important to raise the awareness of legal compliance,

including guiding Chinese citizens and enterprises to abide by local laws and regulations and customs when going abroad, and that they should apply laws and rules to safeguard their legitimate rights and interests” official media quoted Xi as saying.

Observers say China’s current economic woes were largely attributed to Xi’s emphasis more on security issues denting business confidence.

“In the past five years, however, security concerns have taken top priority,” Post columnist Wang Xiangwei said.

Last year, in his keynote speech at the 20th Communist Party national congress, Xi spoke of pursuing development as the government’s central task but devoted far more time to national security and social stability, Wang wrote in his column in the Post on Monday.

Russian court extends detention of Wall Street Journal reporter

AP ■ MOSCOW

A court in Moscow has extended the detention of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, arrested on espionage charges, until January 30, Russian news agencies reported. The hearing took place behind closed doors on Tuesday because authorities say details of the criminal case against the American journalist are classified.

Gershkovich, 32, was detained in March while on a reporting trip to the Russian city of Yekaterinburg, about 2,000 kilometres (1,200 miles) east of Moscow. Russia’s Federal Security Service alleged that the reporter, “acting on the instructions of the American side, collected information constituting a state secret about the activities of one of the enterprises of the Russian military-industrial complex.”

Gershkovich and the Journal deny the allegations, and the US government has declared him to be wrongfully detained. Russian authorities haven’t detailed any evidence to support the espionage charges. Gershkovich is the first American reporter to be charged with espionage in Russia since 1986, when Nicholas Daniloff, a Moscow correspondent for US News and World Report, was arrested by the KGB. He is being held at Moscow’s Lefortovo prison, notorious for its harsh conditions.

Analysts have pointed out that Moscow may be using jailed Americans as bargaining chips after US-Russian tensions soared when Russia sent troops into Ukraine. At least 20 US citizens arrested in Russia in recent years — including WNBA star Brittney Griner — have been exchanged for Russians jailed in the US.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has said it will consider a swap for Gershkovich only after a verdict in his trial. In Russia, espionage trials can last for more than a year.



From third left, Latvia’s Foreign Minister Krisjanis Karins, United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg pose during a meeting of the NATO Ukraine Council in NATO foreign ministers session at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Wednesday. NATO foreign ministers conclude a two-day meeting on Wednesday, in which they discussed Ukraine, tensions in the Western Balkans and preparations for NATO’s 75th anniversary next year. AP/PTI

‘At least 40 civilians killed by al-Qaida-linked rebels’

Abuja (AP): At least 40 civilians were killed last weekend by al-Qaida-linked rebels trying to take control of a besieged town in Burkina Faso’s hard-hit northern region, the United Nations’ rights office said, calling the attack a war crime. In one of the largest clashes in recent years in the West African nation under threat from fighters linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, a large number of fighters tried to take control of Djibo near Mali’s border.

The town, located 210 kilometres (130 miles) from the capital, Ouagadougou, has been under blockade by rebels for more than a year, often struggling to provide essential services. The militants in the latest attack, which happened on Sunday, also wounded 42 people and set fire to three camps for internally displaced people, U.N. Human Rights Office spokesperson Seif Magango said in a statement on Tuesday that blamed the attack on JNIM, an umbrella coalition of armed groups aligned with al-Qaida. “Deliberately targeting civilians

or individuals not taking direct part in hostilities constitutes a war crime,” the U.N. department said, citing reports from its workers on the ground. The Associated Press couldn’t reach witnesses or survivors in the area, which has frequent internet cuts and where the military government is known to crack down on civil society.

State-run RTB Television ran images — which The Associated Press couldn’t verify — that showed large groups of people riding motorcycles as they appeared to flee aerial bombardment. “Attacks on civilians are inexcusable and must stop, and those responsible must be held to account following thorough, impartial and independent investigations by the authorities,” the UN statement added. Around half of Burkina Faso’s territory remains outside of government control. The landlocked country has been ravaged by jihadi attacks. Fighters have killed thousands and displaced more than 2 million people, further threatening the stability of the country that had two coups last year.

Kuwait’s ruling emir, 86, facing health issues stable now

Dubai (AP): The ruling emir of oil-rich Kuwait was hospitalised on Wednesday “due to an emergency health problem” but later reported to be in stable condition, renewing the longstanding concerns over his health since he became ruler in 2020. The report by the state-run KUNA news agency did not elaborate on the problem faced by 86-year-old Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah. However, Sheikh Nawaf has handed over power several times during his rule to his deputy while facing medical checks and other issues. Given Sheikh Nawaf’s age, the emergency renews concerns about his health. State-run news previously reported that he travelled to the United States for unspecified medical checks in March 2021.

The health of Kuwait’s leaders remains a sensitive matter in the tiny Mideast nation bordering Iraq and Saudi Arabia which has seen internal power struggles behind palace doors.

NZ leader plans to ban cellphone use in schools

Wellington (AP): New Zealand’s new prime minister plans to ban cellphone use in schools and repeal tobacco controls in the ambitious agenda he released on Wednesday for his first 100 days in office.

Christopher Luxon outlined 49 actions he said his conservative government intended to take over the next three months. The first new law he planned to pass would narrow the central bank’s mandate to focus purely on keeping inflation in check, he said. That would change the Reserve Bank’s current dual focus on low inflation and high employment.

Many of the actions in the 100-day plan involve repealing initiatives from the previous liberal government, which had been in office for six years. The new efforts include a plan to double renewable energy production.

Luxon said many of the measures were aimed at improving the economy. Many of the plans are proving contentious, including the

one to repeal tobacco restrictions approved last year by the previous government. Those included requirements for low nicotine levels in cigarettes, fewer retailers and a lifetime ban for youth.

Luxon’s government has said that ending the tobacco restrictions — which were not due to take effect until next year — would bring in more tax dollars, although Luxon said Wednesday it wasn’t a case of trading health for money.

“We are sticking with the status quo,” Luxon said. “We are going to continue to drive smoking rates down across New Zealand under our government.”

Critics say the plan is a setback for public health and a win for the tobacco industry.

Two education initiatives — one requiring schools to teach an hour of reading, writing and math each day, and another banning cellphone use — reflect a sentiment among some voters that schools have strayed from their primary mission.

AP ■ BANGKOK

Myanmar and China are conducting naval drills together as the military government in the Southeast Asian nation loses ground in its north-east border region to a coalition of militias that also has strong ties to Beijing. State-run Myanmar Alinn newspaper said Wednesday that three Chinese vessels were anchored in Yangon, Myanmar’s largest city, and that officials from both nations met Tuesday to discuss the maritime security exercises.

The Chinese vessels — the destroyer Zibo, frigate Jing Zhou and supply ship Qian Dao Hu — carry about 700 sailors and arrived at the Myanmar port Monday. The report didn’t give more details on the drills. Myanmar’s military seized power

from an elected government in 2021 and since has been in armed conflict with pro-democracy forces and ethnic militias.

The visit of the Chinese vessels comes during an upsurge in violence on Myanmar’s border with China by the Three Brotherhood Alliance, a group of militias that launched a coordinated offensive against the ruling military on Oct. 27.

China is Myanmar’s biggest trading partner and maintains good relations with the ruling generals. The groups in the alliance also have good relations with China and have vowed to protect foreign investments such as Chinese-backed projects in territory they control. The alliance has claimed widespread victories including four border crossings in the northern part of Shan state, and the military gov-

ernment acknowledged soon after fighting began that it had lost three towns.

The alliance’s offensive has energized the nationwide armed struggle to overthrow the military regime that was installed after the army seized power, and fighting has spread to many parts of the country.

On Wednesday, the resistance forces in the northwestern Chin state seized a small town in Matupi township bordering India, according to Salai Danny, a spokesperson of the Chinland Defense Force-Zotung militia group. Beijing has called for a cease-fire and has said the warring parties should try and resolve their differences through dialogue. It has not, however, used its influence with the militia groups to pressure them to put an end to the fighting.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that my client Devender Sharma is in process to purchase the Freehold Industrial Back side portion of Plot no. 10/3 area measuring 200 sq. yds. in Block-6 out of total area measuring 438 sq. yds. Situated at Industrial area Lawrence Road Delhi (aviation loan from Primal Capital & Housing Finance Ltd.) from Anil Kumar Gupta, who inherited the same vide Will dated 08.05.2011 executed by Sh. Prem Chand (Decd. no. 21389) read with MCO Mutation dated 21.03.2013 All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise howsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned.

Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate)
Unit No. FF-2, First floor, Mahalaxmi Metro Tower
Sec-4, Vasant Vihar, GZ., U.P., Mob. 9810085351

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mrs. Jyoti P. Seth W/o. Mr. P.V. Seth, the owner of ONE FLAT AT GROUND FLOOR, UP TO EXTENT OF CEILING LEVEL, MEASURING AREA 40 SQ. YARDS, A PART OF PROPERTY NO. 3/102, OUT OF KHARSA NO. 24, SITUATED IN THE ASAOI OF LAITA PARK, LAXMI NAGAR, IN THE AREA OF VILLAGE: SHAKARPUR KHAS, ILLAQA: SHAHDARA, DELHI-110092, vide Registered General Power of Attorney Dated 24.07.1998 Sr. No. 44273 No. 04, Document No. 44273 Executed By Mrs. Kiran Sharma W/o. Mr. Prilam Sharma, General Power of Attorney dated 24.07.1998 Sr. No. 44273 All Persons are hereby informed that MR. VIKAS KUMAR SINGH & MRS. NIKKI KUMARI mortgaging the said property with SBI India Credit Company Limited (Formerly Fullerton India Credit Company Limited) General public hereby informed that if anybody has any charge/interest/in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the date hereof.

Mrs. Prashant Lata, Advocate
SS Associates (Law Firm)
FF 18, Lotus Pond Plaza, Vaidhyanagar, Indraprastha, Ghazabad 201014
E-mail: sgssociates@gmail.com, Ph: 7814172794, 9130082337

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences
Sadiq Road, Faridkot -151203
Ph.01639-256232, 256236

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items/services upto 21.12.2023

- 1) External painting including preparation of concrete surface (North face) of GGS Hospital, Faridkot
- 2) Special Repair of Outer face of Academic Block (Center of Excellence) Building of BFUHS, Faridkot
- 3) Replacement of Fallen puff sheets and false ceiling of Auditorium of SINPMIS, Badal
- 4) Construction of waiting shed for patients in open area between OPD Block & X-Ray Block at GGS Medical Hospital, Faridkot
- 5) Up gradation of cooling of AC system of Lecture Theater No.3 (by providing 22 ton ductable AC with plenium) of GGS Medical College, Faridkot
- 6) Operation & Maintenance (O & M) of 22 KLD Capacity E.T.P installed at Nursing College & Civil Hospital at Jalandhar for two years
- 7) Repair & overhauling of 12 person (Magne ECE) lift with AMC of 4 years after one year guarantee period installed at GGS Medical College, Faridkot.

E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items upto 27.12.2023

- 1) Supply and installation of Green Laser Machine
- 2) Procurement of Leadfree Coat Aprons with attached Thyroid Shield for GGS Medical Hospital, Faridkot
- 3) Procurement of 4 KLUHD LED smart 85/98", Projector and IT equipments
- 4) Procurement of 4 KLUHD LED smart 85/98", Projector and IT equipments
- 5) Procurement of UTM Firewall
- 6) Procurement of Compatible Cartridges
- 6) Supply of Printer, Scanner and MFP
- 7) Disposal of E-Waste (Electronic Waste)
- 8) Hiring Agency to provide Services to conduct Computer Based Tests (CBT)

Terms and conditions can be downloaded from <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. The tenders will be accepted in E-Tender mode only. Bidder can also download tender notification and document from the University website i.e. www.bfuhs.ac.in

Registrar

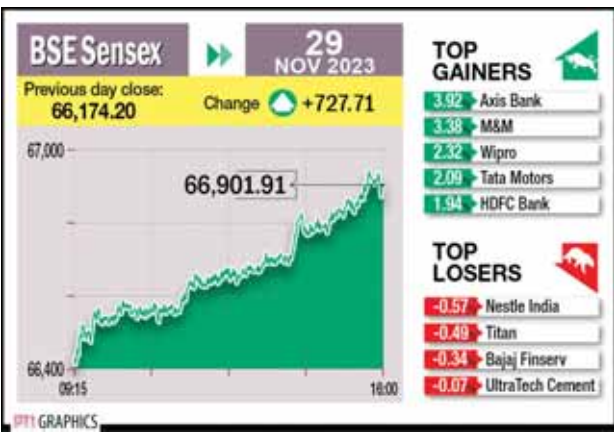
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Sensex jumps 727 pts on foreign fund inflows

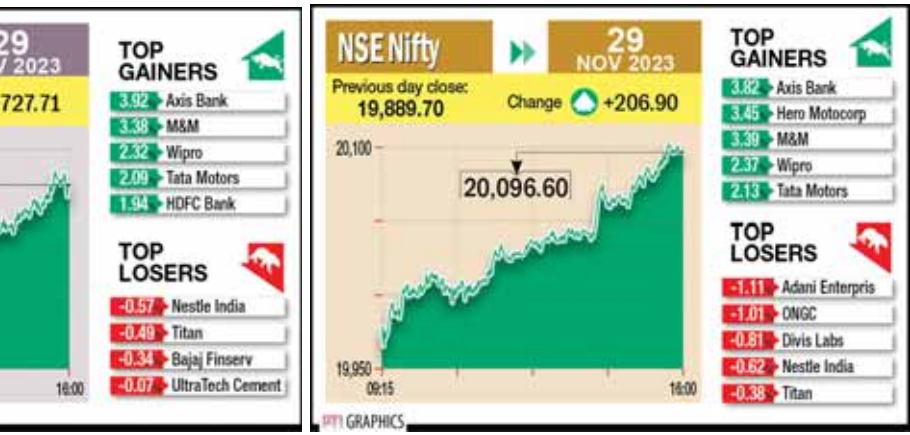
Mcap of BSE listed firms hits \$4-trn milestone

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex rallied 727 points and Nifty closed above the 20,000 mark on Wednesday driven by buying in heavyweight HDFC Bank, Axis Bank ICICI and TCS on expectations of more foreign fund inflows. In a remarkable day for Indian equities, the combined market valuation of all listed companies on the BSE reached the USD 4-trillion milestone for the first time on Wednesday. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 727.71 points or 1.10 per cent to settle at 66,901.91 with 26 of its components ending in the green and four in the red. The index started the day on a positive note and later zoomed 772.08 points or



1.16 per cent to a high of 66,946.28. The broader Nifty climbed 206.90 points or 1.04 per cent to reclaim the 20,000- mark after a gap of over two months. It ended at 20,096.60. Among the Sensex firms, Axis Bank rose the most by 3.92 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra surged by 3.38 per cent, Wipro by 2.32 per cent, Tata Motors by 2.09 per cent, HDFC Bank by 1.94 per cent and Tech Mahindra by 1.51 per cent.



ICICI Bank, JSW Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HCL Technologies and Bharti Airtel were also among major gainers. Nestle, Titan, Bajaj Finserv and UltraTech Cement were the laggards. The combined market valuation of all listed companies on BSE reached the USD 4-trillion milestone, mirroring an optimistic trend in equities. It took just 2.5 years to hit the USD 4-trillion landmark after

the market capitalisation of BSE listed companies touched the USD 3-trillion mark on May 24, 2021. "The market saw incredible upward momentum today, Nifty surpassing the 20,000 mark, driven by strong listing gains of ongoing IPOs and dovish statements from US Fed officials, intensifying expectations for early rate cuts. This was demonstrated by the rise in mid & small caps and drop in US bond yields

and dollar index. "Ease in yield is attracting foreign funds to emerging markets," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 0.78 per cent and the smallcap index climbed 0.40 per cent. Among the indices, bankex jumped 1.67 per cent, auto rallied 1.57 per cent, IT (1.33 per cent), financial services (1.28 per cent), teck (1.20 per cent),

oil & gas (0.99 per cent) and capital goods (0.89 per cent). Consumer durables and realty were the laggards. Raising hopes of more foreign fund inflows, market reports stated that the US-based Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board has announced plans to transition to a new MSCI Index which could lead to more than USD 3 billion of inflows into Indian equities. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. European markets were trading mostly with gains. The US markets ended marginally up on Tuesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 783.82 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.54 per cent to USD 82.12 a barrel. The BSE benchmark climbed 204.16 points or 0.31 per cent to settle at 66,174.20 on Tuesday. The Nifty gained 95 points or 0.48 per cent to 19,889.70.

Second quarter GDP numbers likely to be good: Eco Affairs Secy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian economy is showing momentum and the growth rate in the second quarter (July-September) is likely to be good, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said on Wednesday. The GDP numbers for the second quarter are scheduled to be released on Thursday. The economy grew at 7.8 per cent in the first quarter (April-June) of the current financial year. "India economy showed good momentum in the second quarter. The second quarter numbers should be good," Seth told reporters on the sidelines of a national workshop on 'Leveraging private finance for urban infrastructure developments -- Learnings from G20 Infrastructure Working Group'. He further said that the fiscal deficit target of 5.9 per cent for the current financial year was feasible despite additional



outgo towards food subsidy. "We are confident of meeting fiscal deficit target this year despite the government raising food subsidy for the next five years," Seth said. The Budget 2023-24 proposes to bring down the fiscal deficit to 5.9 per cent of the GDP from 6.4 per cent in the previous financial year. The government proposes to further bring down the fiscal deficit to less than 4.5 per cent of the GDP by 2025-26.

Birla Sun Life collects ₹800 cr from transport & logistics fund NFO



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC Ltd on Wednesday said it has collected nearly Rs 800 crore through its transport and logistics scheme during the new fund offering (NFO) period. The asset management company mobilised the amount from its thematic fund -- Aditya Birla Sun Life Transport and Logistics Fund -- during the NFO period from October 27 to November 10. The fund reopened for subscription on November 21. The open-ended equity oriented thematic fund received a huge response from 53,777 investors and has garnered a total of Rs 798.89 crore, the company said in a statement. "This fund is a unique offering that captures the growth potential of the transportation and

logistics sector, which is a key driver of the Indian economy. The fund aims to provide long-term capital appreciation by investing in companies that are well-positioned to benefit from the structural changes and emerging trends in the sector," A Balasubramanian, Managing Director and CEO at Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC, said. The company said that the transportation and logistics theme is vibrant and fast-growing and the theme has robust growth drivers on both the demand and supply side. The transportation theme includes sectors such as automobiles and auto ancillary, while the logistics theme includes sectors like ports, warehousing/supply chain, e-commerce and allied sectors. These sectors common to both themes would be shipping, railways, infrastructure and airlines.

UltraTech Cement acquires cement grinding assets of Burnpur Cement for ₹169.79 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aditya Birla group firm UltraTech Cement Ltd on Wednesday said it has acquired the cement grinding assets of Burnpur Cement Ltd in Jharkhand for Rs 169.79 crore. The company has acquired

0.54 mtpa cement grinding assets of Burnpur Cement Ltd, located at Patratu in Jharkhand, UltraTech Cement said in a regulatory filing. "The acquisition has been carried out at a consideration of Rs 169.79 crore in terms of the provisions of the Securitisation and



Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002," it added. This investment marks the company's entry in Jharkhand, the filing said, adding the company's capacity in India

now stands at 133 mtpa. Last year state-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) had put up for sale the account of loss-making Burnpur Cement and invited bids from Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) to recover loans outstanding of over Rs 50 crore.

Hiranandani says no IPO plans in 2024

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Hiranandani Group does not have any plans for an Initial Public Offering in 2024, and may look at hitting the capital markets in 2025, a top company official said on Wednesday. Niranjana Hiranandani, the Founder and Managing Director of the city-based group, said internal accruals are sufficient to take care of business requirements at present and all projects being undertaken do not require any funding support. "I have no plans at present... (there is) no need for capital today. But let us see. I haven't decided anything in that direction, but never (say) no. Not (in) 2024, may be 2025," Hiranandani told PTI, replying to a specific query on the company's IPO plans. A slew of its peers from the city, including Rustumjee and Lodha Group (MacroTech Developers), have listed over the last few years. The group announced an expansion into the consul-

tancy services space on Wednesday, wherein it will offer a slew of services, including liasoning, design and marketing, which spread out over the entire lifespan of a realty project, to clients. Hiranandani said the idea is to offer the services on an "a la carte" basis, wherein the client can choose the kind of help the entity needs. The group will charge 12-20 per cent of the cost as its fees, depending on the complexity of work it does, he said. The newly launched service christened 'Eleva' will work across new developments, brownfield expansions, slum rehabilitation and building redevelopment, Hiranandani said, adding that 85 per cent of the people working in the vertical will be its existing staff, while the rest will be junior-level staff who will be hired. He exuded confidence of breaking even in the new business in a year. He said poor execution of projects in Mumbai is a real issue, and pointed out that over 500 projects are stuck



due to some shortcoming or the other. The group will be selective in the project it chooses to work with, Hiranandani said, adding that it will not work

with large-scale projects like the Adani Group's Dharavi project and restrict itself to smaller projects. He said Dharavi accounts for only 10 per cent of the slums

in the city, while the 90 per cent will continue to exist even if the Adani-led projects fructify. It is possible to do away with all the slum structures in the city in 5-6 years, Hiranandani said, adding that he is preparing a plan on the same, which will be submitted to the PM under the aegis of an industry lobby grouping. Asked about his son Darshan virtually admitting to bribing lawmaker Mohua Moitra to ask Parliamentary questions, Hiranandani refused to comment. Hiranandani said interest rate cut and a new version of Prime Minister's Awas Yojana, which does away with the Rs 45 lakh ceiling for a property to classify as affordable, can help prop-up sagging sales of affordable housing. Hiranandani said in his career spanning over four decades, he has never seen a decline in sales of low-cost housing. However, he added that mid-range, premium, and luxury segments have seen impressive growth in the recent past.



Govt invites fresh bids from asset valuers of IDBI Bank

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday issued a fresh RFP for the appointment of asset valuer for strategic sale-bound IDBI Bank. The last date for submitting bids by asset valuer is January 5, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) said while floating the Request For Proposal (RFP). The DIPAM had last week cancelled the bid process for the appointment of an asset valuer for IDBI Bank on low bidder interest. A fresh RFP would be invited soon after a review of some of the bid criteria to enable better interest from bidders, an official had said. The asset valuer has to be registered either with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India, or Sebi, or the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). The bidder is required to have an annual turnover of over Rs 1 crore in the previous three fiscal years.

BUSINESS BRIEF

NFL LEADS AGRI DRONE DEMONSTRATIONS DURING VIKSIT BHARAT YATRA
Punjab: NFL is undertaking number of agriculture drone demonstrations of Nano and Water Soluble Fertilizers in Punjab for farmers during the ongoing Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra. Recently, Secretary (Fertilizers) Rajat Kumar Mishra participated in one of the Drone Demonstrations of Nano Urea Spray on crops in Village Manakpur Kallar in presence of CMD NFL, U Saravanan.

ECOZEN HELPS FARMERS WITH SMART SOLAR PUMP CONTROLLERS

Haryana: Farmers in Haryana now getting India's first 4G-enabled smart solar-powered pump controller, known as the Ecotron, available through Ecozen Solutions under PM KUSUM Yojana with a 75 per cent subsidy. A key player in cleantech, Ecozen specialises in developing climate-smart technology solutions that help farmers improve in farm yield, reduce waste and increase farm earnings.

India, S Korea in Asia Pacific to see heightened real estate investment activities: Colliers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



16th Finance Commission New Delhi, Nov 29 (PTI) The government has cleared the Terms of Reference of the 16th Finance Commission to suggest the ratio for devolution of taxes between the Centre and states and also review financing disaster management initiatives, for five years beginning April 1, 2026. The commission would submit its report for the five-year period (2026-27 to 2030-31) to the President by October 31, 2025, an official statement said. Besides tax devolution and states' revenue augmentation

measures, the commission would review the present arrangements for financing disaster management initiatives with reference to the funds constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. "The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the Terms of Reference for the Sixteenth Finance Commission. The 16th Finance Commission's recommendations, upon acceptance by the government, would cover a period of five years commencing April 1, 2026," the statement said.

REL board has no power to reject open offer, says Burman family

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Burman family, which is blocked in a battle with the management of Religare Enterprises Ltd (REL) for takeover of the company said that the board of the NBFC does not have the "power or authority" to reject their open offer to pick up controlling stake. "It only has the power to recommend the Open Offer to the shareholders," the Burman family spokesperson said in a statement. It is a separate matter, that the shareholders have already seen the governance lapses in REL and whether the directors can be said to be discharging their duties correctly, it said, adding, it is for the shareholders to decide whether to tender the shares in the open offer, or stay invested. "In fact, the board issued a press release dated September 25, 2023 welcoming our investment in REL. The Open Offer price is calculated as per the formula provided in the SEBI Takeover Regulations. As per this formula, the calculation comes to around Rs 221," it said. The open offer price of Rs 235, is at a premium to that price. "Keeping the overall share-

holder interest in mind, we will move towards closing the transaction expeditiously working with all the regulators. Given our credentials, an overwhelming majority of the shareholders are supportive of the proposed transaction and we remain confident that under our guidance, REL's performance would see significant uptrends," it said. The statement comes after Hamid Ahmed, an independent director at Religare Enterprises and CEO of Hamdard Laboratories, has criticised the timing of the Burman family's open offer to acquire more shares in the financial services company. Ahmed emphasised that the board has unanimously rejected the offer, citing its inferior merits and a proposal to replace both board members and management. Entities controlled by the Burman family -- promoters of FMCG major Dabur -- have written to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) and stock exchanges that REL Chairperson Rashmi Saluja sold a portion of her personal holdings in Religare Enterprises Ltd a day after meeting a representative of the Burmans on September 20.

Govt clears terms of reference of 16th Finance Commission

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has cleared the Terms of Reference of the 16th Finance Commission to suggest the ratio for devolution of taxes between the Centre and states and also review financing disaster management initiatives, for five years beginning April 1, 2026. The commission would submit its report for the five-year period (2026-27 to 2030-31) to the President by October 31, 2025, an official statement said. Besides tax devolution and states' revenue augmentation measures, the commission would review the present arrangements for financing disaster management initiatives with reference to the

funds constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the Terms of Reference for the Sixteenth Finance Commission. The 16th Finance Commission's recommendations, upon acceptance by the government, would cover a period of five years commencing April 1, 2026," the statement said. The Cabinet meeting was held on Tuesday. Names of the chairperson and members of 16th Finance Commission would be finalised soon, an official said. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for 16th Finance Commission will be notified in due course.

Malabar Gold launches 335th global store

New Delhi: Malabar Gold & Diamonds has made history as the first Indian jewellery retailer to open in Canada with their new store in Mississauga, at Heartland Town Centre within the Greater Toronto Area. With this, the brand marks its extensive brand presence, with 335 stores spread across the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman,

KSA, Bahrain, Singapore, Malaysia, the USA, the UK, Canada, and India. "The opening of our first store in Canada brings me immense pride and joy, marking a significant milestone for us as the first Indian international jewellery brand to begin operations in Canada," said Malabar Group Chairman MP Ahammed.

Hooda, Kiran win at Syed Modi International

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

India's Kidambi Srikanth bowed out with a straight-game loss in the opening round but young Unnati Hooda shocked compatriot Aakarshi Kashyap to make it to the second round of the Syed Modi International badminton tournament here on Wednesday. Former world no. 1 Srikanth, a 2021 World championships silver medallist, lost 21-23 8-21 to Korea's Chia Hao Lee, continuing his dismal run in international circuit this season. The 16-year-old Unnati, who is touted as one of the finest talents in women's singles, rallied her way to a stunning 15-21 21-19 21-18 win over Kashyap in a 77-minute Round of 32 clash of the BWF Super 300 tournament. The young shuttler from Rohtak will next face Japan's former world champion Nozomi Okuhara, who prevailed 18-21 21-17 21-10 over another Indian Malvika Bansod in another match. Anupama Upadhyaya, Ashmita Chaliha also progressed in the women's singles.



While Anupama defeated Amalie Schulz of Denmark 14-21 21-15 21-9, Ashmita got rid of Polina Buhrova of Ukraine 21-15 21-15 in another match. In men's singles, Orleans Masters winner Priyanshu Rajawat, Denmark Masters winner Kiran George and Sathish Kumar Karunakaran entered the second round with fine victories in men's singles competition. Priyanshu beat Kazakhstan's Dmitriy Panarin 21-17 21-19, while Kiran saw off Chirag Sen -- Lakshya sen's brother -- 21-16 14-21 21-13 and Sathish got past Chinese Taipei's Huang Yu Kai. Priyanshu will face Sathish in an all-Indian clash, while Kiran meets Chia. Sameer Verma, however, went down fighting 9-21 21-17 17-21 to Wang Tzu Wei of Chinese Taipei. In doubles, Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto notched up a 21-8 21-9 win over compatriot Samriddhi Singh and Sonali Singh in the first round. They will face another all-Indian pair -- Rutaparna Panda and Swetaparna Panda -- in the round of 16.



Tiger gets motivation from Nadal

PTI ■ NASSAU (BAHAMAS)

Golf great Tiger Woods is making a much-awaited comeback with the Hero World Challenge this week and he is both curious and excited to see how his ageing and injury battered body could tackle the task. The 15-time major winner will be teeing off for the first time since withdrawing from the Masters after the first two rounds in April. The American had a subtalar fusion surgery on his right ankle two weeks after his withdrawal to deal with the arthritis caused by injuries suffered in a major car accident in 2021. The 47-year-old, who has been playing professional golf for more than 25 years, still loves to compete and has arrived at Albany with an aim to win the tournament he hosts. "I love competing. I love playing. I miss being out here with the guys ... And the overall banter," Woods said at the media interaction while sitting alongside Hero MotoCorp executive chairman Pawan Munjal. "What drives me is that I love to compete. There will come a point in time, I haven't come around to it fully yet, where I won't be able to win again ... When it comes, I will walk away," he said. When asked if he can win again, Woods said: "absolutely." Woods has chosen this tournament as his comeback event for the third time, considering it acts as a springboard for the following PGA Tour season. He is targeting competing in one tournament a month. On walking the course over four days, Woods sounded confident of lasting the distance. "I feel it is a poor decision and it's hugely frustrating for us as you know how little time there is left in the game," Howe said. "There is nothing we can do about it now." Newcastle must now win its home game against last-place AC Milan on Dec. 13 and hope PSG fails to win at Dortmund. The second-place team advances to the Champions League round of 16 and the third-place team goes to the Europa League knockout playoffs.

I have not done this in a while," said the sporting royalty. Woods was also expectedly asked about the proposed merger between PGA Tour and Saudi-backed Liv Golf, the framework for which was announced in June. As a new member on the PGA Tour Policy Board, Woods' opinion on the subject is of even more significance. He is frustrated at the slowness of the process but was optimistic that the December 31 deadline could be met. "I'm pleased at the process and how it's evolved. I am also frustrated by some of the slowness and the governance change that we want to have happen. "And December 31st is coming up very quickly, so there's the timetable there that we would like to implement some of these changes that have not taken place. "The guys, all the player directors have spent so many hours and worked tireless hours to make sure that we have the best deal for all the players that are involved, the entire PGA Tour," said Woods, who was not pleased at all about the players not being consulted before the proposed merger announcement. Nadal is extraordinary Tennis superstar and his friend Rafael Nadal has visited the Albany Golf Course in the past to watch Woods play. Nadal too is on a comeback trail and Woods can only get an extra dose of motivation seeing his friend's steely resolve. "Well, I think what Rafa, what he's done is extraordinary. I mean, he won the Australian Open on a broken foot. The guy's beyond tough and beyond competitive. "He knows that Father Time is here. Every athlete faces it. Although some sports it happens faster than others, and unfortunately just like every sport, you get aged out. "I don't want to see him go. I never wanted to see Federer go, but that's what happened. We should all enjoy watching him compete and watching him play and what he's meant to the game, what he's meant to all of us, just to see the passion of how he plays and why he plays."

Manish overcomes top seed Orlov



PTI ■ KALABURAGI (KARNATAKA)

Manish Sureshkumar scripted the first upset victory of the ITF Kalaburagi Open when he ousted the top seed Vladyslav Orlov in the first round of the USD 25,000 prize money event, here on Wednesday. The 24-year-old played amazing shots to take the first set 6-3 and was leading 2-0 before his Ukrainian rival threw in the towel citing a shoulder injury, which seemed more out of frustration than being in pain. Qualifier Rishi Reddy become the second player from Karnataka to enter the last 16 stage as he battled fatigue and won against Parth Aggarwal 6-4, 7-5. Meanwhile, the seeded players sailed into the pre-quarterfinals without breaking much sweat. The fourth seeded Siddharth Rawat - the highest ranked Indian left in the fray - overcame Taisei Ichikawa from Japan 6-3, 6-4 while fifth seed Ramkumar Ramanathan, who is just back from lifting the ITF 25K title in Mumbai for his second win in as many months, blanked qualifier Ajay Malik 6-0, 6-0 in just 40 minutes. Sixth seed Rishab Agarwal faced some resistance from wild card entrant Jagmeet Singh before overcoming 6-4, 3-6, 6-4. The top seeded pair of Purav Raja and Ramkumar were knocked out of the doubles competition by the duo of Sai Karteek Reddy Ganta and Kabir Hans, who won in straight sets 7-5, 6-3 to enter the quarterfinals. This was the fifth time that the 24-year-old Manish and Orlov were meeting, with each having won twice. The player from Chennai raced to a 4-0 lead courtesy two breaks in the second and fourth. However, the visitor, who was once ranked as low as 45th on the ITF rankings, showed signs of recovery by breaking Manish's serve in the fifth game and held his serve to reduce the margin. Both the players gave a fine example of themselves, especially Manish, who, on many occasions, foiled his opponent's attempt to attack the net which irritated Orlov, who lost his cool and his serve in the eighth game and eventually lost the first set 3-6. In the second set, the Indian broke his opponent's serve in very first game and pocketed the second after which Orlov quit the match. "It's a great start, beating the top seed. I knew his game as we have played before. I grew in confidence during the first few games. My aim was to keep the ball in the court and I managed to do it," said Manish.

Ganemat, Anantjeet win maiden national titles

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ganemat Sekhon and Anantjeet Singh Naruka, arguably India's number one women's and men's skeet shooters at present, added another feather to their cap by winning maiden individual senior national titles here on Wednesday.

Competing at the 66th National Shooting Championship Competitions for shotgun shooters, Punjab's Ganemat and Rajasthan's Anantjeet took contrasting paths towards the same result. Ganemat shot a below-par 116

in qualification and had to come through a five-way shoot-off for four final qualifying places, before shooting down 56 targets to win the 60-shot final. Qualifiers leader Zahra Deesawala was second with 55 hits while Sanjana Sood was third with 44.

In men's skeet, Anantjeet shot at a different level, registering a pillar to post victory. He topped the qualifiers with a 123 out of 125. The next best in the field was 121. In the six-man final, he gunned down 58 out of 60 targets to leave silver-winning Muneek Battula

well behind on 55. Bhavtegh Gill won bronze hitting 45 out of the first 50 targets. Earlier this year, Ganemat won two medals including a gold and silver in ISSF World Cups while Anantjeet won an Asian Games silver in men's skeet at Hangzhou.

Guardiola walks off smiling as City stays perfect

AP ■ ROME



On a night of unconvincing performances from Paris Saint-Germain and AC Milan, Pep Guardiola walked off smiling following a comeback victory for Manchester City in the Champions League. Phil Foden inspired a second-half comeback as City beat Leipzig 3-2 on Tuesday to take first place in Group G and extend its perfect record to five wins in five matches. It's the seventh straight season that City has won its group. The defending champions trailed 2-0 at halftime but Foden scored one goal and helped to create two more to turn the match around and Guardiola had a smirk on his face when he shook hands with Leipzig counterpart Marco Rose after the final whistle. "We had to be relaxed as possible, and we reacted really well," Guardiola said. "We are first in the group and I am very satisfied for the reaction at the end. The team runs and fights and has spirit." Kylian Mbappé's penalty deep into stoppage time salvaged a point for PSG in a 1-1 draw with an injury-depleted but tenacious Newcastle team. In the tight Group F, Borussia Dortmund advanced with a 3-1 victory at Milan, a semifinalist last season. Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and Lazio also advanced. Portuguese duo João Félix and João Cancelo each scored as Barcelona defeated Porto 2-1 to return to the knockout phase after consecutive group-stage eliminations. It will be the first time since Lionel Messi left the club that Barcelona will be playing in the round of 16.

on course to pull off another unlikely win to follow the 4-1 victory over the same opposition last month. That was until Ousmane Dembélé flicked the ball up in the fifth minute of stoppage time and it bounced off Tino Livramento's chest and onto his arm. Referee Szymon Marciniak gave a penalty after watching the incident on video review and Mbappé blasted the spot-kick past goalkeeper Nick Pope. At the San Siro, Marco Reus gave Dortmund an early lead from the spot after Olivier Giroud had a penalty of his own saved for Milan. Although Samuel Chukwueze leveled at the end of the first half, goals from Jamie Bynoe-Gittens and substitute Karim Adeyemi gave the visitors the win they needed to book their spot in the last 16. Dortmund leads with 10 points, followed by PSG (7), Newcastle (5) and Milan (5). PSG, Newcastle and Milan are all still in contention and Dortmund is still fighting to win the group ahead of the last round with Dortmund hosting PSG and Newcastle hosting Milan.

GROUP G In Manchester - where both teams had already advanced - Foden set up Erling Haaland for a goal in the 54th and equalized in the 70th. He then played a part in the buildup for substitute Julian Alvarez's winner in the 87th as City preserved an unbeaten home record in the Champions League that dates back to 2018. Lois Openda scored for Leipzig in the 13th and 33rd, but City responded like champions after the break, with Foden at the heart of the comeback. Swiss club Young Boys secured third place in the group with a 2-0 win over Red Star Belgrade. City leads with a full 15 points, followed by Leipzig (9), Young Boys (4) and Red Star (1).

VAR official removed from Champions League game

AP ■ GENEVA



A video review official has been removed from his Champions League game on Wednesday, one day after having a key role in a disputed decision to award Paris Saint-Germain a stoppage-time penalty for handball against Newcastle which contradicted UEFA's own advice to referees. The VAR specialist from Poland, Tomasz Kwiatkowski, is no longer listed to work at the Real Sociedad-Salzburg game and has been replaced by a German match official. In Paris on Tuesday, Kylian Mbappé scored in the eighth minute of stoppage time to salvage a 1-1 draw after a ball struck Newcastle defender Tino Livramento in the chest and then deflected off his arm, and a penalty was awarded by Polish referee Szymon Marciniak following a VAR review. Marciniak refereed the Champions League final last season and the 2022 World Cup final with Kwiatkowski in his team. Marciniak initially allowed play to continue Tuesday but awarded the penalty after he was advised by his video assistant to review the incident on the pitchside monitor. However, a UEFA panel of storied coaches and former players said in April that "no handball offense should be called on a player if the ball is previously deflected from his own body, and, in particular, when the ball does not go towards the goal." The advice to be given to match officials this season was detailed by the panel, chaired by UEFA Chief of Football Zvonimir Boban, in an April 25 statement headlined "UEFA Football Board urges more clarity on handball rule."

"The handball rule, for example, will always be disputed, but we can make it more consistent and aligned with the game's true nature," Boban, the former Croatia and AC Milan great, said in April. UEFA declined to comment Wednesday, in line with a policy not to discuss field of play decisions. The current laws of the game allow for handballs to be penalized even if the contact was not intentional and after a deflection if a defender's arm is judged to be in an unnatural position. "But his hand is not in an unnatural position," Newcastle manager Eddie Howe said after the game, "(his hands) are down by his side, but he is in a running motion." The cross from Ousmane Dembélé that struck

Livramento was also going backward - and not towards goal. The penalty decision in the PSG game directly affected the standings in the tightly fought Group F, as it kept PSG two points clear of Newcastle in the second qualifying place for the round of 16 behind group leader Borussia Dortmund. "I feel it is a poor decision and it's hugely frustrating for us as you know how little time there is left in the game," Howe said. "There is nothing we can do about it now." Newcastle must now win its home game against last-place AC Milan on Dec. 13 and hope PSG fails to win at Dortmund. The second-place team advances to the Champions League round of 16 and the third-place team goes to the Europa League knockout playoffs.

Kalinga Super Cup to kick off on January 9

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



The Kalinga Super Cup, to be played at two venues in Odisha from January 9, will feature both the ISL and I-League teams with the winners being nominated to play in the AFC Champions League 2 Preliminary Stage. "The format of the tournament will consist of four groups of four teams each, who will play single-leg matches amongst themselves. The group winners will qualify for the semifinals followed

by the final to be played on January 28," said All India Football Federation in a statement on Wednesday. The I-League teams will play the qualifiers to get into the group stage of the Kalinga Super Cup where four slots have been reserved for them in the group stage. "The Champions of Kalinga Super Cup will be nominated to play in the ACL 2 Preliminary Stage of AFC 2023-24 season," said the AIFF. AIFF president Kalyan

Chaubey said, "As per the decision we took earlier, the annual Super Cup tournament will now be organised in a bigger and broader perspective. "The tournament will now be known as Kalinga Super Cup and will be played in Odisha in January 2024. "This is a positive development for Indian domestic football. I am confident the Kalinga Super Cup will be a huge hit both in terms of organisation and spectator interest," he added.

India Women's A pip England Women's A by 3 runs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India Women's A staged a late inspirational comeback to pip England Women's A side by a mere three runs in the first T20 game of their three-match series here on Wednesday.

Chasing 135 for win, England looked in complete control riding on a brilliant 70-run stand for the fourth wicket between vice-captain Hollie Armitage (52) and wicket-keeper-batter Seren Smale (31), but India fought back with a cluster of wickets to clinch a narrow win.

Kashvee Gautam (2/23) struck twice to dismiss Smale and Issy Wong (2) in the 18th over to open the door back for the Indians, who pulled off a thrilling win at the Wankhede Stadium.

With 13 needed off the final over, Shreyanka Patil (2/26) gave away five extras (wide) on the first ball but India prevailed eventually by three runs.

India Women's A were guilty of not putting up enough runs on the board and making plenty of mistakes in the field.



Armitage, who top-scored in the game with 52 off 41 balls (3x4s, 1x6s), made the most of a lifeline as Disha Kasat spilled a regulation catch at cover off Prakashika Naik (1/28).

Another opportunity to break the stand was missed in the 14th over when Indian 'keeper Uma Chetry did not collect the ball to break the stumps, anticipating a direct hit.

The two England batters unleashed powerful hits while constantly pressuring the Indian fielders with brisk running between the wickets.

Patil got India A their first breakthrough when she cleaned up Grace Scrivens (7) in the second over.

Mannat Kashyap (1/21) got rid of Mady Villiers (20; 17 balls, 4x4s) and Naik removed Freya Kemp (1) in the eighth over.

Earlier, after electing to bat, India made 134/7 in 20 overs. Kasat batted well to make 25 from 32 balls, hitting three fours.

On a slow deck, India Women's A could not really push on with their scoring rate, with England

seamers doing well.

Skipper Charlie Dean was the pick among the bowlers with 4-0-19-2 while Kemp finished with figures of 4-0-30-2.

Wong (1/13), Lauren Filer (1/34) and Kirstie Gordon (1/26) chipped in with a wicket each.

Player of the match Patil admitted India made errors in the field.

"It is a big platform for all of us. It happens, (but) how we come back is what matters," Patil told the media after the match.

Patil said India were confident that the bowlers would pull it off.

"I would say maybe (India were) 10-15 runs short but then we were looking (at a total) around 130-140 because the wicket was slightly slower and we knew our bowlers could get the job done," she said.

Brief scores: India Women's A 134/7 in 20 overs (Vrinda Dinesh 22, Disha Kasat 25, Gnanananda Divya 22; Charlie Dean 2/19) beat England Women's A 131/8 in 20 overs (Hollie Armitage 52, Seren Smale 31; Kashvee Gautam 2/23, Shreyanka Patil 2/26) by 3 runs.

Shane is Paarl Royals head coach for SA20



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

SA20 franchise Paarl Royals on Wednesday announced the appointment of former New Zealand pacer Shane Bond as the new head coach for the 2024 season of the South African league.

Bond replaces former South African all-rounder JP Duminy in the position, with the latter currently serving the national team.

Bond, a former New Zealand fast bowling sensation, brings an impressive array of credentials and passion for the game.

His illustrious career, both as a player and a coach across New Zealand's national team and multiple T20 franchises, has earned him the reputation of making the best players even better.

His tactical acumen, knowledge of the game and his ability to inspire and nurture emerging talent have been widely recognized in the cricketing community which have also reflected in the Kiwi pacer helping the Mumbai Indians franchise lift four titles in nine seasons in the IPL.

He was recently also roped in by Paarl Royals' sister franchise, Rajasthan Royals,

in the dual role of assistant coach and fast bowling coach for the IPL.

Royals' Director of Cricket, Kumar Sangakkara, welcomed the 48-year-old for his debut season in the SA20.

"Apart from being a fierce competitor during his playing days, Shane (Bond) has also excelled in his various coaching roles across teams and leagues, and we are delighted to have him lead the coaching team at Paarl Royals.

"The inaugural season provided us with a lot of learnings after our semi-final finish, and we believe that his experience, commitment and vision align well with our goals for the upcoming season," Sangakkara said.

Bond shared his thoughts on the opportunity, saying, "It is a new challenge for me personally to be heading to the SA20, but what gives me the belief is the strong squad we have been able to assemble for the upcoming season.

"We have so much experience and immense potential in our ranks, which makes me excited to join the group in January and work towards achieving our target of lifting the trophy."

With so much dew even 14 runs per over would have been chased: Gaikwad

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The dew laden condition was the primary reason for Indian bowling attack's poor show in the third T20 International, where the home team failed to defend an imposing total of 222, vice-captain and opener Ruturaj Gaikwad said after the defeat.

Indian bowlers leaked 80 runs in the last 5 overs while defending 222 as Glenn Maxwell's 48-ball-104 not out, included 23 runs off the final over from Prasidh Krishna, who was smashed for four boundaries and a six.

For the record, Krishna's 0/68 in 4 overs is the worst T20I figure by any Indian bowler.

"I don't think so it's a concern because it's almost like you are bowling with a wet ball. And it's really tough on them," Gaikwad told reporters during the post-match press conference.

"In these kinds of conditions, 12

runs per over or even 13 or 14 runs per over is gettable, even while we are chasing. In the first game, how easily we managed to chase 210," he cited an example.

"So I think, I don't think so definitely there's not a concern at all. It's just that the conditions are slightly tougher for them, and we have to accept and move on," Gaikwad said Maxwell's brutal innings and heavy dew proved to be home team's undoing.

Making his 100th T20I appearance, Maxwell slammed an unbeaten 104 off just 48 balls as Australia massed 45 runs in the last two overs to seal a last-ball thriller to make it 1-2 in the five-match series.

"I think even Maxi batted really well. To win from a situation where they needed 100 from seven and a half hours and then 50 from 3 overs, I think it was critical innings for him," Gaikwad said.

"And I think from our side, our bowlers tried executing whatever they had in their control.

Playing under great leaders will help me: Gill

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India opener Shubman Gill feels the experience of playing under "great leaders" in the India setup will help him a lot when he leads Gujarat Titans in the upcoming season of the IPL.

Gill has played under the likes of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma and played a vital role in India reaching the World Cup final at home recently.

Gill was recently announced skipper of 2022 IPL champions Gujarat Titans after their captain for two seasons, Hardik Pandya, was traded back to five-time winners Mumbai Indians.

It will be Gill's maiden outing as captain of an IPL side, having begun his journey in the competition in 2018 with Kolkata Knight Riders before heading to GT in 2022.

"We all know captainship comes with a lot of things, and commitment is one of

them. Discipline is one of them. Hard work is one of them. Loyalty is one of them," said Gill in a video posted by the franchise on social media.

"And, because, I think I've played under great leaders and I've learned a lot from them, I think those learnings that I have had from their experience playing under them is gonna help me a lot in this IPL."

Gill added that there was no dearth of experienced players in Gujarat Titans, and he would get to learn a lot from leaders such as New Zealand's Kane Williamson and Afghanistan's Rashid Khan.

"We have great leaders in our team, be it Kane (Williamson) or be it Rashid (Khan) or be it (Mohammed) Shami, or even David (Miller), or even Wriddhi (Saha). So, I think it's gonna be great.

"And obviously, there are gonna be a lot of learnings



along the way, which would be my experience as a captain. And I see a lot of people mak-

ing great memories," he added.

As far as playing the leader-

BCCI extends Dravid's contract But tenure yet to be decided, Laxman to remain at NCA



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI on Wednesday extended the contract of Indian cricket team head coach Rahul Dravid in order to maintain continuity following the senior side's stupendous performance in the ODI World Cup where it won 10 games in a row before losing the final.

However, there was no mention of how long his new tenure would be in the press release issued by the BCCI.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India announces the extension of contracts for head coach Rahul Dravid and the support staff of Team India (senior men)," the sport's apex body said in a statement.

"The BCCI engaged in productive discussions with Dravid after the term of his contract ended following the recently-concluded World Cup and unanimously agreed to further the tenure," it added.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah said that Dravid will have "full backing" of the board, moving forward in his endeavour to win the ICC Trophy, which is missing from the cabinet for the last decade.

"Having won 10 consecutive games before the final, our World Cup campaign was nothing short of extraordinary, and the head coach (Dravid) deserves appreciation for setting up the right platform for the team to flourish.

"The head coach has our full backing, and we will provide him with all the support needed for sustained success at the international level," the BCCI secretary said in a statement.

"The last two years with Team India have been thoroughly memorable. Together, we have

witnessed the highs and lows, and throughout this journey, the support and camaraderie within the group have been phenomenal," Dravid said.

The PTI had on Tuesday reported that Dravid's contract would be renewed with the BCCI looking for continuity in the set-up helmed by the legendary cricketer over the last two years.

Dravid had replaced Ravi Shastri after the T20 World Cup in 2021, getting appointed for a two-year term which ended with the ODI World Cup.

Under Dravid, India also finished as runners-up in the last World Test Championship, losing to Australia in the final.



EAST COAST RAILWAY
e-TENDER FOR CATERING STALLS

No: G.129/Catg Stall/E-Tender/KUR/2023		Date : 16.11.2023		
Sir	Station Name/Location	Tender Notice No.	Reserve Price	EMD (₹)
1	BRHMAPUR (PF-01/VSKP end)	G-129-GMU-CATG-BAM-PF-1	7,31,000/- P.A & 38,01,200/- FOR 05 YEARS	1,90,100/-
2	BHUBANESWAR (PF-01/CTC end)	G-129-CATG-GMU-BBS-PF-1.1	14,96,500/- P.A & 77,81,800/- FOR 05 YEARS	3,89,100/-
3	BHUBANESWAR (PF-6/CTC end)	G-129-CATG-GMU-BBS-PF-6-LD	6,54,300/- P.A & 34,02,360/- FOR 05 YEARS	1,70,100/-
4	JAJPUR KEONJHAR ROAD (PF-2/3/KUR end)	G-129-CS-GMU-LADIES-JKR-1	2,11,509/- P.A & 10,99,847/- FOR 05 YEARS	55,000/-
5	JAJPUR KEONJHAR ROAD (PF-2/3/BHC end)	G-124-CATG-GMU-JKR-2	2,11,509/- P.A & 10,99,847/- FOR 05 YEARS	55,000/-
Category of Station : NSG-3(A) (for SI. No. 1), NSG-2(A-1) (for SI. No. 2 & 3) & NSG-4(A) (for SI. No. 4 & 5). Type of Unit : Catering Stall (for all SI. Nos). Category of Stall (GMU/SMU) : GMU (for SI. No. 1, 2 & 5) & GMU (Ladies) (for SI. No. 3 & 4). Size of Unit : 8'x6' (for all SI. Nos). Cost of Tender Form : 2,950/- (for SI. No. 1, 3, 4 & 5) & 5,900/- (for SI. No. 2).				
Tender Closing Date & Time : 15.12.2023 at 11:00 Hrs. (for all tenders). Note: Complete information including e-auction documents of the above e-tender is available in website http://www.treps.gov.in .				
PR-814/O/23-24		Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/Khurda Road		



Mahanadi Coalfields Limited
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)
Jagriti Vihar, Buri - 768020, Dist. - Sambalpur, Odisha
Ph. (EPABX) : 0663-2542461 to 469 Website : www.mahanadicoal.in

Notice
"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd. www.coalindia.in, respective subsidiary Company, (MCL, www.mahanadicoal.in), CIL e-procurement portal <https://coalindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in> In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <https://gem.gov.in>."



Office of The General Manager
Drainage, WATCO, Cuttack
At-Mahanadivihar, PO-Nayabazar, Cuttack-753004
email: ggdrainagectc@gmail.com

C-1954
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-PROCUREMENT
Invitation for Bids (IFB) No: GM-WATCO-Drainage-03/2023-24 dt: 28.11.2023

The General Manager, Drainage, WATCO, Cuttack on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in single cover system in online mode from eligible contractors for the works mentioned below:

1. No. of Works	: 2 No Works
2. Nature of work	: Construction of Building
3. Class of Contractor	: 'C' & 'B'
4. Paper Cost	: Rs 6000.00 + GST @18%
5. Date & Time of Availability of Bid Document in the Portal	: 11:00 hours of dt. 08.12.2023 to 17:00 hours of dt. 18.12.2023
6. Date and time of opening of Bid	: Dt. 19.12.2023 at 11:00 hours
7. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	: The General Manager, Drainage, WATCO, Cuttack Odisha. At: Mahanadi Vihar, PO: Nayabazar, Cuttack – 753004, email: pedrainagectc@gmail.com

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
All amendments, time extension, clarifications etc. will be uploaded in the website only. Bidders should regularly visit the above website to keep themselves updated.

General Manager
Drainage, WATCO, Cuttack

OIPR-13248/11/0004/2324



OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, MALKANGIRI
Odisha, Pin-764045, Ph. 06861-230244, e-Mail: eamalkangiri@gmail.com
Lt. No. 5490, Dev/2023
Dated:-24.11.23

e- NOTICE
BID IDENTIFICATION No. **ROMKG/06/2023-24**

The Executive Officer, Malkangiri Municipality, Malkangiri on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites for bidders of eligible class registered with any State Govt. and bidders of equivalent grade/ class registered with central Govt./ PSU / MES / Railways according to norm of e-procurement system in online mode for the work as per DTCN.

1. Name of the Work	: As per DTCN
2. Number of Work	: 36 Nos.
3. Estimated cost	: As per DTCN
4. Period of Completion	: As per DTCN
5. Date and Time of availability of Bid Document in the Portal	: From 10 hours of Dt. 27/11/2023 to 17 hours of Dt. 13/12/2023
6. Last date and time for receipt of Bid in the Portal	: 17 hours of Dt. 13/12/2023
7. The bid received online shall be opened on	: 11 hours of dt. 14/12/2023
8. Name and Address of the Officer inviting Bid:	: Executive Officer, Malkangiri Municipality.

Further details can be seen from the Procurement Portal: www.tendersodisha.gov.in

OIPR-13125/11/0021/2324

Executive Officer,
Malkangiri Municipality



B-1354
Office of the Superintending Engineer
Bhanjanagar (R&B) Division, Bhanjanagar.
(Phone/Fax: (06821) 241133 / E-mail: eebbsnbs@yahoo.in)

INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)
E-Procurement Bid Identification No. **S.E-BNJ-R&B- 26 / 2023-24.**

1. Name of work	: Building works
2. No. of works	: 02 Nos. Building works
3. No. of Covers	: Single Cover
4. Estimated cost	: Rs.9,51 lakhs to Rs.22.80 lakhs
5. Period of Completion	: 1wn Calendar Months & Three calendar Month respectively.
6. Date of time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From 12.00 Noon of dated 30.11.2023 to 5.00 PM of dated 06.12.2023.
7. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal	: Up to 5.00 PM. of dated 06.12.2023.
8. Date of opening of bid documents	: At 11.00 A.M. of 07.12.2023
9. Class of Contractor	: "D","C" & "B" Class Contractor
10. Name and address of officer inviting Bid	: Superintending Engineer, Bhanjanagar (R&B) Division, Bhanjanagar

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in. The Addendum / Corrigendum if any will be hosted in the website only.

OIPR-34015/11/0019/2324

Superintending Engineer
Bhanjanagar (R&B) Division