

How tattoo, stolen wireless set led police to Soumya killers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
A hand tattoo, a wireless set stolen from a policeman and CCTV footage helped Delhi Police crack the case of killing of IT professional Jigisha Ghosh and eventually led the investigators to the killers of TV journalist Soumya Vishwanathan, officials said on Wednesday. Ravi Kapoor, Amit Shukla and Baljeet Malik, who were arrested for murdering Ghosh in 2009, later confessed to their involvement in Vishwanathan's murder in 2008. A Delhi court on Wednesday convicted four persons — Kapoor, Shukla, Malik and Ajay

Kumar — of an organised crime syndicate for murder and other offences for the killing of Vishwanathan. The court also convicted fifth accused Ajay Sethi under section 411 (dishonestly receiving stolen property) and Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) provisions for conspiring to abet, aid or knowingly facilitate organised crime and for receiving the proceeds of organised crime. Following the confessional statements of the trio, the Delhi Police arrested Ajay Kumar and Ajay Sethi and booked all five for killing Vishwanathan in the



wee hours of September 30 in 2009 when she was returning home from work. Ghosh was looted and murdered on March 18, 2009. "The murder case of Jigisha was solved two-three days after her body was recovered from Suraj

Kund area in Faridabad. We had got the first lead from a CCTV footage where we found one of the accused was having a tattoo on his hand, while shopping using Jigisha's debit card. Another was carrying a wireless set and wearing a cap," Atul Kumar Verma who was the investigating officer of the case told PTI. Then the officers worked meticulously on Delhi Police's human intelligence network and soon, the police team reached the residence of Malik in Masoodpur. Kapoor and Shukla were arrested subsequently. Malik had his name inked on his hand while Kapoor used to

carry wireless set which he had snatched from a police officer. "They revealed that they kidnapped Jigisha from near her house in Vasant Vihar and later killed and dumped her body after looting her. They also did shopping using her debit cards," Verma said. Verma was leading a team of officials from Vasant Vihar police station. "We were a bit shocked when Ravi Kapoor himself revealed that they had committed the murder of another girl at Nelson Mandela Marg, which was not very far from Vasant Vihar," said Verma. He also said two other associates — Ajay Kumar and Ajay Sethi — were involved in

that murder. The then Deputy Commissioner of Police (South), HGS Dhaliwal, immediately set up another team of officers and appointed then ACP Bisham Singh to look into both the murder cases. Singh told PTI, "Since we had just confession of the accused for Soumya murder case, the major challenge before us was to collect forensic evidence as well." Detailing the night when Vishwanathan was killed, police said Kapoor drove a Maruti Wagon R car and Shukla sat next to him. Malik and Kumar occupied the rear seat. All of

them were drunk, the police said. "On September 30, a car zoomed past their vehicle. It was a Maruti Zen which Soumya was driving back to her home in Vasant Kunj. She was returning from TV Today's office then located at Videocon Tower in Karol Bagh," another officer, O P Thakur, who was among the investigators, said. On seeing a woman driver overtaking them and that she was alone, they raised the speed of their vehicle and came closer to her vehicle. First they tried to waylaid her, and when she did not stop her car, Kapoor opened fire at

Vishwanathan's vehicle. The bullet hit her in the temple leaving her dead on the spot. Vishwanathan's car stopped after ramming into a divider. "All the accused fled from the spot but 20 minutes later returned to see her condition. When they saw police personnel, they ran away," the officer said. "We are very satisfied today. The conviction has happened basically due to three reasons — weapon of offence which was recovered from the accused, the forensic sketch of the spot and the sequence of incident matched with the confession statement of the accused," Singh said.

New RRTS trains to be known as Namo Bharat

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The new Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) trains to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, will be known as 'Namo Bharat'. Modi will on October 20 launch the 17 km section of Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS, a rail-based high-speed high-frequency, regional commute transit system regional commute transit system connecting metropolitan and big cities, towns and urban nodes across the National Capital Region. Official sources have said that India's first RRTS train will be known as 'Namo Bharat'. The RRTS train will be flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 20. The corridor will be opened for passengers on October 21. The fare chart specifies that a one-way journey from Sahibabad to Duhai Depot station, India's first semi-high-speed regional rail service — RAPIDX — whose trains are equipped with hi-tech features and a number of passenger amenities, will cost ₹50 while the fare for the same route will

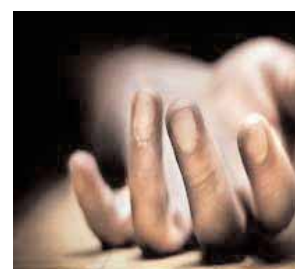


be ₹100 in a premium-class coach. The priority section, between Sahibabad and Duhai Depot, has five stations — Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Guldhar, Duhai and Duhai Depot. The segment from Duhai to Duhai Depot is a spur from the main corridor. According to officials, if a passenger enters from one station, say Sahibabad station and exits from the same station, then it will cost ₹20. Children having a height below 90 cm will be allowed to travel free, the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) said. Commuters can buy a paper QR code-based ticket, which can be generated via ticket vending machines (TVM) or bought from ticket

counters at the RAPIDX stations, officials said. Unified Payments Interface or UPI-enabled ticket vending machines have been installed to purchase paper QR code-based tickets and recharge the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC). Passengers can use bank notes, bank cards, National Common Mobility Cards and UPI to buy tickets from a TVM, they said. With the train service operational, the travel time between Sahibabad and Duhai Depot will be 12 minutes, which would usually take around 30-35 minutes by road. Built at a height of 26 metres, Ghaziabad station will be the highest among the stations on the Delhi-Meerut corridor. The new service will also ease the journey for those who travel every day to and from Delhi. The Ghaziabad station is seamlessly integrated with the Shaheed Sthal Metro station, on the Red Line of Delhi Metro, to enable commuters to comfortably move from one mode to another. A similar arrangement is being done across the entire stretch wherever there is a nearby Metro.

Man strangles wife after quarrel over her going out for work

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
A 52-year-old man strangled his wife to death in south Delhi's Ambedkar Nagar area following a quarrel over her going out for work. Their son told police that his parents had a fight on Tuesday night and when he came down from his first floor room after receiving a call from his father Ved Prakash, he found him dragging his mother's body from the bathroom, police said. On being questioned by his son Akash, Prakash confessed that



he had strangled Sushila (50) to death with a dupatta, police said. The son, along with his father, took the body to a hospital on Wednesday morning, they said.

Police said according to hospital authorities, she was dead before being brought to the medical facility. The matter was reported to police by hospital authorities, an official said and added that there were several injury marks on the woman's body, including that of strangulation. The official said "the son told us that he lived on the first floor of their house in Madangir, while his parents live on the ground floor", and that his father often got into arguments and fights with his mother

over her going out for work. Police said according to Akash, his mother had registered a domestic violence case with police against Prakash and it was being heard in the Saket District Court. But due to societal pressure, she withdrew the case at the time of his marriage, they said. Akash told police that "on Tuesday night, my father had fight with her as she had gone out for work" and around 6 am on Wednesday, "I got a phone call from my father". "When Akash reached at the

site (ground floor), he saw his mother being dragged from the bathroom by his father. He said it looked like his mother was unconscious. "When he questioned Prakash, he admitted that he had a fight with Sushila and strangled her to death with a dupatta and then kept the body in the bathroom," the official said. Later on Wednesday morning, the father and son took the body to the hospital. Subsequently, Prakash was arrested and sent to jail, police said.

Developmental works to be done in jailed Sisodia ward from MLA fund

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Repair of roads and pipes are being carried out in east Delhi's Patparganj using the MLA fund of jailed AAP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia following court approval of his request to use the money for his constituency's development. The former Deputy Chief Minister is in jail in connection with the Delhi excise policy scam case, which is being



probed by the Central Bureau Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate.

On August 22, a court had allowed an application moved by him to release money from his MLA fund for development works in his Patparganj constituency. Following the court's approval, letters have been sent to all relevant departments to ensure that development works in Patparganj start in time using the MLA fund (of Sisodia), said an official statement, which also stated the works requested by the senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader.

1,500 bike taxi drivers writes to LG, seek more time for e-conversion

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
A day after Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal approved a scheme for the regulation and licensing of aggregators providing passenger transport services and delivery service providers in the national capital, more than 1,500 bike taxi drivers have written to Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena demanding that they be given the same timeline for conversion to electric vehicles as their counterparts in delivery services. The scheme also paves the way for bike taxis and mandates that the aggregators should on board electric two-wheelers for passenger services. The file pertaining to the Delhi Motor Vehicle Aggregator and Delivery Service Provider Scheme 2023 has been submitted to the lieutenant governor's office, according to an official statement. According to the letter written by the drivers, "The scheme essentially states that only electric bike taxis would be allowed to run in Delhi and bike taxis of other fuel types would

become illegal to operate. By notifying the said scheme, the government would stop our only source of income that not only supports me but my entire family." The letter has also been sent to Kejriwal, BJP MP Gautam Gambhir and Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot. "This would be a very unfortunate decision as there may be a situation of mass unemployment in a scenario where inflation is already so high and surviving in a metro city has become difficult. For most of us, driving bike taxis is our only source of income to maintain a decent livelihood in these trying times. Even drivers who are dependent on both food delivery and bike taxis are bound to lose half of their income since food delivery is able to employ us only during meal hours," it added. While appreciating the Delhi government's intent to transition to electric vehicles and reduce pollution levels across the city, the drivers underlined that harsh measures like allowing only electric bike taxis to operate will take away their livelihood.

Clean Yamuna projects running behind time: Pollution body

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
In a recent report to the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) pointed out that several major projects aimed at cleaning the Yamuna river in Delhi are reported to be running behind schedule. The report highlights significant delays in projects undertaken by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and the Delhi

Development Authority (DDA) to reduce pollution in the river. The projects include the construction of new sewage treatment plants (STPs), rehabilitation of existing ones, trapping of drains, laying sewer lines in unauthorised colonies, desilting of trunk sewers and utilisation of treated wastewater. These initiatives are part of an NGT panel's "Action Plan to Rejuvenate Yamuna". According to the DPCC report, the work by the DDA to restore

the Yamuna floodplains, divided into several sections, has been delayed by six to 12 months. The report reveals that the construction of a new 124 million gallons per day (MGD) STP in Okhla has been delayed by nine months and it is now expected to be completed by March next year. Similarly, the construction of a 7 MGD STP in Sonia Vihar has been delayed by four months, with a new completion target

set for the end of 2023. The 22-kilometre stretch of the Yamuna between Wazirabad and Okhla, which represents less than two per cent of the river's total length, accounts for approximately 75 per cent of its pollution load. High levels of pollution in the river are attributed to untreated wastewater from unauthorised colonies and jhuggi-jhopri clusters, as well as the poor quality of treated wastewater discharged from STPs and

common effluent treatment plants. The Delhi Government has made a commitment to clean the Yamuna to bathing standards by February 2025. To meet these standards, the biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) should be less than three milligrams per litre and dissolved oxygen (DO) should be greater than five milligrams per litre. Currently, Delhi generates 792 MGD of sewage and 35 STPs

across the city can treat up to 667 MGD of sewage, utilising around 70 per cent of their capacity (550 MGD). Around 242 MGD of sewage directly enters the river. The data indicates that only 10 out of the 35 operational STPs in the capital meet the prescribed standards for wastewater (BOD and Total Suspended Solids less than 10 milligrams per litre), with the capacity to treat 150 million gallons of wastewater per day.

Minimum monthly wages for workers increased in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Lakhs of workers and employees working in Delhi are set to receive a big gift from the AAP Government as Labour Minister Raaj Kumar Anand on Thursday issued an order to increase the monthly wages of unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers of Delhi. Its benefit will also be given to the employees of the clerical and supervisor class. Delhi is the only state to maintain the highest minimum wage bracket for workers. "The Arvind Kejriwal Government has increased minimum monthly wages which includes non-matriculation, matriculation and graduate employees. These new rates are applicable from October one. The Labour Minister also directed to ensure payment to all workers and employees with the enhanced rate," the AAP government said in a statement. According to the new rate of minimum wage increased by the Delhi Government, the monthly wage of skilled



workers has been increased by ₹312 from ₹20,903 to ₹21,215. The monthly salary of semi-skilled workers has been increased by ₹286 from ₹18,993 to ₹19,279. On the other hand, there has been an increase of ₹260 in the monthly wages of unskilled Labourers from ₹17,234 to ₹17,494. Supervisors and clerical employees of Delhi will also benefit from the new rates of minimum wages issued by the Delhi Government. According to the new rates, the monthly salary of non-matric employees has been increased from ₹18,993 to ₹19,279 due to which their monthly salary has increased by ₹286. Similarly, the monthly salary of matriculation pass and non-graduate employees has been increased from ₹20,903 to ₹21,215 an increase of ₹312.

DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Government of India

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
Government of India

CONSERVING DELHI'S HERITAGE
PRESERVING HISTORY

UNVEILING OF RESTORED HERITAGE STRUCTURES
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Hon'ble Lt Governor of Delhi

Guest of Honour
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Minister of State for Culture, Govt. of India

in the August Presence of
Shri Ramesh Bidhuri
Member of Parliament, South Delhi

20th October 2023, 5:30 PM

Major attractions
Restoration of Metcalf's Boathouse, Guesthouse and Circular Monument & other Monuments
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Collateral damage

Palestinian humanitarian crisis worsens by the hour, though window of hope cracks open

Israel's retaliatory attack on Gaza has led to a humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by a particularly disturbing incident — the attack on a hospital. US President Joe Biden has expressed concern and called for restraint by Israel. The rocket attack on Gaza's overcrowded al-Ahli Hospital has been one of the most horrific developments in the ongoing war, and this single attack has claimed around 500 innocent lives who were already in need of medical treatment. The Hamas attributed the cringe-making incident to Israel, which has obviously refuted involvement. It has released a flurry of video, audio and other information that it said showed the blast was due to a missile misfire by Islamic Jihad, another militant group operating in Gaza. The Islamic Jihad has dismissed the claim. The fact that hundreds of civilians under treatment have died is simply not acceptable, no matter whose missile it was. It is a human crisis of the highest order. The US President has shown guts to caution Israel against giving in to



its "rage" and asked it to exercise restraint. This marks a significant departure from the unconditional support for Israel that the US has historically maintained and signals a shift towards a more balanced approach to the ongoing conflict. Biden, while on a trip to Israel, has announced a \$100 million humanitarian aid for Palestinians affected by the conflict in Gaza and West Bank as a goodwill gesture. For its part, the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that "limited humanitarian aid" would be allowed into Gaza from Egypt following a request from Biden; though the fact remains that Egypt and other Arab countries typically don't want to take in Palestinian

refugees. Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai has donated \$300k to Gaza. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is also in Israel to meet Prime Minister Netanyahu as well as the top leaders of a few neighbouring countries.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian crisis is worsening each passing day. Thousands of Palestinians have been killed or maimed, and countless homes, schools and hospitals have been destroyed. The UN has been actively involved in seeking a peaceful solution but it has no way of imposing a ceasefire. The Israel-Hamas conflict broke out suddenly on October 7 when the militant group controlling Palestine fired 5000-odd rockets on Israel, giving it a reason to respond with an attack on Gaza. Eventually, it became Israel vs Palestinian civilians, and the latter are being pounded for no fault of theirs. Their electricity, fuel, food and water supply, controlled by Israel, is cut off and Gaza wears the look of an open jail and a graveyard at the same time. The pressure is slowly but surely building on Israel for an early ceasefire and suspension of the ongoing hostilities. Israel is losing the perception war even outside the Arab world and it would now make sense for it to go for damage control rather than going ahead with its hawkish plans.

PICTALK



A community 'puja pandal' ahead of Durga Puja festival, in Prayagraj

Pusillanimity of Arab leadership

While the Arab states make a hue and cry about Israel's wrongdoings in Gaza, they themselves are not doing anything to help Palestinians in distress



BHOPIINDER SINGH

US Presidential aspirant, Nikki Haley has put the cat amongst the pigeons by asking some straight questions. She stated, "You're going to hear all those Arab countries vilify Israel for what's about to happen. You're going to hear all of them say, how dare you not do more for the Palestinian people?" and then posed bluntly, "But where are the Arab countries? Where are they? Where is Qatar? Where is Lebanon? Where is Jordan? Where is Egypt? Do you know we give Egypt over \$1,000,000,000 a year? Why aren't they opening the gates? Why aren't they taking the Palestinians? You know why? Because they know they can't vet them, and they don't want Hamas in their neighborhood. So why would Israel want them in their neighborhood?"

It is true, but for shedding insincere tears and making political gold out of the issue of Palestine, the Arab Sheikdoms have never done anything worthwhile for the Palestinians, now or before. It's the same curse which afflicted the Middle East when the Syrian-Iraqi refugee exodus took place in the aftermath of ISIL running over swathes — boatloads of refugees had risked the unsafe water-crossing into Europe but no boat or bus seemed to have moved towards the borders of the cash-flush Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates etc. Instead, Europe and its leadership was hauled up the coals when they started closing their borders, given their own socio-economic concerns and inability to take any further refugees. But the Arab leadership was quick, garrulous, and snarky to call out the insensitivity of the 'West' but did precious little to alleviate the sufferings of their own Arab brethren. Now, it seems to be a replay of the exact same double game today, when the Arab regimes are half-heartedly and conveniently pointing fingers at Tel Aviv following the brutal Hamas attack, after having walked a considerable distance with Israel, themselves. It was pursuant to the 'Abraham Accords' that had sought to officially normalise (so called 'secret talks' in parallel are the worst kept



secret) relations between Israel and Arab countries, ostensibly to 'solve' the protracted Israel-Palestine issue. Except that the Accord was virtually predicated on ignoring the Palestinians and their miserable conditions and participation in the same, as irrelevant. Assumption of Palestinian invisibility from those deliberations has come to haunt the region, now. Many Palestinians had not resigned to their proposed fate of slow death and forgetfulness, and sadly it metastasised into the Hamas attack.

The 'Abrahamic Accord' was eventually as ignoble and ineffectual as the peace talks between the Americans and Taliban, in Doha. Beyond countries like Egypt, Turkey and Jordan who have had diplomatic relations with Israel for long, United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Sudan, and Bahrain had rushed into signing deals with Israel — the emotions reserved for Palestinian suffering were conveniently and tellingly forgotten.

Now Bahrain was left issuing an embarrassingly platitudinous and mealy-mouthed statement urging, "the need for de-escalation among all parties to preserve the lives of people", Morocco's King Mohammed

VI expressed "deep concern" and the Emiratis called it a "serious and grave escalation". They are clearly caught between condemning either the Hamas action or the disproportionate Israeli revenge, as they have been party to the brewing secondment of the Palestinian cause. Nikki Haley only questioned the obvious. Importantly, the so-called siege of Gaza may not be practically true as there is a 12-kilometer-long border between Egypt and Gaza.

Public memory is short, but long before Donald Trump embarked on his infamous 'Wall' along the border with Mexico — Egypt along with US help had started a steel wall along the Egypt-Gaza barrier. Unsurprisingly today, the same border (Rafah crossing) remains sealed to refugees, food, medical aid and other humanitarian supplies, all of which the Egyptians could deploy to aid the beleaguered Palestinians, if they wanted to. History of the massacres of Palestinian refugees by countries like Jordan ('Black September' in 1970) or Lebanon (Sabra and Shatila massacres in 1982) etc., all point to the duplicity of Arabs towards Palestinians. Besides, the meekly contextual defense of the Hamas by

countries like Saudi Arabia also betrays an underlying concern feared by the Arab Sheikdoms — Hamas is essentially an offshoot of the 'Muslim Brotherhood' which gave sleepless nights to Arab countries during the 'Arab Spring'. Because it threatens the Arab regimes, Muslim Brotherhood is banned in authoritarian-monarchical regimes in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt etc.,

Beyond postures necessitated by having to pander to Ummah (Islamic Society) concerns and solidarity, the Arab Sheikdoms would not touch the Hamas with a bargepole. In the entire melee, it is the hapless Palestinians who stand to suffer the most, and to that extent, the Arab Sheikdoms are complicit for having run with the hare and hunted with the hound.

The entire plan to remodel the Middle East in line with the powers-that-be has been undone by those in whose name the peace was sought to be negotiated — except the Palestinians were ignored, even by their supposed own.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)



THE 'ABRAHAMIC ACCORD' WAS EVENTUALLY AS IGNOBLE AND INEFFECTUAL AS THE PEACE TALKS BETWEEN THE AMERICANS AND TALIBAN, IN DOHA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A SHIFT IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Sir—A political controversy has erupted following Sharad Pawar's criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for showing solidarity with Israel amid the war with Hamas militants. Assam CM Dr. Himanta Sarma countered Pawar's attack by making a jibe at the Nationalist Congress Party chief. Sarma suggested that Pawar might send his daughter, Supriya Sule, to Gaza to fight for the militant group. However, it is unclear why Sarma opposed Pawar's statement. India has been supporting innocent Palestinians, and Sharad Pawar highlighted the real issue by stating that former Indian prime ministers also stood firmly with Palestine. Pawar added, "The entire land belongs to Palestine, and Israel encroached on their land. Israel is an outsider, and the land originally belonged to Palestine." India's view on other countries has always been the same, but it seems to have changed after comments from the current PM and other political leaders, which have shattered our former perspective. We should always observe inclusivity in our country and strive for equal rights for every citizen.

Md. Mofidul Islam | Howrah

TRIBAL LIVES MATTER

Sir—It has been 122 years since Australia gained independence. However, even today, that country finds itself entangled with the Buckingham Palace of England, body and mind. The clearest evidence of this is that British King Charles III serves as the monarch and head of state of Australia. This situation has perpetuated a mentality reminiscent of the colonial era among the government and the white population. The consequence? The original tribal residents continue to be treated as second-class citizens. If Australian governments genuinely aimed to provide constitutional rights to the indigenous people, and if they truly desired proper representation in Parliament, the tribals would not be living in conditions resembling those from two centuries ago.



YAJULU MEDURY

Adapting to the future of work with NEP 2020

Artificial Intelligence powered technological tools have the potential to revolutionise education delivery and improve learning outcomes

The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 is a comprehensive reform aimed at reshaping pedagogy and establishing a world-class education system rooted in Indian values. This ambitious policy sets out to create a sustainable, inclusive, and knowledge-driven society by the year 2040. A fundamental aspect of NEP 2020 is the transformation of existing curricula and teaching methods across schools, as well as more than 1,000 universities and over 50,000 colleges and standalone educational institutions throughout India.

Current State of Education: The focal point in the current state of education in India is the students, who are the heart and soul of the higher education ecosystem. This encompasses the vast network of 42,000-plus colleges and over 11,500 standalone institutions, many of which operate in the private sector. The entire educational infrastructure, curriculum, and policies must revolve around enhancing the student's learning experiences and outcomes. It is crucial to establish a student-centric environment to



rekindle India's status as a global knowledge powerhouse and learning hub, as it once was. The emphasis should be on effectively catering to students' needs, individual preferences, and holistic development. This need for a student-centric approach is also recognised at the institutional level. Private universities in India are increasingly focusing on entrepreneurship, acknowledging the heightened competition arising from new educational facilities. In response, these institutions are taking various measures to expose students to entrepreneurship at all levels of study. They are introducing unique courses that support entrepreneurship, technology empowerment, and enhanced employability, going beyond traditional academic

formats. **Evolution of Skills:** The rapid emergence of technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, and automation has led to the evolution of skill sets at an unprecedented pace. This necessitates a flexible framework for skill acquisition. Continuous learning, upskilling, and reskilling have become integral components of digital-era skill development strategies. NEP 2020 recognises this evolving learning landscape by advocating the identification and integration of specific skills and values at each stage of education to foster comprehensive student development.

Principles of NEP 2020 Ensuring an equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students. Providing an educational system that caters to every student, regardless of age, gender, passions, interests, strengths, and weaknesses, in a personalized and accessible manner. Emphasizing student upskilling and vocational education to cultivate a high-quality future workforce. Striking a balance between curricular and extracurricular

activities. **Role of Technology in Delivering Holistic Education** Technological tools, powered by Artificial Intelligence, have the potential to revolutionise education delivery and improve learning outcomes. This became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when more than 320 million Indian students faced disruptions in their studies due to lockdowns. Digital education emerged as the alternative to ensure the continuity of learning. Online classrooms were established using various online meetings, webinars, and video conferencing tools, followed by standardized virtual education through platforms like Google's "Teach from Anywhere" hub, which was available in English and 8 major Indian languages. This platform assisted over 9 lakh educators in facilitating online teaching. Multiple similar initiatives have been and can be planned and executed using cutting-edge technologies.

(The writer is Vice Chancellor, Mahindra University, views are personal)

Use Green Crackers



Festival season is around, and firecrackers are back in the limelight. Diwali has, however, been reduced to a festival of sound due to the mindless bursting of conventional firecrackers. In October 2018, the apex court gave the green signal for the production of eco-friendly, green crackers as substitutes for traditional crackers. The green crackers reduce shell size,

don't use ash, and contain dust suppressants to cut down particulate matter (PM) emissions. Down the line, scientists of the famed Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), in collaboration with the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), did extensive research to come up with ways and means of manufacturing green crackers. Worker representatives from Sivakasi, the cracker hub of India, were sent to CSIR-NEERI for training. But not all cracker manufacturing industries have the wherewithal to understand the making of green crackers on a large scale. The green crackers are expected to reduce the PM level by 30 percent. Reducing sound emission to 35 decibels is the norm. They mainly contain potassium nitrate, and minimum amounts of aluminum and barium are used. Since barium nitrate is the cause of air and noise pollution, there is a drastic reduction in pollution. But again, everything boils down to implementation. **Ganapathi Bhat | Akola**

Despite knowing that only 3.8 percent of Australia's 26 million population are tribals, the current Anthony Albanese government organised a referendum on whether to grant the tribals constitutional rights. The outcome was predictable: a resounding 'no.' This reflects the broader sentiment across the country, with the tribal community enduring a life of hardship in Australia despite their significant contributions to the nation's historical and basic infrastructure. **Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur**

HOSPITAL ATTACKED IN GAZA

Sir—The explosion at Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza City, resulting in the loss of over 500 lives, has sparked global outrage and has the potential to be a significant turning point in the Israel-Hamas conflict. Hamas attributes the incident to an Israeli airstrike, while the Israeli military claims it was caused by a misfired Palestinian rocket. Various countries in West Asia have expressed their opinions on this matter,

with Syria and Saudi Arabia blaming Israel, Libya accusing it of 'war crimes and genocide', and Iraq declaring three days of mourning. US President Joe Biden's swift support for Israel during his visit to Tel Aviv contrasts with these stances. Attacking hospitals is considered a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and hospitals and medical personnel are protected by international humanitarian law. The United Nations' efforts to reduce hostilities and enforce international law in the Israel-Hamas conflict seem ineffective. With a significant loss of life, there is growing demand for an immediate ceasefire. The tragedy at Al-Ahli Hospital underscores the need for the international community to work towards preventing civilian deaths in Gaza. **Sabita Kumari | Hazaribagh**

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

ISRAEL'S ATTACKS ON GAZA DISRUPTS W ASIA

The Israel's Gaza campaign can upset many bilateral agreements



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Two world leaders in the middle of almost every geo-political discussion for the past year, travelled out to their respective countries, to resolve the unfolding Israel war on terror. US President, Joe Biden travelled to Israel to express solidarity with one of its closest allies in West Asia. His next stop was Jordan where according to the white house statement, the president's trip "reiterated that Hamas does not stand for the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination and discuss the humanitarian needs of civilians in Gaza. "The President also met with leaders from Egypt, and Palestinian Authority in Amman during the trip. A careful balancing of risks involved with the President's trip to Israel played out in the background, with several senior officials in the White House admitting about the possible PR fallout of the high-level visit.

The fear of a ground attack on Gaza, with US marines in the vicinity, or joining in, causing huge casualties of Palestinians, could trigger a backlash against the war against terror globally. The collective memory of people around the world is currently bombarded with visuals of human tragedy and piles of rubble, caused first by the war in Ukraine for the past year, followed by the Gaza strip, even though, many of them would have preferred, some more time to come out Covid induced economic misfortunes. Additionally, President Biden faces a tough re-election next year, with political sentiments in the US on a slippery ground regarding the state/number of wars America can afford. The world, particularly US citizens, may have a war fatigue, with the one in Ukraine, directly aided by billions of dollars, refusing to die down even in the second year. At this juncture, for President Biden, to be drawn into a full-fledged "war against terror group Hamas" in West Asia with its ally Israel, could suitably upset domestic political equations. The US has gradually pulled out



from West Asia, in the past decade, leaving it up to local sovereign players to come to terms with each other's sensitivities. The ongoing war on terror as a response to the dastardly act, caused by US recognised terror group Hamas, could pull it back to the region upsetting its existing bilateral relations with several other countries present in the vicinity. To be sure, the US led the Arab world and Israel to slowly start patching up through the Abraham's Accord, which involved a bunch of bilateral agreements between the countries persuaded by Washington DC to work towards a common good. The US also stitched together the I2U2 framework, which brought India, Israel and UAE to work closely on global and regional issues of concern. The current conflict in West Asia could upset some of these equations.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin landed in Beijing, his second international trip since the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant on him earlier this year. This trip was widely followed, as it marked the reiteration of "no limits" friendship, between Russia and China which are trying to lead a world order without the US and its allies. President Putin travelled to Beijing, immediately before he attacked Ukraine last year. Meanwhile, despite the arrest warrant, issued by ICC, President Xi landed in Moscow on a state visit and showered praises on the Russian premiere. President Putin's trip to Beijing this week was more to support the Belt and Road Initiative which he had termed as one meant for international cooperation earlier.

India meanwhile has to play a tight diplomatic walk with its full-fledged support to Israel for its war against terror along with the US. India has not ruptured its relations with Russia, while it continues to have abnormal relations with China due to the military conflict and is opposed to the Belt and Road Initiative, as it runs through India's acknowledged disputed territories. India is on a wait-and-watch, which it has done in the past on the Ukraine war, the Israel conflict may be no exception.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)

Disturbing trend of women's radicalisation



NISHAKANT OJHA

The terrorist organisations are radicalising women by exploiting their emotions and using them for their nefarious designs



Women as foot soldiers in India is a perplexing issue that includes a gamut of information gathered of different terror groups having different motives, inspirations and belief systems. By and large, women's involvement in psychological warfare in India has been connected to the exercises of left-wing fanatic groups, for example, the Naxalites.

Women's role, however, is seen to have a critical impact in such groups, both as contenders and as pioneers. Lately, a few examples of women's contribution to jihadist oppression have come to light in India. For instance, in 2018, a group of women were captured in Maharashtra for supposedly wanting to launch fear-mongering assaults. These women were purportedly in contact with people from the Islamic State (IS) and wanted to inflict focus-based assaults in India.

Be that as it may, generally speaking, women's contribution in armed struggle against the state in India, is low as compared to men. This is attributed to social factors that limit women's versatility and potential in opening doors needing high commitment in tough exercises. Furthermore, the man-centric nature of numerous fear-mongering groups makes it challenging for women to ascend to administrative roles or hierarchically assume critical roles in such activities and operations.

It is essential to take note that women's contribution to armed struggle in India and West/Centre East ought not to be seen as detachment. Rather, it is essential for a more extensive study on the pattern of the utilization of viciousness to accomplish political targets.

Giving attention to the underlying drivers of armed struggle in India, like privation, imbalance, and political underestimation, is vital to forestall all kinds of efforts by people indulging in fear-mongering.

Even though women are mostly side-lined in regular roles of brutal political players, they have emerged as dynamic members in 60% of equipped assaults by radical groups in recent years.

Enlistment and Radicalisation

The enrolment and radicalization of women in psychological warfare in the context of India have manifested in various group formations across a long period, depending upon the particular group and settings. Here are probably some of the most widely recognized and enlisted reasons for women joining radical groups:

1. Philosophical teaching: Now and again, women are enlisted and radicalised through philosophical inculcation. This can occur through web-based promulgation, online entertainment, or in-person cooperation with select representatives or ideologues. Women might be drawn to radical philosophies that guarantee them a feeling of direction, a place, and strength.
2. Compulsion and power: Women might be constrained or pressured into joining psychological oppressor groups, either through dangers or savagery against them or their families. For instance, families might be apprehensive about higher chances of being vulnerable to injury because they do not permit their little girls or family members to join fear-based oppressor groups. Such families succumb to threats.
3. Unique interactions: Women are also enlisted through special interactions or organizations. This can incorporate relatives, companions, or associates, who are now engaged with fear-based oppressor exercises. At times, women might be attracted to fanatic ideologies through close connections with individuals from these factions.
4. Monetary impetuses: Women might be enrolled through the commitment of monetary impetus or monetary help.
5. Abuse of strict or ethnic characters: Women might be radicalised through abuse of their rigid or ethnic backgrounds. This can incorporate the utilization of oppressive propaganda about their ethnic

communities by raising their voice, speaking to legitimise radical activities, or depicting specific ethnic groups as persecuted or exploited.

Enrolment of Women in Islamic States (IS)

It was analysed that to be enrolled in an organisation waging war against the state, as a general rule, there are four principal perspectives. It is commonly acknowledged that "psychological oppressors are made not conceived." To start with, there is a group that one has to join. For some this part of having a group, to have a place of identity, is engaging. Besides, there is this belief system, which answers why the group is "legitimised" in going after regular citizens.

The third part is social help, and this is where web-based entertainment truly comes in making future psychological militants. By utilising virtual entertainment stages to speak to individuals who might be radicalised, selection representatives from the Islamic State can stay in steady contact with Westerners, to directly come to a meaningful conclusion and persuade them that joining the group is the correct thing to do.

The fourth part in the making of a psychological oppressor is attributed to individual inspirations and weaknesses.

Understanding the circumstances and backgrounds of the lives that numerous Muslims lead in Western nations clarifies why joining or helping militant groups like the Islamic State in all probability goes in favour of such terror groups. It's an obvious fact that Islamophobia is an issue in numerous Western nations. Militants go about aggravating this issue leading to an expansion in Islamophobia. Each time a significant fear-monger assault happens, there is a critical explosion of widespread disdain and violations against Muslims.

There is a propensity to fault the Muslim people and groups for launching a couple of demonstrations.

The idea of female Muslims wearing headscarves is seen as a restriction they face as compared to Muslim men. Wearing a headscarf makes these women stand out as being Muslims, and consequently easier to target them.

Women from fear-based oppressor groups are not by any means the only ones who attract likely female enlisted people. Frequently, men would play with little kids, seeing which women get emotional about their innocence and eventually succumb to the charm of such men and get trapped. A manual called "A Course in the Craft of Selecting" that was composed by Al-Qaeda was found by authorities from the US in Iraq. In the manual, it gave directions, for example, to invest however much energy as could reasonably be expected with the individual who is the objective of the enlistment, show the fundamentals of Islam (yet be mindful so as not to raise jihad), and generally speaking to be a decent audience to the likely select/ targeted person.

In particular, young women are all the handier and so brought into the enrolment specialists' web. For any youth, the high school years can be a period of distractions, defiance, and experiencing passionate feelings. It is also a fact that the absence of shrewdness and emotional development can also instigate little kids into believing that they need to join a psychological oppressor group. Furthermore, many who decide to join the Islamic State lack information about Islam itself. As a result, they are more vulnerable and readily get entrapped in the snare laid out by the Islamic State.

The radicalisation of women is a thin-line segment, which needs deep thought and a way forward in the field of counter-terrorism.



A FEW EXAMPLES OF WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO JIHADIST PSYCHOLOGICAL OPPRESSION HAVE COME TO NOTICE IN INDIA

(The writer is an eminent expert on counter-terrorism (West Asia & Middle East) and advisor to cyber and aerospace Security; Views are personal)

Basking in the glory of sporting achievements

Indian sportspersons give their best-ever performance in the Asian Games; return home with 107 medals

India reached an unprecedented milestone of 107 medals at the 19th Asian Games 2023 in Hangzhou, the People's Republic of China. This is the first time in history that India has achieved this remarkable feat. This achievement came after the Indian women's kabaddi team clinched the gold medal in the women's team kabaddi event at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou on 7 October.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the athletes by calling it a momentous achievement for India at the Asian Games. In a post on X, the Prime Minister wrote, "A momentous achievement for India at the Asian Games! The people of India are thrilled that we have reached a remarkable milestone of 100 medals. I



RAJDEEP PATHAK

(The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

extend my heartfelt congratulations to our phenomenal athletes whose efforts have led to this historic milestone for India."

In a display of both grit and grandeur, with an astounding haul of 107 medals, India's 655 representatives surpassed their previous record set in Jakarta 2018. Further, beyond the significance of the medals, Hangzhou served as a crucial gateway to the Paris 2024 Olympics, providing 74 quotas spanning multiple sports. India secured six of these quotas, spearheaded by an impressive performance in boxing. Athletes such as Nikhat Zareen, Preeti Pawar, Parveen Hooda, and Lovlina Borgohain have now earned their places in Paris. Furthermore, contributions



from athletics and men's hockey expanded India's quota tally, solidifying the nation's robust representation in the upcoming Olympic Games in the French capital. This remarkable feat is not merely a statistical triumph but a testament to the transformative journey that Indian sports have undertaken in the past decade. It encapsulates a narrative of perseverance, strate-

gic planning, and a resolute push towards excellence. While cricket held the nation's collective imagination, other sports languished in the shadows. The turn of the 21st century, however, witnessed a palpable shift in this narrative. Post-2014, the initiative towards the clarion call by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his "Khelo India" slogan became

a catalyst for change. Launched in 2018, Khelo India aimed to transform the sporting culture in India by identifying and nurturing talent at the grassroots level. The program envisioned the development of a sporting ecosystem that would encourage youth to pursue sports professionally. One of the cornerstones of Khelo India has been the development of sports infrastructure. From building state-of-the-art stadiums to upgrading existing facilities, the initiative has provided athletes with world-class training environments. In the heart of 'Khelo India' lies its commitment to identifying and nurturing talent. School and college-level competitions were re-imagined, and special camps and training programs

were organized to hone the skills of promising athletes. Further acknowledging the financial constraints that often stifle budding athletes, Khelo India instituted scholarships and financial incentives. This support not only alleviates the financial burden but also sends a resounding message that sports are a viable career option. The success stories of javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra; teenage shooting sensation Manu Bhaker; weightlifter Mirabai Chanu and others are examples of how Khelo India has promoted rural sportspersons into national and international arenas bringing glory back to the Nation. The professionalisation of sports has created a multitude of employment opportunities.

Athletes, coaches, sports scientists, and sports administrators now have a growing ecosystem to thrive in, contributing to the overall economic development. The focus should now shift towards developing the health of young children, steering them away from the allure and distraction of modern gadgets, especially mobile phones. Channelling the energy and potential of the youth into sports can be a powerful tool for their holistic development. In shaping the future, let us envision an India where the focus on sports is not just about winning medals but about building a healthier, more disciplined, and focused generation that will contribute to the nation's prosperity and well-being.

Russian FM offers security talks with N Korea, China

AP ■ SEOUL

Russia's foreign minister proposed regular security talks with North Korea and China to deal with what he described as increasing U.S.-led regional military threats...



North Korean counterpart, Choe Son Hui, earlier Thursday and lauded deepening bilateral collaboration.

transaction the world has to worry about," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha University in Seoul.

over its advancing nuclear programme and Russia over its war with Ukraine. The US has been expanding regular military drills with South Korea and temporarily deploying more powerful military assets around the Korean Peninsula in response to North Korea's barrage of missile tests since last year.

ational arms to refill Russia's declining weapons inventory. Neither Russia nor North Korea has disclosed what Putin and Kim agreed to during the summit.

Nawaz gets protective bail in two graft cases

Islamabad (PTI): In a temporary relief to Nawaz Sharif ahead of his return to Pakistan on Saturday, the Islamabad High Court on Thursday granted the former prime minister a protective bail in the Avenfield and Al-Azizia corruption cases until October 24.

bail in these cases when he left for the UK in 2019 for medical treatment. The respite comes just days ahead of Nawaz Sharif's arrival in Pakistan on October 21, ending about four years of self-exile in London.

Also, an anti-corruption court in Pakistan suspended his arrest warrant in the Toshakhana vehicles The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme through a counsel Qazi Mushahid approached the Islamabad-base accountability court No. 1 on Wednesday for suspension of the permanent arrest warrant issued two years ago for failing to appear in a case about getting a vehicle from Toshakhana on concessional price.

According to the petition, Nawaz was seeking protective bail in order to surrender before the court and "submit to due process of justice and avail remedies permissible under the law".

The 73-year-old politician was convicted in the Avenfield and Al-Azizia cases and was declared a proclaimed offender in the Toshakhana vehicle case, which is pending before an accountability court in Islamabad. Nawaz was on

The plea sought the Islamabad High Court's direction to stop authorities from arresting Nawaz from the airport on his return to the country on October 21 to allow him to surrender before the court. Judge Muhammad Bashir heard the plea and ordered to suspend the warrants when informed that Nawaz wanted to appear before the court. The judge fixed the hearing for October 24 and suspended warrants until then. However, the judge warned to restore the arrest orders if Nawaz failed to appear.

China building up N-arsenal faster than previous projections: Report

AP ■ WASHINGTON

A Pentagon report on China's military power says Beijing is exceeding previous projections of how quickly it is building up its nuclear weapons arsenal and is "almost certainly" learning lessons from Russia's war in Ukraine about what a conflict over Taiwan might look like.

way the Pentagon measures the growing military capabilities of China, which the US government sees as its key threat in the region and America's primary long-term security challenge. But after Hamas's October 7 attacks on Israel, the US has been forced again to focus on the Middle East, instead of its widely promoted pivot to the Pacific to counter China's growth.

accelerating buildup of military muscle designed to enable Beijing to match or surpass US global power by midcentury. Last year's report warned that Beijing was rapidly modernising its nuclear force and was on track to nearly quadruple the number of warheads it has to 1,500 by 2035. The United States has 3,750 active nuclear warheads.

The official briefed reporters on Wednesday on condition of anonymity before the report's release. The US does not adhere to a "no first use" policy and says nuclear weapons would be used only in "extreme circumstances."

As the Chinese economy struggled to recover from the post-COVID blues and anti-monopoly campaigns, the ruling Communist Party in an attempt to bolster sagging business confidence has warned its cadre against "inappropriate interference" in microeconomic activities.

ances from Xi, under whose watch the CPC in the few two years carried out a massive anti-monopoly campaign against top business houses including Alibaba which created a panic among private businesses.

the article, citing dictates in the Central Anti-Corruption Coordination Group Work Plan (2023-27) released in September. Such "interference" means those officials are not taking into consideration the requirements of "high-quality development", as championed by the party's Central Committee, Cai said, adding that some authorities are not "strict and civilised" when it comes to law enforcement.

called an "imbalance" in local government finances, warning that this has subsequently incentivised regional authorities to turn more aggressive in seizing assets and assessing fines, seeking any means to raise revenue.

China reaffirms commitment to support SL credit optimisation

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lanka on Thursday said China has expressed its commitment to support the country's efforts to restructure its external credit to comply with the reforms suggested by IMF for releasing the second tranche of the USD 2.9 billion bailout package.

According to the statement, the Chinese Finance Minister reaffirmed China's commitment to extend comprehensive support for the implementation of a medium-term and long-term programme that is mutually beneficial to both parties and aimed at optimising Sri Lanka's debt. China holds about 52 per cent of Sri Lanka's USD 46 billion external credit.

The authorities and their advisors intend to take the necessary time to consider the proposal and assess its compatibility with the parameters in Sri Lanka's IMF-supported programme and the comparability of treatment principle, compliance with both of which is imperative for the authorities," the statement said.

The IMF however had made external debt restructuring conditional to the 4-year programme. In September the second tranche of USD 300 million was held back due to the inconclusive nature of debt restructuring. Sri Lanka was hit by its worst economic crisis in history last year when its foreign exchange reserves fell to a critical low and the public came out on the streets to protest the shortage of fuel, fertilisers and essential commodities.

arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) to support Sri Lanka's economic policies and reforms. The IMF however had made external debt restructuring conditional to the 4-year programme. In September the second tranche of USD 300 million was held back due to the inconclusive nature of debt restructuring.

Parbhanji City Municipal Corporation invites e-Tender for the work of "invitation for Expression of Interest (EOI) Day to day Operation, Maintenance & Repairs of Parbhanji Municipal Solid waste (Wet And Dry Waste) processing plant of capacity 100 MT & Biogas Plant of capacity of MT and sanitary Landfill site at (Borwand Kh) of PCMC" along with necessary spares and electricity bill for Parbhanji Municipal Corporation, Parbhanji, in the State of Maharashtra, Please visit website www.mahatenders.gov.in from Date 19/10/2023 or detailed information.

Public Notice regarding land acquisition and compensation details.

Corruption charges against Rajapaksa dropped

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Citing lack of evidence, Sri Lanka's anti-graft commission has dropped a case against former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa in which more than Rs 17 million was discovered by protesters from the President's House here in July 2022. The Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) on Wednesday reported to the Colombo Fort Magistrate's Court that due to lack of evidence, no further action can be taken against the 74-year-old politician.

President's Office belonged to him but he was unable to take care of it due to the prevailing security situation at that time. He told the police that the money belonged to him and it was to be distributed among the people whose houses were destroyed by the protesters, the Daily Mirror portal reported. The former president fled Sri Lanka on July 13 last year to the Maldives. From there, he travelled to Singapore from where he sent in his resignation on July 14, paving the way for the incumbent Ranil Wickremesinghe to take over the presidential reins.

Later, Rajapaksa flew to Thailand. He returned to Sri Lanka on September 2. Rajapaksa and his family faced multiple accusations of wrongdoing between 2015 and 2019. The powerful Rajapaksa family has dominated Sri Lankan politics for over two decades. Mahinda Rajapaksa, the 77-year-old patriarch of the Rajapaksa family has been the country's president and prime minister. He was also forced to resign as the prime minister amidst the anti-government protests in the country last year.

Public Notice regarding land acquisition and compensation details.

Public Notice regarding land acquisition and compensation details.

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar advertisement for a Physiotherapist position.

Parbhanji City Municipal Corporation advertisement for a tender for waste management services.

Punjab State Power Corporation Limited advertisement for a tender for an ambulance.

Punjab State Power Corporation Limited advertisement for a tender for an ambulance.

Punjab State Power Corporation Limited advertisement for a tender for an ambulance.

Punjab State Power Corporation Limited advertisement for a tender for an ambulance.

Verka advertisement for a tender for a design and installation of a cold room.

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar advertisement for a tender for a supply and installation of a cold room.

