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SILVER IN
MEN'S SKEET
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NIA tightens noose on Khalistanis

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

In a multi-State clampdown against Khalistanis and the terrorists-gangsters-drug smugglers syndicate, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday conducted synchronised raids in several places and detained a number of suspects linked to Canada-based "listed terrorist" Arsh Dalla and his cohorts, including dreaded gangsters. Dalla is operating his cartel through a network of gangsters in India.

A total of 53 locations were raided during the day-long operation, which started early on Wednesday. State Police forces provided the necessary support and assistance in the raids.

The search operation spanned the six States of Punjab, Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

During the raids, the NIA seized pistols, ammunition, large numbers of digital devices and incriminating materials.

Besides Arsh Dalla, others covered in the NIA raids are notorious gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi, Sukha Duneke, Harry Maur, Narender alias Lali, Kala Jatheri and Deepak Tinu among others.

The searches follow a recent intelligence input against gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, a criminal mastermind with a notorious track record, who has

been linked to several high-profile crimes, including the murder of renowned Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala and threats issued against Bollywood actors Salman Khan, officials said.

Recent intelligence inputs suggest an alarming development in Bishnoi's illicit activities suggesting he has established a direct line of communication with Nasir Khan, an operative of Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

"The connection suggests that Bishnoi and his gang might be diversifying their criminal portfolio by procuring weapons with the help of Pakistan Intelligence Operatives (PIOs) and making use of these weapons for furthering gangster activities in the region," reads the Intelligence report.

Bishnoi's gang is notorious for involvement in extortion and killings but the recent revelation of links with Pakistan-based entities suggests a "strategic shift in the gang's operational focus."

"The gang's involvement in arms smuggling represents a significant escalation in their criminal activities and poses a considerable risk to the nation's security. The potential backing by Pakistan ISI operatives also indicates a concerning overlap between organised crimes and geopolitical adversaries, enhancing the threat profile of Bishnoi's operations," the report warned.

The latest round of search-



Police personnel outside a residential premises during a raid by National Investigation Agency in Dehradun on Wednesday PTI

es were the seventh in the series of such crackdowns launched by NIA following the registration of five cases since August 2022, including the two new cases registered against Organised Criminal Gangs in July 2023. The cases relate to conspiracies of targeted killings, terror funding of pro-Khalistan outfits and extortion by the gangsters, many of whom are lodged in various jails or are operating from various foreign countries, including Canada, Pakistan, Malaysia, Portugal and Australia and the United States among others, officials said.

"The focus of today's raids, aimed at dismantling the terror-gangster-drug smuggler nexus, was on weapon suppliers, financiers and logistics providers associated with various hardcore gangs and their operatives. These gangs are working with drug smugglers and terrorists based out of other countries, including Pakistan, the UAE, Canada, Portugal, etc," the NIA said in a statement.

NIA investigations so far have revealed that the conspiracies under investigation were being hatched in jails of different States and were

being executed by an organised network of operatives based abroad. Notable among such conspiracies were the sensational killing of Maharashtra builder Sanjay Biyani, mining trader Mehal Singh and international Kabaddi player Sandeep Nangal Ambia in Punjab last year.

Many of the criminals and gangsters who were earlier leading gangs in India have fled abroad in recent years and are now pursuing their terror and violence related activities from there, the NIA probe has unraveled.

Extrajudicial killing is not India's policy: Jaishankar

PTI ■ NEW YORK

In the wake of Canada's allegations about India's "potential" involvement in the killing of a Khalistani separatist on its soil, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said that New Delhi conveyed to Ottawa that it is not the Government of India's policy and it is open to looking at "specific" and "relevant" information in the case.

Jaishankar made the comments in a conversation at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York on Tuesday after addressing the UN General Assembly session.

"Yes, I do have a comment. I will share with you very frankly what we told the Canadians," Jaishankar said when asked if he had any comment on recent allegations by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that "agents" of the Government of India are linked to the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on Canadian soil on June 18.

"One, we told the Canadians that this is not the Government of India's policy," Jaishankar said.

"Two, we told the

Canadians saying that look, if you have something specific, if you have something relevant, let us know. We are open to looking at it," Jaishankar said while responding to a question from former US Ambassador to India and CFR Distinguished Fellow Kenneth Juster, in his first public comments on the issue.

Jaishankar asserted that one must also understand the context because the "picture is not complete" without the context of it.

"You also have to appreciate that in the last few years, Canada actually has seen a lot of organised crime relating to the secessionist forces, organised crime, violence, extremism. They're all very, very deeply mixed up," he said.

"We have actually been badgering the Canadians, we have given them a lot of information about organised crime leadership, which operates out of Canada. There are a large number of extradition requests. There are terrorist leaders who have been identified," he said, adding that one has to understand that there is an "environment out there," he said.

"That is important in a way

to factor in if you have to understand what is going on out there. And our concern is that it is really been very permissive because of political reasons. So, we have a situation where actually our diplomats are threatened, our consulates have been attacked and often comments are made about 'there is interference in our politics'. And, a lot of this is often justified as saying, well, that is how democracies work," Jaishankar said.

When asked by Juster whether the Government of India will cooperate with Canada if there are specific pieces of evidence provided to it, Jaishankar said, "If somebody gives me something specific, it doesn't have to be restricted to Canada, but if there is any incident which is an issue and somebody gives me something specific, as a government I would look at it. Of course, I would look at it."

When asked about reports that intelligence about the killing was shared amongst the Five Eyes, Jaishankar said, "I'm not part of the Five Eyes. I'm certainly not part of the FBI. You are asking the wrong person."

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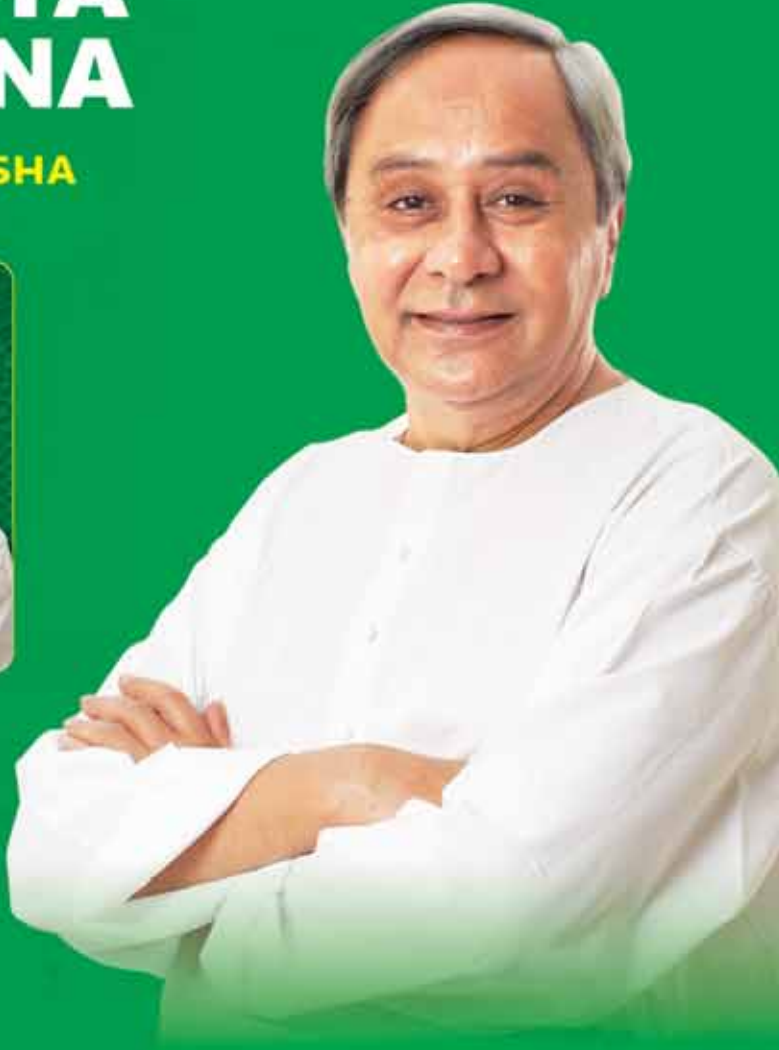
BIJU SWASTHYA KALYAN YOJANA

HEALTHY ODISHA, HAPPY ODISHA



"EVERY LIFE IS PRECIOUS"

CHIEF MINISTER, ODISHA



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Mahanga double murder

Court asks Jena for personal appearance on Oct 6

RAJESH BEHERA

KENDRAPADA

The Salipur Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Court in Cuttack district on Wednesday summoned senior BJD leader and Mahanga MLA Pratap Jena for personal appearance before the court on October 6 to record his statement in the 2021 Mahanga double murder case.

While adjudging the case, the JMFC Court on Monday had found that a prima facie case punishable for the offences under Sections 302,



506, 120(B) of IPC exists against the accused Pratap Jena after going through the case record, statements of complainant recorded under Section 202 of CrPC and other available materials on record.

The court in its order stated that as Pratap Jena is an MLA, the case records be transferred to the court of Additional District and Session Judge-cum-Special Court, Bhubaneswar for disposal in accordance with law.

Notably, BJP leader

Kulamani Baral, who was the block Chairman of Mahanga, and his associate Dibyasingha Baral were brutally killed by unidentified miscreants on January 2, 2021 while they were returning home by a motorbike.

Later, the prime accused in the case, Prafulla Biswal, was found dead under mysterious circumstances near the Govindpur area in Tangi of Cuttack district. Ranjit Kumar Baral, son of Kulamani Baral, had filed a ICC case in the JMFC court of Salipur.

BJP privilege move against CM

for dubbing Opp 'anti-people'

PNS BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Assembly on Wednesday witnessed ruckus over a privilege notice against Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for allegedly attacking the Opposition and lowering the dignity of the Assembly.

Moving the notice during the Zero Hour, Opposition Chief Whip Mohan Charan Majhi referred to the CM's statement in the House on September 25, which he

alleged has insulted the opposition parties and lowered the dignity of the House and its members.

Majhi demanded that the CM tender an apology to the House for his statement.

He said the CM in a suo motu statement in the House on September 25 had stated, "The Opposition is anti-people and people will give them a befitting reply."

"We had not sought a statement from the CM on the

issue. He placed it on his own to shield the ST Secretary. He termed the Opposition as 'anti-people'. Who is anti-people? The CM should tender an apology and ensure expunction of the word from the proceedings," Majhi said.

Countering the Opposition, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Niranjan Pujari dubbed the privilege notice as a political gimmick. On the other hand, the Minister brought a privilege notice against the

Leader of Opposition. The Opposition should not use the Assembly as a political platform, he said.

Amid the privilege notice and counter privilege notice, the House witnessed noisy scenes forcing Speaker Pramila Mallick to adjourn the House several times. In the afternoon, the Speaker convened an all-party meeting to run the House smoothly. However, it did not yield any positive result.

Complaint against Ola, Uber, Rapido over illegal op

PNS BHUBANESWAR

The Regional Transport Officer (RTO), Bhubaneswar has filed a police complaint against Ola, Uber and Rapido companies over illegal operation in and around the city without obtaining any aggregator licence.

In the complaint lodged with the Saheed Nagar police, the RTO has mentioned that only the two-wheeler vehicles registered as transport can be used by aggregator agencies.

"But these aggregator agencies are deliberately using non-transport two-wheelers without any licence. Such illegal use of non-transport two-wheelers were reported several times, and these companies were instructed to strictly adhere to the guidelines issued by the State Government. Even written instructions were also issued to Sandip Kumar Choudhury (Ola), Deepak Palai (Uber), Lalajee Choudhury (Rapido) to strictly follow the guidelines,"

the official wrote in the complaint.

"Due to such illegal operation by these companies, the local auto association and other commercial vehicle associations are strongly objecting to this violation and had protested against these illegal activities by these companies," the RTO said.

"Very often, law & order situations are being created due to such illegal activities. Even Transport Commissioner, Odisha, had also called them twice and instructed them to follow the guidelines. But in spite of all instructions, these persons deliberately indulged themselves in such illegal activities, for which the local auto association has informed to go for strike on September 27," the officer said.

"It is requested that stringent criminal action may be initiated against the aforementioned persons for creating frequent law & order situations for deliberate violation of MV law," he urged.

Arka Keshari returns to BJP

PNS BHUBANESWAR

Former Kalahandi BJD MP Arka Keshari Deo on Wednesday returned to the BJP after staying away from the saffron camp for about 10 years.

The young leader joined the BJP along with his wife Malvika Devi in Bhubaneswar in the presence of senior leaders of the party, including BJP State president Manmohan Samal and Kalahandi MP Basant Kumar Panda.



Arka Keshari had joined the BJD in 2013 after the demise of his father Bikram Keshari Deo, who was a former BJP MP. Subsequently, he resigned from the ruling party in 2019. He was elected to the Lok Sabha in 2014 from Kalahandi on a BJD ticket.

The ruling party had fielded former Minister Pushpendra Singhdeo in 2019 General Elections. However, BJP candidate and former state president of the party Basant Panda won the seat.

Despite Covid

Tax collections on petrol, diesel, cooking gas rise in 4 yrs

PNS BHUBANESWAR

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the State Government's collection of VAT on fuels and GST on cooking gas witnessed a decent growth during the past four financial years. The State has collected VAT of Rs 29,652.46 crore between 2019-20 and 2022-23.

According to a written statement made by Finance Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha, the State had collected Rs 5,797.31 crore revenue from petrol, diesel and cooking gas in the Financial Year 2019-20,

which was increased to Rs 6,398.51 crore in 2020-21.

Similarly, the tax collection from the sources again increased to Rs 7,945.14 crore in the year 2021-22. It further escalated to Rs 9,511.49 crore during the last FY.

As per the statement, the State has collected Rs 9,415.93 crore VAT on petrol during the last four years while the VAT collection from diesel stood at Rs 19,405.24 crore.

Moreover, the Government has got Rs 831.28 crore GST from cooking gas in the period. The State is collecting 5 percent

GST on LPG domestic gas cylinders.

The State has set a target to collect Rs 13,243.90 crore revenue from petrol, diesel, STF, natural gas, liquor and petroleum crude oil.

Notably, State's revenue collection has registered a growth of 12.9 percent till August of the FY 2023-24 over the corresponding period of previous year.

The Government has collected revenue of Rs 41,231 crore till end of August, 2023 against the collection of Rs 36,510 crore during the same period of last year.

State's Own Tax Revenue collection has recorded a growth of 14.4 per cent during April -August of 2023-24 with a collection of Rs 20,131 crore.

Similarly, total non-tax revenue collection till end of August is Rs 21,100 crore which is 11.5 percent more than the collection of previous year.

The mining revenue collection has witnessed a minimal growth of 2.8 per cent till August end. The State has collected Rs 17,250 crore from this source during the current year in comparison to the collection of Rs 16,784 crore last year.

Life Science Startup Summit

'ILS facilitates cutting edge biotech research'

PNS BHUBANESWAR

The DBT-ILS, Bhubaneswar, organised the Life Science Start-up Summit 2023, under the theme of "Atma Nirbhar Bharath" in its main campus.

The summit was inaugurated by WODC Chairman Asit Tripathy, who highlighted the achievements that have been attained in the biotechnology sector. He further added that biotechnology applications will play an important role in mitigating a lot of challenges in various sectors.

He expressed that ILS with

its strong scientific base and infrastructure is playing a major role in developing and enabling the ecosystem for bio incubation in the region.

Director, ILS Dr Debasis Dash mentioned that the ILS bioincubator has all advanced equipment and infrastructure facilities for carrying out cutting edge biotechnology research and focuses on cost effective and affordable product development. Being a nodal center for the State, the ILS bioincubator is going forward with remarkable achievements and aims to maintain the pace of creating sustainable entrepreneurs, he added.

Startup Odisha Executive Chairman Dr Omkar Rai in his address spoke about the opportunities in the State for promoting an innovation ecosystem for startups and entrepreneurship in the area of biotechnology. He mentioned that the Odisha Biotechnology Policy has several action plans to take these initiatives forward and complemented ILS in taking the lead in this important area.

The speakers urged the young researchers and faculties to take advantage of the enormous opportunity for their research ideas to offer business opportunities.

In Nabarangpur

Teacher dies, 20 students hurt as bus overturns

PNS NABARANGPUR

In a tragic mishap, a teacher was killed and over 20 students were injured when a bus turned turtle at Chandahandi Ghat in Nabarangpur district on Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Prabhas Jena, a Physical Education Teacher (PET) at the Umakote Swami Vivekananda Bidyamandir.

As per reports, the bus was carrying students of the Umakote Adarsha Vidyalaya to Chandahandi for a district-level sports competition when the driver lost control of the wheels while negotiating a curve and the vehicle fell from over 30 feet in the ghat.

While the teacher died on the spot, over 20 students suffered injuries. Locals rushed



the victims to the Jharigaon Community Health Centre for treatment. Further details were awaited.

HITTING THE BULL'S EYE

Naveen says he pressed Pvt Secy to big job on purpose

For quite some time, much dust was kicked up by political opponents of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for having sent his Private Secretary on a cross-State marathon run to collect long-pending grievance documents gathering dust due to a standstill status during the two-year Covid pandemic period. The trusted Private Secretary VK Pandian used a helicopter to finish the herculean task as fast as possible. Wherever he went, a big gathering occurred only because people were crazy to see and talk to the secretary who Naveen openly believes is a truly capable aide.

Not surprisingly, political opponents and a very few own party members disapproved of the style Naveen uses: distrusting the political tribe and depending wholly on the wisdom of bureaucrats. This attitude of Naveen has historical reasons. During Janaki Ballav Patnaik's long reign of fifteen years, much had happened to force the masses to hate



BISWARAJ PATNAIK

politicians. The lowest-wrung political entities and their allies abused power to the brim and made merry on all fronts. They made huge money by intimidation and guile as well as indulged in everything unethical. A panchayat member behaved like king so much so as to keep even field police officials frightened. JB Patnaik's rule ended tragically. He got defamed on several fronts of which most Odisha people are aware.

So, when Naveen arrived, Odisha was a poor, nature-devastated State with horrible Congress party folks like Giridhar Gamanga all equally unfit to rule. Naveen was, therefore, looked upon as fresh air. He too did things which pleased the people. He handpicked the big rogues and tossed them to the garbage yard with the help of a former bureaucrat called Pyari Mohan Mohapatra. Naveen became an overnight messiah, so people believed. Good things happened too in the following years, for which he flourished as a meaningful political entity that put the people at the top as principal beneficiaries of the State of which political creatures are servants.

The 2019-2024 Naveen stint got a bit messed up due to in-house detractors and antagonists like Soumya Ranjan Patnaik who lately began to feel suffocated and disempowered. Ever since he materialised on the Odisha stage, Soumya began as an entrepreneur by setting up the first corporate

media house with enormous help and unconditional support from the State administrative machinery only because he got married to the powerful Chief Minister JB Patnaik. He is undoubtedly a superb businessman who most certainly used his enviable relationship to grab whatever ordinary mortals could never have picked. As super bonus, his daily newspaper turned the mouthpiece of the JB regime. Janakibabu was outwardly a perfect gentleman, a visionary to a good extent but was sinfully dynastic. Niranjan Patnaik, the billionaire former Minister used to be a struggling salesman-level material supplier for small government offices. The moment Soumya his younger brother became JB's son-in-law, he used all his cunning to behave as the elder son-in-law to hypnotise JB to grab a party ticket and become a Minister.

Soumya became a Congress politician and grabbed a seat. Later when he was rejected by the

masses, he jumped into the saffron fold perhaps because the Congress was losing badly all over the country to regional parties. But bad luck kept befalling him for decades. Two of his smart siblings Niranjan and another, a mines millionaire, kept earning from enterprises set up because of political association. Niranjan had organised huge iron ore mines for family. After decades of political failure, Soumya realised that until Naveen is around in Odisha, no other party shall survive. He knew too Naveen, because of his lineage, learning, is not servile to any national outfits, no matter how formidable. On the contrary, Congress as well as BJP biggies struggle to remain pally-pally with Naveen as he is one of the most-adored politicians.

Obviously, Soumya, frantic to remain respectfully active in power politics, made friends with the BJD which hugged him in as a critical media house was won. Soumya got a Rajya Sabha seat,

then became an MLA but never was given a ministerial berth.

Eventually, he turned bitter for not being made a Minister. So, he began targeting the CM's trusted Private Secretary, who has been given unbridled power and authority to carry forward and get implemented people-oriented development projects and schemes. Soumya, by now a furious detractor within the fold, began tarnishing Naveen's image by questioning the former's Private Secretary's absolutely free-hand moves. He criticised openly the way Ministers and legislators are used as porters and labourers, little realising that headless guys are in positions only because of people's love for Naveen. If they chose to break away, they would be pounded to dust by the voters. All this is too well-known to all by now.

Soumya even disbelieved the punitive notes served on him, saying Naveen is held captive by the Secretary, who may have forged the signature of the boss. He also

made loud claims of a whopping 400 crore-rupee helicopter misuse cost incurred by the unruly Private Secretary without once delving into the matter to know the exact truth.

Now that Naveen has made clear in the Assembly that he had pressed the bureaucrat into service on purpose at a helicopter run cost of only 40 crore, it has silenced all detractors for good. The special assignment was to collect hugely pending grievances of the people since the standstill Covid days. Soumya's claim of Naveen having become vegetable has been dispelled with one simple stroke by the elderly Chief Minister.

Soumya has already lost so much by being impetuously errant. Now that people know the inner truth from the horse's mouth, he may have to appeal for striking a compromise or get lost forever on all fronts. That he is not a saint is also being discussed vigorously across the society. Dark truths are surfacing as public whispers keep indicating more than before.

Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel project Villagers come up with 11-point charter of demands

KAHNU NANDA ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

The villagers and PRI representatives held a meeting in Kothi Panchayat under Kujang block and discussed the ongoing land acquisition process underway in Narendrapur village for the proposed ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel [AM/NS] project.

They put an 11-point charter of demands before the Government for consideration and warned of protesting the land acquisition for the project if the demands were not met.

No compensation can revive the agriculture production and food crisis of the locality following the sacrifice of massive farmlands to the project, said Kothi Panchayat Sarpanch Laxmidhar Sahoo.



The meeting discussed the quantum of amount that should be provided to the land losers as compensation. The R&R Policy of industrial displacement envisages that compensation is three to four times the market value of the property plus 100% solatium on the amount. Market value is determined based on sales and purchases made at the local sub-registrar offices. Ironically, law is unclear on defin-

ing market value whether it is the highest value at which a property in the area is transacted or the average over a period of time. The villagers demanded Rs 3 crore per acre. Besides, they demanded guaranteed employment for land losers, education and training for local youths, improvement of road and communication infrastructure and health and environmental protection etc. Sources informed that the

RPDAC meeting for the proposed AM/NS project at Paradip was held in Jagatsinghpur on August 24.

The administration later presented a draft report that about 1,476 families are likely to be displaced for the project from Bijayachandpur, Udayabata and Nuagada villages including its few hamlets. It was decided to rehabilitate the displaced families in Narendrapur village.

Pressing for various demands Jail workers begin hunger strike in S Odisha

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The jail workers across the State have intensified their agitation and staged a hunger strike on Tuesday pressing for a 5-point charter of demands.

Under the banner of the Prison Employees Maha Sangh, they held the fast unto death agitation after their 12 days of symbolic protest by wearing black badges.

Their 5-point charter of demands include Grade Pay hike, salary as per 7th Pay Commission recommendation, promotion of ward staff based on seniority as mandated by the Jail Management Act of 2012, enhanced allow-

ance for ward staff from Rs 400 to Rs 1,400 and amendment of rules governing sub-division jails.

The demonstrations were held in the Phulbani District Jail, Baliguda Sub-Jail, Boudh Special Sub-Jail, Kodala Sub-Jail, Bhanjanagar Special Sub-Jail, Daspalla Sub-Jail, Aska Sub-Jail, G. Udayagiri Sub Jail, Surada Sub Jail, Digapahandi Jail, Chatrapur Jail, R.Udayagiri Jail, Paralakhemundi Jail and Brahmapur Jail in South Odisha as part of the State wide agitation.

The stir has affected the functioning of jails including inmates management.

Alcoholic teacher beats boy brutally in K'pada

For questioning why he was taking liquor in school

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

A teacher beat a student black and blue and detained him in room for questioning him as to why he was consuming liquor during school hours in the school premises.

Victim Suvam Barik of Chandan Nagar High School on Tuesday found teacher Gopabandhu Behera taking liquor inside the school premises.

Suvam later asked Behera whether he was consuming al-

cohol and upon this, Behera went berserk and beat Suvam brutally with a wooden plank. Suvam fell unconscious and sustained critical injuries. The accused teacher allegedly detained Suvam in a class room alone and released him after the school was closed.

After returning home, Suvam brought the matter before his family members. He was soon rushed to the Aul CHC for treatment. Gurucharan Barik, the uncle of Suvam, later lodged a complaint against Behera. A case has been registered and the police are conducting an inquiry on the issue, informed Pattamundai SDPO Khyamasagar Panda.

CoBRA Jawan shoots self in Koraput

PNS ■ KORAPUT

A CRPF CoBRA jawan of Commando Battalion shot himself dead by using his service weapon in Koraput district in the wee hours of Wednesday. The reasons behind him taking the extreme step were yet to be ascertained.

The deceased was identified as S Dillip, a resident of the Dwarka area in Gujarat.

Dillip, who was deployed under Sunabeda police station in Koraput, shot himself below his chin by using his

service weapon. He died on the spot.

Getting information, the Sunabeda police reached the spot and sent the body for postmortem.

"We are probing the incident. We are yet to find out the reason behind the CoBRA jawan's suicide," said Sunabeda police station IIC Ramani Ranjan Dalei.

Notably, the CoBRA Battalion of the CRPF is deployed in Odisha for conducting anti-Maoist operations.

In Kandhamal Man gets 20-yr RI for raping minor

PNS ■ PHULBANI

Kandhamal POSCO Court Judge Sanjit Kumar Behera has convicted one Nupura Diga for raping a minor girl under the Baliguda police station area in Kandhamal district in April 9, 2022 and sentenced him to undergo 20 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI).

The court also directed him to pay a fine of Rs 10,000 and in default to undergo further six months RI. The court also

directed the district Legal Services Authority to pat also directed to pay compensation o of Rs 7 lakh to the victim.

The accused had raped the victim while she was going to collect mangoes from near her village with her two minor friends. The accused had also threatened her family not to disclose the matter .Special Public Prosecutor Asim Praharaj conducted the case from prosecution side.

Thanks to Rotary Club, Malkangiri

A ISWAR RAO ■ MALKANGIRI

In a heartwarming display of community support and benevolence, the Rotary Club, Malkangiri has taken a significant step to enable Harishchandra Pangi, a resident of Laxmipur Village in the Lugel GP under Podia Block, to pursue his higher education.

Pangi had come to Malkangiri seeking employment and had been working at a local bookstore for two months. It was during this time that he reconnected with his former teacher, Uma Sankar Patnaik. Upon learning about Pang's circumstances, Patnaik offered him accommodation at his home and assistance in finding work. Subsequently, Patnaik introduced Pangi to Rotarian Shayambabu Dora, a member of the Rotary Club Malkangiri to join in his shop. Pangi had lost his father



during childhood, and his mother had been the sole provider for him, his younger brother, and sister. Tragically, in 2022, his mother succumbed to a snake bite, leaving Harish burdened with debt incurred for her cremation expenses. To repay this debt, he had taken to various labour-intensive jobs, including construction work, loading sand and bricks, and collecting

kendu leaves. Despite these hardships, he managed to earn Rs 5,400 and successfully cleared his debt.

Moved by Pang's determination and his desire to continue his education, Rotarian Dorababu inquired about his academic qualifications. Pangi revealed that he had completed his Matriculation in 2021 but had been unable to pursue further studies due to

his family's challenging circumstances.

The Rotary Club Malkangiri initiated efforts to secure a spot for him at the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) in Bhubaneswar. The club reached out to senior Rotarians in Bhubaneswar for assistance in securing a seat in +2 at KISS. Pangi left for Bhubaneswar to join KISS recently.

‘Role of pharmacists important’

Pharmacists’ Day held in B’pur

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The World Pharmacists' Day on September 25 was jointly organised by IPGA and HOMESCET here.

Pharmacy professionals from different institutions participated in the celebration. Vice-Chancellor, Khallikote Unitary University, Brahmapur Col Prof Prafulla Kumar Mohanty was the chief guest for the function.

ADC (Assistant Drugs Controller), Bhubaneswar Dr Sudarsan Biswal was the keynote speaker. The function was presided over by Editorial Manager, Research Journal of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (RJPLS) Prof Ghanshyam Panigrahi.

Editor in Chief, RJPLS Prof Anjan Kumar Mohapatra, Principal, Om Sai College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Brahmapur Dr



Bhagaban Biswal and Executive Editor, RJPLS Prof Prasanta Kumar Chaudhary, carried out the proceedings of the programme.

Prof Ghanshyam Panigrahi delivered the welcome address and presented a brief description about the meet.

Secretary of HOMESCET, Prof Mohapatra revealed the logo of HOMESCET and briefed about the aims and

objectives of the trust, and declared the RJPLS as an official publication of HOMES.

Assistant Drugs Controller (ADC), Bhubaneswar Dr Sudarsan Biswal briefed on the role of Pharmacists and contribution of Pharmacists in healthcare system and their sacrifice during COVID pandemic. Dr Biswal explained on how the Drugs Control Department is taking roles and respon-

sibilities for the development of Pharmacy profession.

Dr Biswal spoke on the importance of World Pharmacists Day. The chief guest of the function Col Prof PK Mohanty highlighted the significance and contributions of Pharmacists and the profession for the society.

Vote of thanks was offered by treasurer of HOMESCET Prof Chaudhary.

2nd batch Agniveers' PoP held in INS Chilka

PNS ■ INS CHILKA

PVSM, AVSM, NM, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Naval Command, Vice Admiral MA Hampiholi reviewed the Passing Out Parade (PoP) of the second batch of Agniveers at INS Chilka on Tuesday.

A total of 2,896 Agniveers and Coast Guards (including 448 women) successfully passed out from the portals of INS Chilka in a post sunset ceremony.

Members of the passing out course also attended the event and witnessed the momentous occasion.

The PoP marks the culmination of 16 weeks of rigorous training and beginning of a new voyage in the Indian Navy towards a combat ready, credible, cohesive and future proof force.

The Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief complimented the passing out course for the immaculate turnout as well as crisp and synergised movements indi-

cating high standards of training and discipline. He urged the trainees to build upon Navy's core values of duty, honour and courage. He also complimented Team Chilka for high standards of training imparted to the future sea warriors.

The chief guest awarded medals and trophies to the meritorious trainees on the occasion.

A valedictory function was conducted wherein the trainees showcased their talents in a cultural programme.

In Baleswar Irregularities in special school: DM asked to probe

UBACHAK MOHANTY ■ BALESWAR

The State Government has directed the district Collector of Baleswar to inquire into allegations regarding irregularities in a special school for physically challenged and mentally retarded at the Mission compound in the district and submit a report forthwith.

The school has been receiving Government grants since 1987. It is alleged that the school was showing student strength of 126 instead of actual 85. It is also alleged that the school is having 18 visually impaired, 55 hearing impaired and the rest is mentally retarded students.

The management of the school engaged able teachers instead of visually impaired teachers for the visually impaired students flouting the department guidelines of appointment of teachers for the special children.

The school received Rs 2.10 lakh for procurement of computers and other items, yet the same was not available. Besides, bathrooms and toilets for the hostel students were not adequate, it was alleged.

Earlier, a complaint was made before the Governor and again another complaint was made with the State Government. After receipt of allegations of such irregularities and misappropriation of funds, the Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department sought an enquiry report from the district Collector, the reports in-

INBRIEF

MAN GETS 5-YR RI FOR OUTRAGING MODESTY OF 2 MINORS

Baleswar: Special Judge POCSO Ranjan Kumar Sutar on Wednesday sentenced a person in Baleswar district to five years' rigorous imprisonment for outraging the modesty of two minor girls finding them alone. The convict Miltan Jadav of village Badakia under Chandipur police station was also asked to pay a fine of Rs 2,000. In default, he has to undergo another year's RI. The police had arrested and forwarded the accused after an FIR was lodged in this connection by the family of the two minor siblings.

COUPLE KILLED OVER WITCHCRAFT SUSPICION IN G' PATI

Paralakhemundi: A couple was killed in Ghodapanka village under the Adaba police station on the suspicion of practicing witchcraft. The deceased were identified as Kapilendra Malik and his wife Sasmita. Earlier, some unidentified miscreants had shot at Kapilendra in February. After recovery, he was staying in Adaba but five months back he had come back to Ghodapanka. But some miscreants attacked and killed him on Monday evening. Though his wife tried to escape from the spot, the assailants chased and killed her. Later, some relatives rushed them to the hospital but they were declared brought dead. The Adaba police arrested eight persons in connection with the incident.

WOMAN TEACHER DIES IN SUNDARGARH ROAD MISHAP

Rourkela: A woman teacher of a Government upper primary school was killed on Wednesday when the Scooty by which she was travelling collided head on with a motorbike under the Lepripada police station in Sundargarh district. The bike rider was also critically injured. The deceased was identified as Sunima Patel (55). Getting information, her family members rushed to the spot and shifted her to the District Headquarters Hospital but she was declared brought dead by the doctor.

PLASMA EXCHANGE TO TREAT LIVER DAMAGE AT SUM

Bhubaneswar: The SUM Ultimate Medicare (SUMUM), a Bhubaneswar-based hospital, has started a Plasma Exchange (PLEX) to treat liver injury. The advanced therapy, also known as liver dialysis, was successfully conducted to treat a young



woman who had been diagnosed with severe liver injury, Dr Gadadhar Panda, Associate Consultant in the GI Sciences department who conducted the procedure, said.

AMBIKA DAS ELECTED NAFSCOB DIRECTOR

Kendrapada: Odisha State Cooperative Bank Director Ambika Prasad Das was elected uncontested as National Federation of State Cooperative Bank Ltd (NAFSCOB) Director. He was elected Director at the NAFSCOB Board of Directors meeting and AGM held at Jaipur of Rajasthan on Tuesday. He is the first cooperator from the district to be elected as NAFSCOB Director. Das has thanked State Cooperative Minister, Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak, Odisha State Cooperative Bank(OSCB) President T Prasad Rao Dora and OSCB managing committee members for the achievement. Notably, NAFSCOB is the apex body of cooperative banks in the country.



MADKAMI AGAIN PRESIDENT OF MALKANGIRI BJD

Malkangiri: Manas Madkami, a prominent leader in Malkangiri district and former MLA, has been appointed as the president of the Malkangiri district Biju Janata Dal (BJD) for a fourth consecutive term. This decision was announced by BJD supreme and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik along with State organisational secretary Pranab Prakash Das.



RASHTRIYA POSHAN MAAH HELD IN PHULBANI

Phulbani: The Kandhamal administration organised a district-level celebration of the 6th Rashtriya Poshan Maah 2023 at the Zilla Parishad Hall here on Tuesday. Zilla Parisad president Nandini Mallick said departmental officers' cooperation is essential to declare the district malnutrition-free. Awareness



programmes are being conducted, but the problem persists because still 20% pregnant women are giving birth to their child at home. Now, the Government has included sweets made from raggi in the food list of children. Additional DRDO PD Hara Prasad Bhoi said the mental status of a child depends upon nutrition.

In Baleswar Woman attacked, robbed of Rs 7L & gold

PNS ■ BALESWAR

Armed miscreants allegedly decamped with cash of Rs 7 lakh and gold ornaments from a house after attacking an elderly woman at Juani under Bahanaga block of Baeswar district, late on Tuesday night.

According to reports, victim Shantilata Gupta was alone at her house as her son had gone to the Baleswar railway station to receive his wife.

Taking advantage of it, the miscreants scaled the boundary wall and barged into the

house. As the woman resisted the, they attacked her with sharp weapon and tied her.

They then fled with cash of Rs 7 lakh and gold ornaments worth Rs 12 lakh.

After the woman's son and daughter-in-law reached home, they found her in an unconscious state in a pool of blood.

She was rushed to Gopalpur Hospital and later shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital as her condition deteriorated.

Police started an investigation into the incident.

BJP may field Central Ministers in four other States also

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Given the fact that close contests are expected in the upcoming Assembly polls, the BJP may strategically soon announce candidates for Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Telangana with “surprise” inclusions in line with Madhya Pradesh Assembly list.

The BJP’s move to field three Union Ministers and several senior Members of Parliament in the upcoming Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections may be repeated in the four other State Assembly polls, including Rajasthan, where the BJP hopes to cash in on “anti-incumbency” against the Ashok Gehlot-led

Congress.

Rajasthan voters traditionally not repeating a government twice has also made BJP optimistic of winning the election as it is also working hard to keep its house in order in the desert state.

The factional division in the Rajasthan unit and former two-time Chief Minister Vijaya Raje’s tug of war with Union war minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat are expected to be “neutralised” by fielding ‘heavy weight’ Central ministers and MPs who would impact on the assembly segments other than their own, sources said.

The entry of senior leaders in the assembly poll would also be done to positively tilt caste

equations - Rajputs, jats, SC, STs - in the state, according to sources.

Working on the MP model, the party may include Central Minister and Jodhpur MP Shekhawat, Minister of state for law , Arjun Ram Meghwal, Rajsamand MP Diya Kumari, and Jaipur (Rural) MP Rajyavardhan Rathore.

Despite Raje wanting to be projected as the Chief Ministerial candidate, the Central leadership has made it amply clear that as in the case of Madhya Pradesh, the elections in the state will be contested under a “collective leadership” with Prime Minister Narendra Modi being the main engine of the poll campaign, they said.

With the likely induction of senior leaders in the assembly fray, there could be more claimants to the CM post in Rajasthan as may be the case in Madhya Pradesh also where three top Central ministers have been fielded as assembly



candidates.

BJP had recently appointed Arjun Meghwal, a backward class leader, the convenor of BJP’s Election Manifesto committee, for Rajasthan.

In Madhya Pradesh - Union Minister for agriculture, Narendra Singh Tomar, will be

contesting from Dimani; Pralhad Patel, minister of state for food processing from Narsinghpur; and minister for state for rural development, Faggan Singh Kulaste who has been given a ticket from Niwas, a seat reserved for STs.

All three are now ‘competitors’ to the incumbent four-time CM Shivraj Singh Chauhan. Tomar and Kulaste have been fielded from the assembly seats won previously by the Congress.

In Telangana also , MPs, including Union Minister and State Chief GK Reddy, are expected to enter the electoral fray where BJP is seeking to be the main opposition party vis-à-vis the current Chief Minister

KC Rao’s ‘Bharat Rashtia Samithi’, even though the Congress has now emerged as the main challenger to the ruling dispensation..

Union Minister and BJP’s Rajasthan election in-charge Pralhad Joshi said his party would soon announce the list of candidates for Rajasthan but did not confirm that it may include bigwigs from the Centre.

He said that the BJP has given tickets in Madhya Pradesh to its leaders in that state but the Congress Party ‘does not have a leader’. “This is the problem of the Congress party,” he said.

“We are going to win with a huge majority in Madhya

Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Rahul Gandhi himself has admitted that they are losing in Rajasthan,” the BJP leader said.

On Sunday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had said that as of now the Congress is certainly winning Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, probably winning Telangana, and there is a ‘very close’ contest in Rajasthan that the party believes it will be able to win.

Prime Minister Modi on Monday visited Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan which would go to the polls along with Chattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram, before December - and blamed the Congress for making them lag-gard states.

INDIA Bloc in tatters in Bengal

Cong playing second fiddle to BJP: TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) looks to be in tatters from the beginning in Bengal not only with the Left Front categorically declaring its no-truck formula with the Trinamool Congress but also the latter fighting an ongoing war of words with the primary INDIA constituent Congress accusing the tri-colour party’s Bengal unit of playing second fiddle to the BJP.

A day after Chowdhury accused Mamata Banerjee of making fun trips to Spain and splurging taxpayers’ money for her personal reasons at a time when Dengue was wreaking havoc in Bengal, TMC leader

and Minister Dr Shashi Panja hit back saying, “by making such statements Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is only weakening the INDIA alliance ... I don’t know whether he is hitting out at the Alliance itself.”

Chowdhury had earlier questioned how Banerjee paid her hotel bills in Madrid. “We have heard that the Chief Minister does not take her salary. She earns her sustenance from the sale of her books and from her paintings. If that is so then how she could afford to stay at a hotel in Madrid that costs Rs 3 lakhs per day” the Congress MP from Behrampore asked.

The counterattack from Panja came hours after TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh attacked Chowdhury saying, “he is sounding like a BJP man ... he seems to have a plan to weaken the INDIA alliance ... by his statement it is clear that he playing the B Team of



the BJP in Bengal ... his party leadership should take note of this.”

Ghosh said that the Congress high command “should reign in Chowdhury if they really want the Alliance to work well.”

Ghosh’s hard-hitting statement notwithstanding Chowdhury attacked the Chief Minister once again saying, the “dengue situation in Bengal is manmade ... rather I will call it Mamata made ... rather we can also call it government-sponsored dengue.”

While the TMC and the Pradesh Congress traded fire,

the second most visible Congress leader in the State Kaustav Bagchi on Wednesday sprung a second surprise by walking alongside senior BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari in a protest rally of recruitment scam victims.

While the Pradesh Congress leadership remained tightlipped on Bagchi who has from the very beginning protested against the Congress joining hands with Mamata Banerjee “who has literally decimated the Congress in Bengal by engineering defections and whose goons daily attack, loot and rape our grass-roots workers” the Congress odd ball said he was walking for a cause and not with any person.

“I have walked in a rally which has no flags ... I have no problem with Suwendu Adhikari — despite him being a BJP leader and promoting different ideology — insofar as he

is fighting for a cause that relates to the people,” Bagchi a lawyer-turned-politician said provoking the TMC once again to draw the attention of the national leadership.

“We will expect the Congress leadership to take note of these issues in Bengal if they really are serious about the INDIA alliance,” Ghosh said even as NCP leadership too asked the two parties to refrain from open war of words like this.

Meanwhile, TMC sources said that Mamata Banerjee would embark on a tour of other States beginning with Assam where she would campaign for the INDIA alliance.

According to sources TMC Assam leader Ripun Bora had a meeting with party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee where it was decided that the Bengal Chief Minister would embark on a tour of Assam in the month of November.

SC tags plea seeking FIR against Udhayanidhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday tagged a plea, which has sought registration of an FIR against Tamil Nadu Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin over his “eradicate Sanatan Dharma” remark, with another similar pending petition. A bench of justices Aniruddha Bose and Bela M Trivedi was hearing a plea seeking direction for registration of an First Information Report (FIR) against Udhayanidhi Stalin and DMK leader A Raja for their comments on Sanatan Dharma.

On September 22, the top court had agreed to hear a separate plea filed by Chennai-based lawyer B Jagannath seeking registration of an FIR against Udhayanidhi Stalin and



others over his “eradicate Sanatan Dharma” remark, which the petitioner likened to hate speech. Udhayanidhi Stalin, who is also an actor, is the son of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and ruling DMK chief M K Stalin.

The plea filed by Delhi-based advocate Vineet Jindal came up for hearing before the bench on Wednesday. “We will not issue notice but we will tag it,” the bench told the counsel

appearing for the petitioner. The lawyer appearing for Tamil Nadu argued that the plea was “public interest litigation in the nature of publicity interest litigation”.

He said the top court had last week issued notice on the other petition having similar prayer and there was no need to have another such plea. “Instead of taking notice, we will take it up on that day,” the bench said, adding, “The question of entertaining itself, we will take it up that day”. Terming it an “unfortunate scenario”, the state’s counsel said in this matter, several writ petitions have been filed in different high courts and it becomes difficult for the State. “You have the appropriate remedy under the Constitution,” the bench observed, adding, “We are only tagging it”.

Fresh SC bench to hear Naidu's plea for quashing FIR in ₹371-crore scam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A new bench of the Supreme Court will hear on October 3 former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu’s petition for quashing the FIR against him in the alleged ₹371 crore scam in the State’s Skill Development Corporation as Justice SVN Bhatti on Wednesday recused himself from hearing it.

Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for the TDP leader, rushed to a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud after Justice Bhatti, who was sitting with Justice Sanjiv Khanna, recused himself from hearing his petition.

“We will list it before an appropriate bench on Tuesday,” said the bench, which also comprised justices JB Pardiwala



and Manoj Misra. The apex court also made it clear that it cannot restrain the trial judge from dealing with the prosecution’s plea seeking further police custody of the TDP leader.

Naidu was arrested on September 9 for allegedly misappropriating funds from the Skill Development Corporation when he was the Chief Minister in 2015, causing a purported loss of Rs 371 crore to the State exchequer. His judicial remand has been extended by the trial court till October 5.

India, US hold 2+2 dialogue to strengthen logistics cooperation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

Given the robust ties between the two countries with focus on defence and security, officials of India and US held discussions on opportunities to further strengthen interoperability and logistics cooperation during the India-US 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue.

Underscoring the transformative momentum in the India-US relationship, the officials late Tuesday in Washington also discussed combined maritime engagements in the Indian Ocean Region, as well as expanded cooperation in the space and cyber domains, the Pentagon said.

The Indian delegation was led by Additional Secretary



Vani Rao of the Ministry of External Affairs and Joint Secretary Vishwesh Negi of the Ministry of Defence, it said. The American side was led by Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Ely Ratner and Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu. “The officials also discussed regional security developments and

strategic priorities across the Indo-Pacific region,” a statement said.

The 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue advanced a wide range of ambitious initiatives across the breadth of the US-India partnership, including defence and security, emerging technologies, people-to-people ties, clean energy, and supply chain resilience, the Pentagon said.

3-day Indo-Pacific Army Chiefs meet held by Indian Army ends

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A three-day Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs Conference (IPACC) organised by the Indian Army with the US Army as the co-host, culminated here on Wednesday. The event witnessed participation from 30 countries and provided an opportunity for the delegates to exchange ideas and views on security and other contemporary issues of mutual interest, with core efforts directed to promote ‘Peace and Stability’ in the Indo-Pacific region.

The event commenced with a call-on by General Randy George, the Chief of Staff (COS) of the US Army to General Manoj Pande, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Indian Army on September 25. Both Chiefs discussed



issues of mutual interest and shared views on contemporary issues.

The next day, the Chiefs and the Heads of Delegations laid wreath at the National War Memorial paying homage to our fallen heroes. This was followed by a Joint Press Brief by the COAS Indian Army and COS of the US Army.

The COAS Indian Army

remarked that the region is not only a cauldron of cultures, histories, resources and opportunities but also a theatre of complexities and challenges. The COS of the US Army highlighted the role of land power and said it not only contributes to the shared security of the region but land power is also the decisive force in dealing with crises.

Centre directs banks to depute doorstep executives to help immobile pensioners

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With reports of several pensioners in their late nineties, immobile or bedridden and hence facing difficulty in visiting the facilities to collect their pensions, the Centre has woken to the cause and directed the pension disbursing banks to depute doorstep executives to such pensioners submit their life certificates.



All pensioners have to give a life certificate (proof that they are alive) annually to continue receiving pension. There are about 69.76 lakh central government pensioners.

An order issued by the Department of Pension and Pensioners’ Welfare (DoPPW) also asked all banks to create awareness about the convenience of obtaining the life certificate digitally by using the face authentication technology by super senior pensioners (those aged 80 and above).

In view of the digital life certificate through face authentication technology, it is now possible for every citizen to submit a digital life certificate (DLC) either from home using an Android smartphone or at the bank branch, said the order dated September 25.

“It is suggested that all

banks may utilise the various platforms for creating awareness of the convenience of obtaining a life certificate by using the face authentication technology,” it said.

Banks can facilitate the submission of life certificates by deputing doorstep banking executives, said the order. They can widely publicise the methodology for submitting DLC by pasting information posters at branches and ATMs, it added.

Banks may send SMS/emails/WhatsApp messages to the pensioner with a link to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for face authentication to empower the super senior pensioner to submit their life certificate through face authentication technology using their Android phone, the order said.

Navy to unveil updated ‘indigenisation roadmap’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With special stress on self-reliance, the Indian Navy will unveil an updated new “indigenisation roadmap” next week with a focus on specific initiatives to achieve self-reliance in acquiring various critical technologies and platforms to boost its overall military might.

The roadmap will be released at the second edition of the annual ‘Swavlamban’ seminar to be held on October 4 and 5, Navy officials said on Wednesday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the conclave.

At a media briefing, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh said the Navy resolved to develop 75 technologies at the Swavlamban seminar last year and the aim has been achieved.

“Last year, in the presence of the prime minister, the Indian Navy had committed to develop at least 75 technologies as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav,” he said.

The Vice Chief said the Navy has invested considerable time and efforts towards realising this commitment. “Today, I can say with confidence that the Swavlamban initiative has



gained critical mass, and is gathering continuous momentum. And, I am happy to inform you that the promises made last year have been fully met, and even surpassed in some cases,” he said. These technologies will be showcased during the upcoming Swavlamban seminar.

An updated “Indian Navy indigenisation roadmap”, a document titled ‘Swavlamban 2.0’ and new challenges for the industry are planned to be released at the seminar, said another senior official.

The Navy will showcase the new technologies that include swarm drones of various categories as well as applications of robotics and artificial intelligence at the seminar. Vice Admiral Singh said over the past year, each and every proposal received by the Navy has been examined, processed and pursued by dedicated teams of

officers to ensure that the force has an array of “trials cleared products”, which are consequently ready, or nearly-ready, for induction. “We have already obtained Acceptance of Necessity for 12 such cases, worth close to 1500 Crores, and procurement orders for products worth 200 crore amongst these have already been signed. In the coming weeks, we are looking to conclude many more such contracts,” he said.

The Navy is encouraging development of new products under the ‘Sprint’ initiative that was launched at the Naval Innovation and Indignation Organisation (NIIO) Seminar in July last year.

These products are being developed under the innovation for defence excellence scheme of the Ministry of Defence and Technology Development Acceleration Cell of Indian Navy.

Chhattisgarh Government withdraws plea challenging ED's action against officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Chhattisgarh Government on Wednesday withdrew from the Supreme Court its plea challenging on the ground of jurisdiction the Enforcement Directorate’s action against State Government officials in money laundering case. The money laundering case lodged in 2022 stems from an FIR registered on a complaint by the Income Tax department over allegations of illegal collection of levy on coal as well as attempts to influence public servants through corrupt means in Chhattisgarh.

The ED charged a “massive scam” took place between 2019 and 2021 in coal transportation in Chhattisgarh as part of which a “cartel” of politicians, officers and others was allegedly running a parallel system of exporting illegal levy. In its plea, the Chhattisgarh Government argued that the ED, on the basis of the FIR lodged in Bengaluru, registered an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) in Raipur on September 29, 2022

and started an investigation against State Government officials.

Chhattisgarh standing counsel Sumeer Sodhi told a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and SVN Bhatti on Wednesday he has instructions to withdraw the plea. The bench allowed the State Government to withdraw the petition and recorded Sodhi’s submission. The petition demanded the court to declare the ED’s action illegal, without jurisdiction and unconstitutional.

The State Government had earlier this year filed a suit challenging the constitutional validity of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) alleging that central investigating agencies are being misused to “intimidate, harass and disturb” the normal functioning of the non-BJP State Government.

The Bhupesh Baghel-led Congress government filed the original suit challenging the law under Article 131 of the Constitution which empowers a state to move the Supreme Court directly in matters of dispute with the Centre or any other State.

Varanasi gets Best Smart City Award in North Zone

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Varanasi has written a new chapter of development with heritage as it has received the 'Best Smart City Award' in the North Zone on Wednesday when at a programme organised in Indore (Madhya Pradesh) by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Municipal Commissioner and CEO of Varanasi Smart City Shipu Giri was honoured by President Draupadi Murmu on Wednesday.

Varanasi was selected as the best smart city out of more than 30 smart cities of North Zone including Agra, Lucknow, Dehradun, Srinagar and Shimla. An exhibition has also been organised in this event, which was inaugurated on Tuesday by Kaushal Kishore, Minister of State, Ministry of Urban and Housing Affairs. Major works of Varanasi were displayed in the exhibition.

The security cover of Varanasi was shown live during the exhibition through advanced surveillance cameras installed in the city. Apart from this, Rudraksh



President Draupadi Murmu giving Best Smart City Award in North Zone to Varanasi MC Shipu Giri in Indore (MP) on Wednesday.

International Convention Centre, Machhodari Model School, modern development of streets of Varanasi, Integrated City Command Centre and Colony Parks were also showcased through 360 degree virtual reality tour. Benia Bagh, development of ancient streets etc have also been demonstrated. According to reports received here, a huge crowd of visitors gath-

ered at the stall of Varanasi Smart City to see the growth journey of 'Brand Banaras'. Dr D Vasudevan, Chief General Manager (CGM) of Varanasi Smart City, called this award an honour of the people of Varanasi. The project undertaken by Varanasi Smart City has been completed within the stipulated time frame and with quality. This is being taken full care of even in the

Gatimaan project. He said that a scheme worth Rs 1,017.69 crore was approved in Varanasi Smart City in 2018, the work of which has been completed. State-of-the-art development has been done in many areas of the city. At the same time, work on three projects worth Rs 329 crore is in progress. It is likely to be completed by March 2024, he added.

CHC Misirpur Supdt given adverse entry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Superintendent of Community Health Centre (CHC) Misirpur has been given adverse entry for not giving proper response regarding low institutional delivery in block Kashi Vidyaapeeth. This was ordered by the Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal while presiding over a meeting of the District Health Committee at Vikas Bhawan here on Tuesday.

In the meeting, information was obtained regarding the status of payment under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY). Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that payment of 266 beneficiaries of last year is pending in the district. The CDO expressed displeasure over the non-payment of last year's pending payments in the district under the JSY and directed all the medical officers in charge to ensure that all the beneficiaries are paid.

The divisional accounts manager was taken to task for not providing satisfactory information about the progress of the amount spent in relation to the allocated budget and not being able to provide item-wise information about the amount spent. He was directed to attend the upcoming meetings with



CDO Himanshu Nagpal holding a meeting of District Health Committee in Varanasi on Tuesday.

complete information. Similarly, block account managers Harhua and Pindra were taken to task for laxity in their work and directed to take strict action. The CDO also sought the information about Seva Pakhwada of Ayushman Bhava campaign. The CMO said that about 500 units of blood were collected in the blood donation camp organised during the Ayushman Bhava campaign.

The CDO said that all the medicines should be kept as per the standards in the health and wellness centres (HWCs) including the district hospitals so that the patients do not have to purchase medicines from outside. Apart from this,

displeasure was expressed over at least four antenatal check-ups and less identification of complicated deliveries in the RCH portal. He laid emphasis on safe delivery of women with high risk pregnancy (HRP) at all the FRUs in the district. Apart from this, the CDO conducted a thorough review of all the programmes.

The CDO also reviewed the progress of Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 5.0, which was conducted in the month of September. While receiving information about the progress of the currently running Ayushman Bhava campaign, he directed that as per the guidelines pre-

scribed for this campaign, all the blocks should conduct the same as per the department-wise microplan. While reviewing the programme, it was directed that the report should be sent to the district headquarters on time. The CDO said that the programmes to be conducted on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti should be organised in 100 per cent gram sabhas.

The superintendents of all government hospitals, all ACMOs, Deputy CMOs, Divisional Accounts Manager, Senior Finance and Accounts Officer, DCPM, incharge medical officers and other medical officers were also present in the meeting.

BLW employees pledge for clean food, water

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A campaign was run in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) on Wednesday with awareness and pledge of clean food, water and environment and 'no use of single waste plastic'. The employees improved the workplace by offering shramdaan. As per the guidelines of the Ministry of Railways, a cleanliness campaign was conducted in the Officers' Guest House, Officers' Rest House and Office Canteens in the series of Swachhta Pakhwada-2023 being organised from September 16 to 30. Under the cleanliness campaign, along with a thorough inspection of the catering units and food facilities available in the canteens, high quality cleaning arrangements were also tested. The food and beverages available in the canteens were inspected and necessary guidelines were given for cleanliness.

Under the public awareness programme, every canteen employee of BLW was educated about clean food, water and environment and also the availability of separate dustbins for dry and wet wastes. During the drive, the ill effects of single use plastic were explained



Employees taking a pledge for clean food, water at BLW in Varanasi on Wednesday.

and people were encouraged to use it and to use only cotton bags. Various types of posters and messages related to cleanliness were also displayed in BLW Officers' Guest House, Officers' Rest House and office canteens.

Earlier, under the ongoing Rajbhasha Fortnight, various programmes are also being organised in BLW. In this direction, a seminar on Bhartendu Smriti Hindi Original Composition was organised at the Hall of Fame. The programme was presided over by BLW's Chief Rajbhasha Officer and Chief Mechanical Engineer (SE) Neeraj Jain. The subject

was introduced by Senior Rajbhasha Officer Dr Sanjay Kumar Singh. Public Relations Officer (PRO) Rajesh Kumar and others were also present. In the seminar, many BLW employees mesmerised the officers and employees by reciting their own poetry. Alok Kumar Singh, Vikas Pandey, Naval Kishore Gupta, Dr Sunita Tiwari, Amlesh Srivastava, Karuna Singh, Om Prakash Chanchal, Nitu Prakash Jaiswar, Bijendra Kumar, Arvind Pratap Singh and many others took part in the programme.

In the same direction, a technical seminar and Hindi

workshop was organised at BLW's Technical Training Centre (TTC). Junior translator Alok Kumar gave detailed information about the technical aspects of e-Office and Unicode.

Junior translator Dr Shashi Kant Sharma talked in detail about the use of punctuation marks in Hindi, technical words, full forms, foreign expressions as well as common mistakes in Hindi.

The programme was conducted by senior translator Amlesh Srivastava, while the vote of thanks was proposed by senior translator Vinod Kumar Srivastava.

CM praises Prayagraj police for best use of latest tech

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has applauded the role of Prayagraj police for making the best use of latest technology (Artificial Intelligence (AI)/Machine Learning (ML)-based traffic enforcement solutions for vehicle tracking) and inter-district coordination in nabbing an inter-state gang of robbers.

The CM's praise came during an online review meeting held recently. The meet was also attended by Commissioner of Police Ramit Sharma who briefed the CM about the use of technology in cracking the case.

The Prayagraj police had

recently arrested four key members of a Katihar (Bihar) based gang, who had executed two loots in UP, including Prayagraj and Sitapur, on September 12 and 15 respectively.

Explaining about the technology that helped cops in tracing out the escape route, Sharma told reporters "We took the advantage of the AI/ML based traffic enforcement solutions technology that helps in vehicle tracking. The Prayagraj police with the help of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera and Red Light Violate Detection (RLVD) traced the escape route of robbers who had executed a ₹7 lakh loot

near MG Road under Civil Lines police station in the city on September 12."

"After tracking their bike's registration and through CCTV network, police found that the robbers had entered the city from Varanasi. Then the Prayagraj police coordinated with their Varanasi, Lucknow, Kanpur, Agra, Sitapur and Barabanki counterparts and shared information to tighten the noose around the law breakers," Sharma added.

Similarly, various police teams assigned to crack the incident also coordinated with each other and seniors with the help of Integrated Control and Command Centre (ICCC).

The police also took help from different toll plazas and hotel industry to find out their exact route and stay details.

The CP added that a group of four robbers on two separate bikes in a bid to dodge cops had escaped on two different routes i.e Prayagraj-Kanpur and Prayagraj-Lucknow. However, one was spotted moving to Kanpur and Lucknow with the help of ICCCC, he added.

Sharma said the ICCCC facilities at Varanasi, Lucknow, Prayagraj and Sitapur helped in tracking the route of criminals. Moreover, the Operation Trinetra (that involves installing CCTVs) also helped cops to ascertain the identities of the criminals.

7 kids hurt in terrace collapse

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

As many as seven kids sustained injuries after they were trapped under the debris of a collapsed terrace in Parsara village under Kokhraj police station of Kaushambi. The injured kids — Aditya (12), Riya (8), Sneha (10), Aryan (6), Kanak (8), Shreyansh (10) and Kashish (10) were taken to the district hospital, Manjhanpur, from where doctors referred Aditya and Shreyansh to

Prayagraj for better treatment.

The incident took place when a group of children were playing under the dilapidated terrace attached to a wall. "Some kids climbed the terrace following which it collapsed trapping the kids. They were pulled out with the help of locals and taken to Manjhanpur hospital. Two of them were later referred to the SRN hospital in Prayagraj for better treatment," Kaushambi SP Brijesh Kumar Srivastava said.

ABETMENT TO SUICIDE CASE AGAINST TEACHER: A case has been registered against a teacher for abetment to suicide of a female student here. The student, Palak Jaiswal, was a class XI student in a college. She had posted a video of the programme organised in the college on Teachers' Day on WhatsApp status in which the school teacher is seen dancing.

It is alleged that after seeing the status the teacher got

angry, called the student and threatened to get her name removed from the college. After this the student committed suicide at home. The family members were continuously visiting the police station to register a case against the teacher but the police allegedly scolded them and sent them away. When MLA Harshvardhan Vajpayee took cognizance of the matter, a case was registered against the teacher on the Tuesday.

UP Board disposes of 59,860 correction-related complaints

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The authorities of Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad, popularly known as UP Board, claimed to have disposed of 59,860 complaints related to correction in certificates and marksheets of students pending since 1984 after holding special camps in different districts.

He added the board had received as many as 59,860 backlogs/complaints, including Prayagraj region (8356), Meerut (24,512), Bareilly (5188), Varanasi (18,591) and Gorakhpur (3213) related to correction of errors in students' certificates/marksheets.

"This is despite the fact that the board had been repeatedly demanding proof and certified documents from students/principals/BSA and

the board authorities have taken outstanding measures to solve the long-pending backlogs and complaints of students pending since 1984.

He added the board had received as many as 59,860 backlogs/complaints, including Prayagraj region (8356), Meerut (24,512), Bareilly (5188), Varanasi (18,591) and Gorakhpur (3213) related to correction of errors in students' certificates/marksheets.

"This is despite the fact that the board had been repeatedly demanding proof and certified documents from students/principals/BSA and

DIOS concerned to get the errors rectified," he said. Shukla added the oldest complaint was from Meerut region wherein the applicant had registered his plaint regarding the correction of his father name's spelling in High School certificate in 1984. Similarly, in Prayagraj region a complaint of Rae Bareilly-based applicant was pending since 1986 wherein the father's name in High school certificate was misspelt. The board authorities after taking serious note of problems being faced by students and their guardians, had decided to hold camps in different districts

with the help of BSAs and DIOSs concerned and invited the applicants or complainants to come with proper proofs, documents to get grievances sorted out on the spot.

"All the 59,860 backlogs were sorted out within two months. The corrected documents have been uploaded on parishad's website as well," Shukla said adding that the board has decided to take online applications from students, developing its tracking system and seeking online documentation to get the errors cleared as well as online verification within stipulated time.

Air show to impact operation of flights

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The air show to celebrate the Air Force Day will impact the operation of flights from different cities to Prayagraj between October 3 and October 8. The mega air show will be organised on October 8 and is likely to be attended by President Draupadi Murmu. Authorities have already cancelled flights from Indore, Raipur, Lucknow and

Dehradun. Besides 76 other flights will be cancelled between the given dates. Although the main event is on October 8, flight operations at Prayagraj airport will remain affected from October 2 itself. On October 6 there will be a full dress rehearsal of the event. The Indigo has released information about the cancellation of 76 flights during this period. Apart from this, timings of flights operated by Alliance Air have been changed and will

be delayed by one hour. At present flights to Bhubaneswar, Delhi and Mumbai are allowed from October 2 to October 8. Although this may also change later but Prayagraj-Dehradun, Prayagraj-Indore, Prayagraj-Raipur, Prayagraj-Lucknow will remain cancelled for seven consecutive days.

Likewise, Prayagraj-Bengaluru service will also remain cancelled on October 3, 5 and 8 and will operate only on October 2, 4, 6 and 7. The

Prayagraj-Bhopal flight will also remain cancelled on October 3, 5 and 7 and will operate on the rest of the intervening days.

On the 91st foundation day of India Air Force (IAF) an air show is being organised by the IAF at Sangam. While a number of flights operating from Prayagraj Airport are being cancelled, a radius of three kilometres around Bamrauli Air Station has been declared as 'no flying zone'.

‘Kanya Janmotsav’ programme held

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjana while addressing the 'Kanya Janmotsav' programme organised by the Probation department at the Women's Hospital on Tuesday as the chief guest said that equal right was a must for the girls to move forward. She appealed to the parents of newborn girls for registration under Kanya Sumangla Scheme for their future. She said that the government has increased the amount of help from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000 which will be available to the girls from time to time. On the occasion she gave gift kits to all the 30 girls and blessed them. Congratulating the mothers for giving birth to girl child the DM said no discrimination should be done between boys and girls. Probation Officer Shakti Tripathi said the 'Kanya Sumangla Yojana' was a scheme to empower girls and threw light over the other schemes related to women welfare.

After the function the DM inspected the maternity ward and interacted with patients about the facilities which were being provided to them by the hospital. She directed the officials concerned to make avail-

able medical facilities properly and ensure the availability of other benefits too. Inspecting the premises the DM took the officials concerned to task for the filth and warned to maintain cleanliness otherwise remain prepared to face the music. She made it clear that medical waste should be disposed of as per norms. She inspected the buildings which were to be demolished for new construction, including the nursing school. During the inspection the DM was accompanied by Chief Development Officer (CDO) Srilaxmi VS, Principal Medical College Dr RB Kamal, Dr Juhi Deshpande, representative of working agencies and other officials concerned.

Meanwhile the DM while presiding over the meeting of the District Health Committee, Ayush Committee and inter-departmental Coordination Committee at the Collectorate on Tuesday directed the doctors posted at the CHCs as well as the PHCs to upload their photographs on group while doing rounds in wards. Reviewing the availability of the health facilities to patients the DM expressed her discontent over the attitude of doctors under which pregnant women

were being referred to other hospitals instead of treatment. Taking a strict view the DM directed the doctors to mention proper reason in referral cases. She sought details from the chief medical officer (CMO) about the admitted pregnant women and the figure of referred cases in comparison to admitted patients. She directed the CMO to issue show-cause notice to the incharge of Women's Hospital for mismanagement. She directed the doctors deployed at the CHCs and PHCs to do the round in the wards at midnight and upload the photograph on the group. She said no doctor was allowed to leave the place of posting without the prior permission. She made it clear that it was a wrong practice that most of the doctors were not staying at the place of posting during night time. The DM directed the CMO to prepare a list of the ASHAs according to the performance. On the issue of bad progress in the distribution of Ayushman cards the MOIC Rajgarh was taken to task and the DM directed the CMO to review the progress regularly and take action accordingly.

ARRESTED: The City Kotwali police arrested three


accused of theft and recovered three gas cylinders on Tuesday. Pushpa Devi of Gafoor Khan Ki Gali Vasilganj under City Kotwali police station had on September 23 lodged a case at the police station stating that her gas cylinder and a mobile phone had been stolen at night. After registering the case SHO Bal Mukund Mishra handed over the investigation to sub-inspector (S-I) Ajay Kumar Ojha. During investigation the IO interrogated a suspect who was identified as Sunil Lodhi of Oliyar Ghat under City Kotwali police station who said he used to steal household goods with Sonu of Takiya Danu Shah under City Kotwali police station. On identification of Sunil the police nabbed Sonu but nothing could be recovered from his house. The police recovered a gas cylinder from Sunil's house. The two accused said they used to sell the cylinder to Suresh Nishad of Machhali Ka Pul under City Kotwali police station who was working at a gas agency. On information provided by the accused the police raided the house of Suresh Nishad and received two gas cylinders. After completing the legal formalities the police sent the trio to jail.

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FIRST COLUMN

HOW TO GET HELP FROM GOD?

To begin with, accept the ‘Karmaphala’ principal’ — “what we sow we reap”




AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We have to make suitable efforts to do that. God is unlike our parents, who are obliged to help, especially when we are quite young. In the case of God, we have to deserve His help. If it wasn't so, God would be obliged to help everyone. Even parents stop helping as children become self-supporting, except to guide, as required. Therefore, we have to get rid of this false impression that God will help no matter what. Yes, He will if we become deserving. In this article, I will detail some thirty ways we can successfully do that, and which are mostly simple.

The first one has to be following dharma because it is most dear to God. God even incarnates to re-establish dharma. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 4.7) Dharma is the bedrock upon which the creation is based. Don't we know what social and other norms are? Then, we must not cross their 'Maryada' (limits). The second one is to be dutiful because this is the only right given to us. (2.47) Goodness must follow in our behaviour. We must be headed towards purity, as practised by yogis. (5.11) We should try to remember God because He is everything. (7.19) This will lead to 'dhyana' – the process of meditation.

Now I take up processes involving others. The first one has to be charity. All of us have something to spare, whether material objects or personal time. Human birth demands that we become useful to others. How else can the creation go on? We must help/serve others and others will do likewise.

The next group of acts are when we directly address God. The first one has to be praying, which comes to us naturally, whenever we are in trouble; even children pray when fearful. We should express our thanks if God responds. Shouldn't we be highly obliged? If God still does not respond, it is time to seek forgiveness and begin repenting for sins done in the past. Shouldn't we wonder about God's non-response and what we must do to deserve His help? Gradually, we must begin giving our minds and intelligence to God. What does this mean? Simply stated, God must be brought into our psyche; we must begin to think about God.



By now we would have become humble enough to do 'namaskar' to God giving up our highly bloated ego; visit a nearby temple to have 'darshan' of God. These places are generally highly charged with spiritual energy, which will help us to become God-conscious. We can begin worshipping God in our homes. We can begin by choosing a photo of God in whatever form attracts us the most; God has multiple forms. Similarly, we can start chanting God's name or mantra, whatever appeals to us. All these will lead to our becoming inquisitive about God's instructions, as detailed in bona fide scriptures like the Geeta. We can try to do whatever God wishes us to do (16.24), which will ensure God's pleasure. By now, we would have become highly deserving of God's help, because we in effect would have taken God's shelter.

This takes us to another level. God takes charge of our lives; He begins to use us as His 'nimitta' (instrument). Our lives will begin to become greatly fulfilling. God will get everything done and we will get credit. We will become very useful and highly satisfied. 'Tapasya' will begin to come naturally, which will qualify us for more gains, because in the spiritual domain also, the 'karmaphala principle' works, the only difference being: in this case our acts are spiritual. The word 'yogi' will no longer be a distant concept, we will become one. Sky is the limit then, as Sanjaya of the Mahabharata fame has described, "Where there is the yogeshwar Shri Krishna and where there is the archer Arjuna (in our case us), there will be 'saubhagya' (opulence), victory, wealth and definite principles (morality)".

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

Punjab is reeling under socio-economic distress

Without sustainable economic growth, local employment generation, and self-reliance, Punjab's well-being will continue to be a challenge



It's worrisome that Punjab only receives 45 paise for every rupee it contributes to the Centre's tax kitty. This is especially concerning when comparing it to states like UP and Bihar, which receive Rs 1.80 and Rs 1.20, respectively. This revenue-sharing disparity is a significant contributor to the socio-economic distress experienced by Punjab. As a landlocked border state, it's even more crucial for Punjab to overcome this fiscal distress since India's and Pakistan's bilateral trade also halted through the Wagah-Attari route majorly affected Punjab's economy only. The said cost-effective cross-border route can directly short-connect to Europe, a big potential to catalyse the Punjab economy as strong as the economy of Southern-Western States, because of near to seaports.

Being far away from the seaports is one of the major disadvantages that Punjab is struggling with, and has a crippling impact on industrial growth. Secondly, adjoining the sensitive Pakistan border not only halted the trade but Pakistan led to illegal arms supply and drug terror scuffed the social fabric and law and order of Punjab. Keeping these two major geographical disadvantages centre stage till any central government has not compensated Punjab as it faces odd challenges in comparison to other states. Not even a fair share of tax kitty given, the Rural Development Fund(RDF) and Mandi Fee of Rs 5337 crore have not been released for long. Thus, how long does a fiscally distressed state government alone take forward the most development and welfare-oriented expenditure?

When a state's economy weakens, its people and progress suffer together. This is evident in the current crisis in India-Canada relations, as Punjab's economic distress has led to a migration of its human resources to Canada. Unfortunately, this migration has created a breeding ground for radicals and anti-Indian khalistan extremist activities on Canadian soil, a globalised challenge that has gone unaddressed. The Canadian connection to khalistani is longstanding. Since the mid-80s, there has been a significant exodus of Punjabi youth to Canada, where they often

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WHEN A STATE'S ECONOMY WEAKENS, ITS PEOPLE SUFFER. PUNJAB'S ECONOMIC DISTRESS HAS LED TO A MIGRATION OF ITS HUMAN RESOURCES TO CANADA

(The author is vice-chairman of Sonalika group, vice-chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, and chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views expressed are personal)

do odd jobs to sustain themselves. Unfortunately, some of these young people become prey to anti-India extremists.

It is not good to allow a lop-sided economic development of a sensitive state like Punjab. It has its serious repercussions. If we fail to ensure holistic development, then we will be accused of inefficiencies in handling human resources. Unemployment is a multi-faceted problem exacerbating the distressed places associated with poorer mental health, crime and drug abuse. There is enough evidence of drug abuse and distress in the law-and-order situation, that an issue of brimming, can be ascribed directly to unemployment.

Punjab, which used to be a prosperous and progressive state even during its toughest time, is currently facing a significant problem of uncontrolled unemployment due to distressed farming and an imbalanced industrial base. This has resulted in Punjab's GDP growth rate dropping to 6%, which is lower than the national growth rate of 7.24% in 2022-23. Punjab is currently ranked at the 19th position, whereas it ranked first in GDP among the states in 1981 and fourth in 2001. Interestingly, UP and Bihar, which were once part of the economically sick states known as 'BIMARU' (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh), are now fast-growing economies. UP achieved an impressive growth rate of 16.8%, with a GDP of Rs 20.48 lakh crore in 2022-23, while Bihar's growth rate was 10.98% with a GDP of Rs 7,45,310 crore.

It is crucial to acknowledge that Punjab has immense potential that should not be overlooked when compared to the Southern and Western states. Presently, Punjab's contribution to the country's tax kitty stands at approximately 3%, and it only receives 1.8% of

the divisible pool of taxes allocated by the Fifteenth Finance Commission. In contrast, the Western and Southern states contribute 67% to the central exchequer but only receive a meagre 3-4%. While their argument may appear valid, it is essential to consider that the Southern and Western states account for 53% of India's total factories and have the advantage of being closer to seaports, which can drive economic growth and result in more contributions to the central exchequer. Punjab's sluggish growth may dampen overall economic sentiments, but it still holds enormous potential for growth and contribution to the country's economy.

Undoubtedly, Punjab has the potential to contribute 10-15% as it possesses a strong capable and committed entrepreneurial spirit to overcome this economic distress. This spirit has been evident in the past when it overcame the challenges of the partition of India in 1947 and 13 years of militancy in the mid-80s to mid-90s. Within a few years of these events, Punjab was able to rehabilitate its economy and become the richest state in India in the 80s. Today, Punjab seeks a fair interface without any political interference to compete on a level playing field and strengthen its economy, ultimately reducing unemployment.

It is important to consider Punjab's significant contribution to national food security. However, the large areas and population figures of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar provide them with additional leverage from the central tax pool. It is concerning that Punjab only received 1.8% of the Rs 8,16,649 crore distributed by the centre to the states during 2022-23. In contrast, Uttar Pradesh received the highest share at 18% (Rs 1,46,525 crore) and Bihar received the second-highest share

at 10%. This highlights why Punjab and other states argue that they are not receiving a fair share of funds, despite contributing more to the exchequer.

During the fiscal year 2022-23, Punjab contributed a sum of Rs 32,800 crore to the central taxes fund, which included CGST, income tax, corporation tax, wealth tax, union excise duty, customs, and service tax. However, in return, the state only received Rs 14,756 crore. This has led to Punjab raising the issue with the Fifteen Finance Commission, as it believes it deserves a fair share of central tax. Despite its efforts, Punjab has been unable to secure an amendment to the Finance Act.

Constitutionally, the purpose of the finance commission is to create some kind of 'equalization' among advantaged and disadvantaged states. From the point of view of equalization, the adoption of population figures as one of the criteria of devolution needs to be justified. Therefore, the constitution provides for a fair share of union revenue to be devolved to the states to address this issue.

The Way Forward:

In a federal structure, the central government needs to prioritise the improvement of economic conditions and livelihood prospects for the people of Punjab, which are facing unique challenges in comparison to other states.

It is crucial to take a comprehensive approach that ensures employment opportunities and social respect regardless of demographic and political differences. Without sustainable economic growth, local employment generation, and self-reliance, Punjab's well-being will continue to be a challenge, which is indispensable for the overall well-being of our nation.




AS MITTAL

Goat-rearing can be an excellent source of livelihood in rural Bihar

To provide livelihood, the government should provide adequate training and information to landless, marginal farmers about the goat farming schemes

Anita Devi, a 40-year-old resident of Hussainpur village, located about 65 kilometres from the Muzaffarpur district in Bihar, lost her husband two years ago. Left with no means to support her family of seven, including four daughters and two sons, she started goat farming to earn a livelihood. She faced criticism when she began rearing goats as a woman farmer. However, Anita resisted because her motivation to provide for her family kept her going. She had started with just two goats. Today, she has eight adult goats and 20 young ones. Goat rearing enabled her to protect her family and improve her financial status.



SIMRAN KUMARI

(The writers is a student from rural Bihar; views expressed are personal)

Alongside manual labour, agriculture-based employment like cattle, poultry, ducks, and goat farming is a crucial source of income, especially for economically disadvantaged individuals like landless, small-scale farmers, agricultural labourers, and socially oppressed individuals. According to the latest 2019 Livestock census, India has a population of 150 million goats, the second largest in the world. In around half a million remote villages, 70 million farmers are involved in the goat farming business. The primary income from Goat farming comes from milk, which has a production of about 42000 Kgs and meat production, which stands at 8500 Kgs.

Like Anita Devi, Goat farming is an excellent means of self-employment for many rural women. Around rural areas in Muzaffarpur, many women earn their livelihoods through goat farming, becoming breadwinners for their families. 35-year-old Champa Devi, resident of the same village as Anita, also supports her three daughters and two sons by raising goats.

In other instances, older women in the village claim that their sons and daughters-in-law have stopped providing for them in their old age. These women have, therefore, started rearing 2-4 goats to earn a living. These women leave for the fields in the morning to



graze their goats and only return in the evening.

Goat farming is a hard job, especially during the monsoons. It can be a challenge to find adequate fodder for the goats. The farmers rely on bananas, bamboo, and Banyan leaves to keep the cattle alive. People invest their capital into it. Even

after that, we see an increasing number of women who raise goats in the village. It has become a source of livelihood for many families.

Various non-governmental and government organisations run programs to strengthen the village economy through agriculture-based employment like cattle, poultry, ducks, and goat farming. The Bihar government provides subsidies up to 60% for promoting goat farming. Under the Integrated Goat and Sheep Scheme, there is a provision for subsidising ten goats plus one buck, and 40 goats and two bucks. The government also provides financial aid to disadvantaged communities like Scheduled Caste/Schedule Tribe and

Other Backward Classes. These continuously disadvantaged groups get up to 60% subsidy, while the rest get 50%.

In addition, the capital investment required for raising 20 goats with one buck is about two lakhs, and farmers can take a loan from the bank for this purpose. This process of approving loans goes through the Department of Animal Husbandry in consultation with the bank. After that, subsidies get deposited into the beneficiaries' bank accounts in two instalments. However, because of a lack of awareness, many rural families do not know these schemes, leading women farmers like Anita and Champa to take loans with

high interest rates to start goat farming. On top of that, due to their lack of training, It is difficult for farmers to acquire high-quality breeds.

To promote livelihoods, the government should provide adequate training and information to landless, marginal farmers, and labourers about the goat farming schemes. Details about these schemes should be available in the Panchayat office or Gram Sabha. Ward members should be responsible for disseminating information about these programs to goat farmers. Only then women in vulnerable situations will be able to continue goat farming as a career and give themselves and their families a better future.

Wedding hall fire in Iraq kills 100, hurts 150

AP ■ MOSUL (IRAQ)

A raging fire seemingly caused by fireworks set off to celebrate a Christian wedding consumed a hall packed with guests in northern Iraq, killing around 100 people and injuring 150 others as authorities warned Wednesday the death toll could still rise.

Authorities said that flammable building materials also contributed to the latest disaster to hit Iraq's dwindling Christian minority. In the fire's chaotic aftermath, officials offered conflicting death tolls and security officials said they had detained staff at the wedding hall as part of their investigation.

The fire happened in the Hamdaniya area of Iraq's Nineveh province, authorities said. That's a predominantly Christian area just outside of the city of Mosul, some 335 kilometres (205 miles) north-west of Baghdad. There was no official word on the cause of



People gather at the site of a fatal fire, in the district of Hamdaniya, Nineveh province, Iraq on Wednesday. A fire that raced through a hall hosting a Christian wedding in northern Iraq killed multiple people, authorities said Wednesday. AP/PTI

the blaze, but the Kurdish television news channel Rudaw aired footage showing pyrotechnics shooting flames up from the floor of the event and setting a chandelier

afire. Multiple witnesses, including 50-year-old wedding attendee Faten Youssef, said the fire started as the bride and groom began their slow dance.

The flames raced through plastic decorations and the ceiling started collapsing, she said. "Flames started falling on us," Youssef told The Associated Press. "Things were

falling down and blocked the way to the exit." She said her family found their way out through a kitchen, after the family struggled through smoke and flames and her son failed to kick through a jammed exit door.

It wasn't immediately clear if the bride and groom were among those hurt.

Survivors arrived at local hospitals in bandages, receiving oxygen, as their families milled through hallways and outside as workers organized more oxygen cylinders. Some of those burned included children. Ambulance sirens wailed for hours after the fire as paramedics brought out the injured.

Extravagant wedding ceremonies are common in Iraq, like many countries in the Middle East. Families often invite hundreds of relatives and members of the broader community, spending heavily on spectacular ceremonies with elaborately decorated

halls, music and entertainers, often including pyrotechnics.

Casualty figures fluctuated in the hours after the incident.

An initial Health Ministry statement, carried by the state-run Iraqi News Agency, said the blaze killed over 100 people and injured 150. Health officials in Nineveh province put the death toll at 114, while Iraqi Interior Minister Abdul Amir al-Shammari later put the death toll at 93.

A Health Ministry official, speaking to the AP at midday Wednesday on condition of anonymity as he did not have authorization to talk to journalists, said that 30 bodies have been identified by their relatives, but the rest are so badly burned that will require DNA identification.

He put the death toll at 94, with around 100 people still receiving medical treatment. "The death toll is expected to rise as some are in critical condition," he said.

Leader of Spain's conservatives loses first bid to become PM

AP ■ MADRID

The leader of Spain's conservatives failed Wednesday in his long-shot first bid to become the country's next prime minister when he fell short of the votes he needed in the Spanish parliament to form a government. As expected, Popular Party leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo came up four votes shy of the necessary absolute majority of 176 votes in his favour. Feijóo will try again on Friday when the bar is lowered and he needs only more "yes" than "no" votes from parliament's 350 lawmakers.

The Popular Party holds 137 seats in the Madrid-based Congress of the Deputies, the most of any party. But even with backing from the far-right Vox's 33 lawmakers and two from small conservative parties representing Navarra and the Canary Islands, Feijóo only reached 172 votes in his favour to 178 against him.

Spain's July 23 national election left the parliament highly fragmented with its legislators spread between 11 different parties, setting the stage for a difficult path to power for any party. If Feijóo fails to win approval on his second attempt, acting Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez would get a shot at staying in the Moncloa Palace. The centre-left Socialist leader would have to round up enough support of lawmakers from a group of competing leftist, regionalist and separatist parties from Catalonia and the Basque Country. The parliament debated Feijóo's bid to become prime minister for several hours on Tuesday and on Wednesday morning before the vote. The debate, however, was dominated by the possibility that Sánchez is considering accepting demands from Catalan separatist parties that Spain grant an amnesty for hundreds, possibly thousands, of people who participated in a failed 2017 secession bid by northeast Catalonia. Sánchez, who has pardoned several high-level Catalan separatists, has kept quiet on the possibility of an amnesty, and only said that he wants to continue "normalising" relations with the northeast region where tensions have decreased in recent years.

6 climate activists take on European nations

AP ■ STRASBOURG

Six young people argued that governments across Europe aren't doing enough to protect people from climate change at the European Court of Human Rights on Wednesday in the latest and largest instance of activists taking governments to court to force climate action.

Legal teams for the 32 nations — which includes the 27 EU member countries, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, Russia and Turkey — questioned the admissibility of the case as well as the claim that the plaintiffs are victims of climate change harm.

But lawyers representing the young adults and children from Portugal said the nations they're suing have failed to adequately address human-caused warming and therefore violated some of the group's fundamental rights.

Barrister Sudhanshu Swaroop, a counsel for United Kingdom, said national governments understand the threat

of climate change and its challenges and are determined to tackle it through international cooperation.

He said the plaintiffs should have gone through national courts first, and stressed that since they are not nationals of the countries they are attacking, other than Portugal, the European Court of Human Rights cannot have jurisdiction.

"There was no attempt by the applicants to invoke, let alone exhaust domestic remedies," agreed Isabelle Niedispacher, a legal expert for Belgium.

Pleading on behalf of the young people, Alison Macdonald told the judges about the urgency to tackle the "biggest crisis that Europe and the world" have perhaps faced, and that they should play a bigger role in helping control planet-warming emissions. "It cannot be within a state's discretion whether or not to act to prevent catastrophic climate destruction," she said.

US allows Israeli citizens to travel to America visa-free

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration is admitting Israel into a select group of countries whose citizens are allowed to travel to the United States without getting a visa in advance.

The decision announced Wednesday comes despite Washington's concerns about the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinian Americans and marks a major accomplishment for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has sparred frequently with the Biden administration.

Under the waiver programme, Israelis will be able to travel to the US for business or leisure purposes for up to 90 days without a visa simply by registering with the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation. But even if they are authorised to travel under that system, US officials at the airport can still bar them from entering the country. Israel had been facing a

Saturday deadline, the end of the US government's budget year, to gain admission to the programme without having to requalify for eligibility next year.

The Department of Homeland Security administers the programme, which currently allows citizens of 40 mostly European and Asian countries to travel to the US for three months without visas.

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said the agreement, after more than a decade of work, "will enhance our two nations' collaboration on counterterrorism, law enforcement and our other common priorities" and make the allies more secure.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in a joint statement with Mayorkas, cited enhanced "freedom of movement for US citizens, including those living in the Palestinian Territories or travelling to and from them". Israel's admission has been a priority for successive Israeli leaders. It comes as

Netanyahu is facing months of mass protests against his proposed remake of Israel's judicial system that critics say will make the country less democratic.

Countries that want to take part in the visa programme have to meet three critical benchmarks.

Israel met two of those benchmarks over the past two years: a low percentage of Israelis who applied for visas and were rejected and a low percentage of Israelis who have overstayed their visas. Israel had struggled to meet the third, for reciprocity that essentially means all US citizens, including Palestinian Americans, must be treated equally when travelling to or through Israel.

Claiming national security reasons, Israel has long had separate entry requirements and screening processes for Palestinian Americans.

Many complained that the procedures were onerous and discriminatory.

Azerbaijan says 192 of its troops were killed in last week's offensive

AP ■ BAKU

A total of 192 Azerbaijani troops were killed and 511 were wounded during Azerbaijan's offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh last week, the country's Health Ministry announced on Wednesday. It also said that one Azeri civilian died in the hostilities. Nagorno-Karabakh officials said earlier that at least 200 people on their side, including 10 civilians, were killed and over 400 were wounded in the fighting.

The military operation allowed Azerbaijan to reclaim full control over the breakaway region that was run by separatists for about 30 years.

Tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians — more than a third of the region's population — have already left. More are likely to follow after separatist troops agreed to lay down arms and Azerbaijan lifted a

10-month blockade of the road linking the territory to Armenia.

Azerbaijan and separatist officials have held two rounds of talks on the "reintegration" of Nagorno-Karabakh and its ethnic Armenian population into the mainly Muslim country, but how exactly it would happen remains unclear.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a region of Azerbaijan that came under the control of ethnic Armenian forces, backed by the Armenian military, in separatist fighting that ended in 1994.

During a six-week war in 2020, Azerbaijan took back parts of Nagorno-Karabakh along with surrounding territory that Armenian forces had claimed during the earlier conflict.

In December, Azerbaijan imposed a blockade of the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with

Armenia, alleging that the Armenian government was using the road for mineral extraction and illicit weapons shipments to the region's separatist forces.

Armenia charged that the closure denied basic food and fuel supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh's approximately 120,000 people. Azerbaijan rejected the accusation, arguing the region could receive supplies through the Azerbaijani city of Aghdam — a solution long resisted by Nagorno-Karabakh authorities, who called it a strategy for Azerbaijan to gain control of the region.

Some 42,500 people, or about 35 per cent of Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population, had left for neighbouring Armenia as of Wednesday morning, according to Armenian authorities. Hours-long traffic jams were reported on Tuesday on the

road linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia.

An explosion at a gas station near the region's capital Stepanakert, where people were queuing to fuel up their cars before leaving for Armenia, on Monday night killed at least 68 people, according to Nagorno-Karabakh's human rights ombudsman Gegham Stepanyan.

Another 290 were wounded, and a total of 105 were considered missing as of Tuesday evening, he said.

The Armenian Health Ministry on Wednesday said 237 people wounded in both the hostilities last week and the gas station explosion on Monday had been evacuated by ambulance and helicopter from Nagorno-Karabakh.

They're receiving necessary treatment, and the process of evacuating the injured continues, the ministry said.

UK authorities first drug consumption room

AP ■ LONDON

Scottish authorities on Wednesday approved a 2.3 million-pound (\$2.8 million) pound drug consumption room, the first government-backed place in the UK where users can take illegal drugs such as cocaine and heroin under the supervision of medical staff.

Local officials in the Scottish city of Glasgow on Wednesday approved the facility, which had long been delayed by political disagreements.

Authorities hope the pilot project will help tackle drug misuse problems in Scotland, which has the highest drug death figures in Western Europe and saw almost three times the rate of drug poisoning deaths compared to the UK average in 2021.

The facility, which will start recruiting staff next year, was first proposed in 2016 following an HIV outbreak in Glasgow among people

who injected drugs in public places.

It's backed by the Scottish government, although some lawmakers have raised concerns about the impact on local residents and businesses.

Proponents, including Scotland's drug and alcohol policy minister Elena Whitham, say evidence from more than 100 similar facilities worldwide, including in Germany and the Netherlands, show they work to save lives and reduce overall costs to health services.

The centre will be staffed by trained health care professionals and offer a hygienic environment where people can consume drugs they obtained elsewhere.

Officials say people can't share drugs with others in the facility, and that health and social workers at the centre will offer advice and support on recovery and welfare.

Churchill's Old War Office launched as luxury hotel

PTI ■ LONDON

The Old War Office (OWO) of Britain's World War II era prime minister Winston Churchill opened its doors as a brand-new luxury hotel in London with a glittering launch event, complete with surprise musical performances by musicians Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber and Andrea Bocelli.

Princess Anne — the Princess Royal, the sister of King Charles III, officially unveiled the plaque for The OWO after a tour of the hotel with Hinduja Group co-chairman GP Hinduja on Tuesday evening. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also made a quick stopover, along with parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, hoteliers and stars of film and television. The Indian-origin Hinduja Group conglomerate and the UK's richest family had acquired the landmark on Whitehall, opposite Downing Street, over eight years ago and tied up with Raffles Hotels to transform the building into an extravagant hub complete with luxury residences, restaurants and spas. "We have always been working to see what best we can do between India and the UK because we believe our responsibility is to act as a bridge between the host country and the motherland," said GP Hinduja.

"It took us eight years and in these eight years we had a lot to do, but finally this iconic building has been converted into peace and solace, not World Wars. It is the legacy not only of the Hinduja Group but London as a great destination. Everyone who lands in London will first come here to see what it is," he said. After the launch event, which also showcased the food of 3-Michelin-starred chef Mauro Colagreco as the chef partner for The OWO, the hotel will welcome its first guests starting this Friday.

UN asked to declare 'gender apartheid' as Af womens' mental health worsens

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The UN's most powerful body must support governments seeking to legally declare the intensifying crackdown by Afghanistan's Taliban rulers on women and girls "gender apartheid", the head of the UN agency promoting gender equality said Tuesday.

Sima Bahous, executive director of UN Women, told the Security Council that more than 50 increasingly dire Taliban edicts are being enforced with more severity, including by male family members. That is exacerbating mental health issues and suicidal thoughts especially among young women and is shrinking women's decision-making even in their own homes.

"They tell us that they are prisoners living in darkness, confined to their homes with-



out hope or future," she said.

Under international law, apartheid is defined as a system of legalized racial segregation that originated in South Africa. But a growing consensus among international experts, officials and activists says apartheid can also apply to gender in cases like that of

Afghanistan, where women and girls face systematic discrimination.

"We ask you to lend your full support to an intergovernmental process to explicitly codify gender apartheid in international law," Bahous urged the 15-member council, including its five permanent

members: the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France.

There is no existing international law to respond to "mass, state-sponsored gender oppression," Bahous said. But she said the Taliban's "systemic and planned assault on women's rights... must be named, defined and proscribed in our global norms so that we can respond appropriately."

The Taliban took power in August 2021 during the final weeks of the US and NATO forces' pullout from Afghanistan after 20 years of war. As they did during their previous rule of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban gradually reimposed their harsh interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia, barring girls from school beyond the sixth grade and women from almost all jobs, public spaces, gyms

and recently closing beauty salons.

The Security Council meeting on UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' latest report on Afghanistan took place on the final day of the annual meeting of world leaders at the 193-member UN General Assembly.

On Wednesday, Zabihullah Mujahid, the main spokesman for the Taliban government, slammed the council meeting for focusing on domestic Afghan matters of "women's education and their work" instead of issues such as security, peace and stability.

"It was necessary to discuss the end of the blacklist in the United Nations, the removal of sanctions, the release of seized assets," Mujahid said on X, formerly known as Twitter. He said the UN gathering should also have discussed "the recog-

nition of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" as the Taliban call their government.

No country has recognized the Taliban, and the assembly's credentials committee hasn't either, primarily over its effort to relegate women to their homes and failure to form an inclusive government. This has left UN recognition with the now-ousted previous government led by Ashraf Ghani. For the third year, its representative did not speak at the high-level gathering.

Bahous said that over the past year, UN Women collaborated with the UN political mission in Afghanistan known as UNAMA and the UN International Office for Migration to interview over 500 Afghan women.

Among their key findings, she said: 46% think the Taliban should not be recognised under

any circumstances; 50% think the Taliban should only be recognised after it restores women's and girls' rights to education, employment, and participation in government.

The women interviewed said the dramatic shrinking of their influence on decision-making, not just at the national or provincial level but also in their communities and homes, is driven by increased poverty, decreasing financial contribution and "the Taliban's imposition of hyper-patriarchal gender norms," Bahous said.

In a grim sign of women's growing isolation, she said, only 22% of the women interviewed reported meeting with women outside their immediate family at least once a week, and a majority reported worsened relations with other members of their family and community.

Kakar admits military influence to continue in Pakistan polity

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Underscoring the inevitable role of the army in Pakistan, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar has admitted that the country's military will continue its hold in politics unless civic delivery institutions are strengthened in the coup-prone country. The powerful Army, which has ruled coup-prone Pakistan for more than half of its 75-plus years of existence, has hitherto wielded considerable power in matters of security and foreign policy.

Kakar was speaking during an interview with the news channel TRT World, a Turkish public broadcaster, on Tuesday, when he spoke about the Pakistani military's major role in politics.

"Pragmatically, realistically and honestly ... affirmative, yes," was his answer when the interviewer asked if the disciplined military would continue to stay for a foreseeable future in Pakistan's polity.

Kakar was replying to a question about the "undue influence, whether suspected or real, of the military establishment of Pakistan" and its role.

He was asked: Can Pakistan work as a democracy when most Pakistanis believe

their leadership is beholden to the almost nefarious relationship with the military?

"As far as the civil-military relationship and its imbalance is concerned, I personally view it as a pure government structure. Pakistani politicians, all the political leadership, have had a marital alliance with this military institution for their own specific interests," the caretaker prime minister said.

"And once they are out of power, it is one of their favourite mantras to criticise and shift the onus of their own failures in terms of governance and pinpoint the reason behind that failure as an imbalance between the civil and military relationship," he pointed out.

"Unfortunately, in our case, the civilian institutions who (sic) are responsible for the service delivery at the behest of the government or state, are performing quite poorly in last three-to-four decades be it in our health services, be it in our education services, be it our disaster management, be it our tax revenue collection," he said, adding, "So, when there is poor governance challenge, the only institution which has the organizational capability left with us is military."

"So anyone who is leading the government has to rely on



the day-to-day basis on the challenges of government and engage them to do that delivery part," the leader from the Balochistan region said.

He also offered a remedial measure: "If somebody is genuinely interested that the military should not meddle in the affairs of the state structure, then we need to enhance the capability of these civilian institutions." The question about the military's influence had earlier stemmed from another question about the alleged US involvement in former prime minister Imran Khan's ouster.

Kakar promptly dismissed it as a "conspiracy theory" that is common in all kinds of political cultures. Khan was ousted from power in April 2022 after losing a no-confidence vote, which he had then

alleged was part of a US-led conspiracy targeting him because of his independent foreign policy decisions on Russia, China, and Afghanistan.

Khan is also facing more than 140 cases across the country and faces charges like terrorism, violence, blasphemy, corruption, and murder.

Observing that they (Khan's party) themselves had "retreated and they retrieved that allegation themselves in a couple of months, Kakar said, "How would I, or anyone else, believe in such a conspiracy when people who brought it to public domain backtracked from it (sic)."

Kakar said his government, even if a caretaker dispensation, has ensured that "no one, whether it is the USA or any other power, meddles in our domestic affairs." "We are a sovereign country, we are a sovereign nation. We do things according to our own interests. Whether that was a good decision or a bad decision to oust Imran Khan's government, but all we know is for the last many, many, many years, that was the only way and time that he was ousted constitutionally. There was no military coup. That was all constitutional and lawful," Kakar asserted.

9 killed in blast as kids play with rocket shell in Pak's Sindh

Karachi (PTI): At least nine people, including five children, of the same family were killed on Wednesday when a rocket launcher's shell exploded at a house when the kids were playing with the ammunition in Pakistan's Sindh province, police said. Kashmiri-Kandhkot Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rohil Khosa said children found a rocket shell while playing on the ground and brought it home where it exploded, killing nine people, including five children, two women, and two men, of the same family. He said besides the casualties five others were injured in the explosion and rushed to hospital. "This is an area on the riverine belt and the rocket shell must have been left there by dacoits who hide out deep into the riverine belt areas," Khosa said.

The SSP said the police had reached the site and further investigation was underway and an "emergency" had been declared at the Kandhkot Civil Hospital. Pakistan Peoples Party's Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said in a tweet that the riverine areas of Sindh and Punjab had become a safe haven to many criminal gangs and urged the government to clear the region from such elements.

Iran launches imaging satellite into orbit amid tensions with the West

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran claimed on Wednesday that it successfully launched an imaging satellite into space, a move that could further ratchet up tensions with Western nations that fear its space technology could be used to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran's Communication Minister Isa Zarepour said the Noor-3 satellite had been put in an orbit 450 kilometres (280 miles) above the Earth's surface, the state-run IRNA news agency reported.

It was not clear when exactly the launch took place. There was no immediate acknowledgment from Western officials of the launch or of the satellite being put into orbit.

The US military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Iran has had a series of failed launches in recent years.

Zarepour said the aerospace arm of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which has had success in launching satellites in the past, had carried out the most recent launch.

Authorities released footage of a rocket taking off from a mobile launcher without saying where the launch occurred. Details in the video corresponded with a Guard base near Shahroud, some 330

kilometres (205 miles) north-east of the capital, Tehran. The base is in Semnan province, which hosts the Imam Khomeini Spaceport from which Iran's civilian space program operates. The Guard operates its own space program and military infrastructure parallel to Iran's regular armed forces and answers only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

It launched its first satellite into space in April 2020. But the head of the US Space Command later dismissed it as a "tumbling webcam in space" that would not provide vital intelligence. Western sanctions bar Iran from importing advanced spying technology.

The United States has alleged that Iran's satellite launches defy a UN Security Council resolution and has called on Tehran to undertake no activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. The US intelligence community's 2022 threat assessment claims the development of satellite launch vehicles "shortens the timeline" for Iran to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile because it uses similar technology.

Iran has always denied seeking nuclear weapons, and says its space program, like its nuclear activities, is for purely

civilian purposes. US intelligence agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency say Iran abandoned an organised military nuclear program in 2003.

Over the past decade, Iran has sent several short-lived satellites into orbit and in 2013 launched a monkey into space. The program has seen recent troubles, however. There have been five failed launches in a row for the Simorgh program, another satellite-carrying rocket.

A fire at the Imam Khomeini Spaceport in February 2019 killed three researchers, authorities said at the time. A launchpad rocket explosion later that year drew the attention of then-President Donald Trump.

Tensions are already high with Western nations over Iran's nuclear program, which has steadily advanced since Trump five years ago withdrew the US from the 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers and restored crippling sanctions on Iran.

Efforts to revive the agreement reached an impasse more than a year ago. Since then, the IAEA has said Iran has enough uranium enriched to near-weapons grade levels to build "several" nuclear weapons if it chooses to do so.

Pak inches closer to holding polls

Lists of prelim delimitation of constituencies published

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan on Wednesday inched closer to the holding of the much-awaited general elections as the country's chief election body published the lists of preliminary delimitation of constituencies. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had announced it would hold the election in the last week of January after finalising the setting up of electoral districts in the light of the data of the census, which was held earlier

this year. In a press release, the ECP said that the report of preliminary delimitation has been uploaded on the commission's website and can be accessed by the public, where maps of the delimitation are also available.

"The publication of the preliminary constituencies will continue for 30 days from Sept 27 to Oct 26," it said, highlighting that objections to the preliminary constituencies can be made by the voters of the concerned constituency. The through representations would be in the form of representations addressed to the commission's secretary and be submitted to the ECP Secretariat in Islamabad by October 27.

"The ECP will take decisions on these representations from Oct 28 to Nov 26 after hearing the positions of the

respective parties," the release said. The final list of constituencies would be published on November 30, followed by issuance of the elections schedule and polling.

The completion of the delimitation brings ECP closer to holding polls by the last week of January, as planned by the body. A specific date for the elections is yet to be announced. The ECP earlier stated 54 days were required to let the candidate file nominations, their scrutiny and final approval as well as time for election campaign. That is why it said that the elections would be held in the last week of January. The initial listing of electoral districts is the first major step to fulfill the commitment to hold polls by the end of January.

The National Assembly

was dissolved on August 9 and constitutionally, the elections should be held within 90 days but the process was delayed by the ECP due to the delimitation exercise which became mandatory in the wake of the new census held this year. The previous government just days before the end of its term endorsed the results of the census which obligated the ECP to set up a new electoral district on the basis of the latest population. The move led to fears that the polls meant to be held within 90 days may be delayed till next year as the delimitation process would take about four months to complete. The National Assembly consists of 266 general seats and 60 seats reserved for women. Ten seats have also been reserved for non-Muslims.

Pakistan receives first shipment of LPG from Russia

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan has received the first shipment of liquefied petroleum gas from Russia, marking the cash-strapped nation's second major Russian energy purchase.

The shipment of 100,000 metric tonnes of LPG was delivered by Russia to Pakistan through Iran's Sarakhs Special Economic Zone, the Russian embassy in Islamabad said on Tuesday. However, it did not provide details on Iran's involvement, and it was not immediately clear how much the LPG cost or if it was discounted. The Russian embassy said consultations are on for the next shipment.

Tuesday's shipment comes after Pakistan received its first-ever delivery of Russian crude oil in June under a deal struck between the two countries earlier this year.

Russia accuses Ukraine's Western allies of helping attack its Black Sea Fleet HQ

AP ■ KIVY

Russia on Wednesday accused Ukraine's Western allies of helping plan and conduct last week's missile strike on the Black Sea Fleet's headquarters in annexed Crimea.

"There is no doubt that the attack had been planned in advance using Western intelligence means, NATO satellite assets and reconnaissance planes and was implemented upon of the advice of American and British security agencies and in close coordination with them," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said at a briefing.

Moscow has repeatedly claimed that the US and its NATO allies have effectively become involved in the conflict by supplying weapons to

Ukraine and providing it with intelligence information and helping plan attacks on Russian facilities. The accusation came the day after video appeared to show the fleet's commander, Adm Viktor Sokolov, was still alive despite Ukraine's claims — without providing supporting evidence — that he was among 34 officers killed in Friday's strike on the port city of Sevastopol.

The Crimean Peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014, has been a frequent target since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a full-scale invasion of Ukraine 20 months ago. Crimea has served as the key hub supporting the invasion and has increasingly come under fire by Ukraine.

Ukraine said the strike

that put a large hole in the main building of the headquarters had wounded 105 people, though those claims could not independently be verified.

Russia initially said one serviceman was killed but quickly retracted that statement and said the person was missing. Moscow has provided no further updates and has not commented directly on Sokolov's status.

The Ministry of Defence, however, posted video Tuesday showing Sokolov among other senior officers attending a video conference with Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. Sokolov did not speak in the clip shown.

Ukraine's Special Operation Forces posted a statement Tuesday saying its sources claimed Sokolov was among the dead, many of

whom had not yet been identified. It said it was trying to verify the claim after the video surfaced.

Sokolov was shown speaking to journalists about the Black Fleet's operations in a video posted on a news channel linked to the Russian Defence Ministry.

It wasn't clear when the video was recorded. The video didn't contain any mention of the Ukrainian attack on fleet headquarters.

Zakharova's statements follow comments made Tuesday by Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council, who said the arrival of American-made Abrams tanks in Ukraine and a US promise to supply an unspecified number of long-range ATACMS missiles would push NATO closer to a direct conflict with Russia.

Philippines says it will remove any barrier China installs in disputed South China Sea

AP ■ MANILA

Philippine forces would dismantle any floating barrier that China's coast guard may install in the disputed South China Sea, a Philippine admiral said Wednesday after Manila infuriated China by removing one such obstruction in a contested shoal. Philippine officials strongly condemned the installation last week of a 300-metre (980-foot) -long barrier by Chinese coast guard vessels at the entrance to the lagoon of Scarborough Shoal as a violation of international law and the country's sovereignty. The barrier has prevented a swarm of Filipino boats from entering the rich fishing area, they said. The shoal lies within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone just west of the main Luzon Island, but has been occupied by China since 2012 as part of a push by Beijing to lay claim to virtually the entire

South China Sea.

On Monday, the Philippine coast guard said it has complied with an order by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr to launch a covert operation to remove the rope and net barrier held up by small buoys in the mouth of the shoal. China reacted on Tuesday by asking the Philippines "not to make provocations or seek trouble".

"Huayang Island is China's inherent territory," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in a news briefing in Beijing on Wednesday, referring to the Chinese name for Scarborough.

"What the Philippines (has) done is nothing but a farce that entertains itself. China will continue to safeguard territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests of Huangyan Island."

Philippine Vice Adm

Alberto Carlos, who heads the military's Western Command in charge of overseeing the

South China Sea, told journalists he was concerned that the Chinese coast guard may also install a similar floating barrier at the entrance to Second Thomas Shoal, which is occupied by a small Philippine navy contingent on a long-grounded warship but has been surrounded by Chinese coast guard ships. "My concern is, if they also put a barrier in Ayungin...we also have to remove the barrier," Carlos told journalists, using the Philippine name for Second Thomas Shoal. "Whatever they install, we will remove." Under Marcos, who took office last year, the Philippines has intensified efforts to fight China's increasingly aggressive actions in one of the world's most hotly contested waters. The Philippine coast guard now often invites journalists to join its territorial patrols in an effort, it says, to expose China's bullying in the busy waterway.

3 astronauts return to Earth after a year in space

AP ■ CAPE CARNIVAL

A NASA astronaut and two Russian cosmonauts returned to Earth on Wednesday after being stuck in space for just over a year. American Frank Rubio set a record for the longest US spaceflight — a result of the extended stay.

The trio landed in a remote area of Kazakhstan, descending in a Soyuz capsule that was rushed up as a replacement after their original ride was hit by space junk and lost all its coolant while docked to the International Space Station.

What should have been a 180-day mission turned into a 371-day stay. Rubio spent more than two weeks longer in space than Mark Vande Hei, who held NASA's previous endurance record for a single

spaceflight. Russia holds the world record of 437 days, set in the mid-1990s.

The Soyuz capsule that brought Rubio and cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitri Petelin back was a replacement launched in February. Russian engineers suspect a piece of space junk pierced the radiator of their original capsule late last year, midway through what should have been a six-month mission. Engineers worried that without cooling, the capsule's electronics and any occupants could overheat to dangerous levels, so the craft returned early.

There wasn't another Soyuz to launch a fresh crew until this month. Their replacements finally arrived nearly two weeks ago. "No one deserves to go home to their families more than you," the space station's

new commander, Denmark's Andreas Mogensen, said earlier this week. Prokopyev told ground controllers throughout the descent that all three were feeling good. They experienced more than four times the force of gravity as their capsule streaked through the atmosphere and came to a touchdown in the barren Kazakh steppes. Helicopters moved in with recovery crews to fetch the astronauts.

"Rubio's record ride comes to an end," NASA commentator Rob Navias said from Mission Control in Houston.

Rubio, 47, an Army doctor and helicopter pilot, said at a news conference last week that he never would have agreed to a full year in space if asked at the outset. He ended up missing important family milestones including the oldest of

his four children finishing her first year at the U.S. Naval Academy and another heading off to West Point.

Rubio said the psychological aspect of spending so long in space was tougher than he expected. "Hugging my wife and kids is going to be paramount, and I'll probably focus on that for the first couple days," he said. Rubio may hold on to this record for a while. NASA has no plans as of now for more yearlong missions.

It was the first spaceflight for Rubio and Petelin, 40, an engineer. Prokopyev, 48, an engineer and pilot, has now pulled two long station stints.

They logged 157 million miles (253 million kilometres) since launching from Kazakhstan last September and circled the world nearly 6,000 times.

APPENDIX IV-A [See proviso to rule 8(6)] Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property

E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor"), the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whatever there is" basis on 31.10.2023 from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of Rs. 21,19,171/- (Rupees Twenty One Lakh Nineteen Thousand One Hundred Seventy One only) pending towards the Loan Account No. HHLDMT00453825, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till 22.09.2023 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. 23.09.2023 along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from MANOJ KUMAR and DURGESH.

The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 16,00,000/- (Rupees Sixteen Lakh only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 1,60,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Sixty Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
FLAT NO. FF-302 (M. I. G) HAVING COVERED AREA 51.09 SQUARE METERS EQUIVALENT TO 550 SQUARE FEET ON FIRST FLOOR (FRONT LHS) (WITHOUT ROOF RIGHTS) CONSTRUCTED UPON PLOT NO. A-7/2 (SITUATED IN DLF ANKUR VIHAR, PARGANA & TESHIL LONI, DISTRICT GHAZIABAD, GHAZIABAD -221102, UTTAR PRADESH.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.indiabullshomeloans.com. For bidding, log on to www.auctionfocus.in

Date : 23.09.2023
Place : GHAZIABAD
Authorized officer
Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited

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The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 69,25,000/- (Rupees Sixty Nine Lakh Twenty Five Thousand only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 6,92,500/- (Rupees Six Lakh Ninety Two Thousand Five Hundred only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
PROPERTY BEING RESIDENTIAL PLOT NO. D - 366 AREA MEASURING 50 SQUARE METERS EQUIVALENT TO 60 SQUARE YARDS, BLOCK - D IN THE RESIDENTIAL COLONY KNOWN AS "SUSHANT LOK PHASE - II", SITUATED IN VILLAGE GHATA, TESHIL SOHNA, DISTRICT GURUGRAM, GURUGRAM - 122001, HARYANA AND WHICH IS BOUNDED AS FOLLOWS:
NORTH : PLOT NO. D-365
SOUTH : PLOT NO. D-367
EAST : ROAD
WEST : PLOT NO. D-370

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.indiabullshomeloans.com. For bidding, log on to www.auctionfocus.in

Date : 23.09.2023
Place : GURUGRAM
Authorized officer
Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited

Sensex rebounds from early lows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex rebounded from early lows to settle higher by 173 points on Wednesday following buying in Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro and ITC and positive trends in Asian and European markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 173.22 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 66,118.69 with 20 of its components ending in the green and 10 closing lower.

The index opened lower and fell further to a low of 65,549.96 in morning trade. However, buying in Reliance, L&T, Infosys and Maruti helped it recover losses. Later, it jumped 226.8 points or 0.34 per cent to a high of 66,172.27.

The Nifty gained 51.75 points or 0.26 per cent to end at 19,716.45. It moved between a low of 19,554 and a high of 19,730.70 in day trading.



Among the Sensex firms, Larsen & Toubro, ITC, Sun Pharma, Maruti, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank and Hindustan Unilever were among the gainers. Titan, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Tata Steel and Nestle were the major laggards.

“The market inched higher in the second half, driven by positive openings in European markets. Concerns about glob-

al interest rates and elevated oil prices are being balanced by several domestic factors, such as promising economic growth prospects and the potential for strong earnings, which validate the premium valuation,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Persistent outflows of foreign funds and rising US bond yields are expected to keep the broader indices in bleak terrain,

in the near term, Nair added.

Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd said that markets remained volatile but ended higher due to recovery in select heavyweights.

“The impending rebound in select heavyweights like Reliance and ITC largely contributed to the recovery,” Mishra said, adding that the scheduled monthly expiry of derivative contracts would keep the volatil-

ity high.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.76 per cent and smallcap index jumped 0.68 per cent.

Among the indices, capital goods jumped 1.14 per cent, healthcare climbed 1.13 per cent, industrials (0.97 per cent), FMCG (0.77 per cent), realty (0.70 per cent), IT (0.48 per cent) and teck (0.43 per cent).

Bankex, consumer durables and oil & gas were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the green. European markets were trading mostly in positive territory. The US markets ended lower on Tuesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.98 per cent to USD 94.88 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 693.47 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

AMNS India’s Hazira project to be started by 2026: Mittal

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

ArceorMittal executive chairman Lakshmi N Mittal on Wednesday expressed confidence that AMNS India’s Hazira project, which is under expansion, will be commissioned by 2026.

In October last year, ArceorMittal’s arm AMNS India had stated that it will invest Rs 60,000 crore to scale up capacity of its steel plant at Hazira to 15 million tonnes (MT).

“We have full confidence that with the cooperation of the Centre and Gujarat government, we will be able to commission the project by 2026, Mittal said here while speaking at the celebrations of 20 years of ‘Vibrant Gujarat’ summit.

Hazira expansion project is moving at a fast pace and over 20,000 people are involved in the project construction, he said.

“It is our target to double our production capacity in the first phase and then triple...We will also make advance products for technology,” he said, adding it would help India reduce imports and become self-reliant.

The company is also committed for sustainability, he said.

He also said that because of the ‘Vibrant Gujarat’ summit, different states are organising investor summits and this is helping India attract foreign investments.

Today India is termed as the fastest growing economy in the world and global firms are keen to invest in the country.

He added that the successful G20 Summit has further enhanced the image of India.



The summit not only reflected India’s diplomatic and organisational success, but also showed India’s image as a global consensus builder.

Talking about the state, Mittal said that Gujarat is a leading industry state as it has presence of industries from varied sectors such as petrochemicals, automobile, pharma, port, textiles, electric vehicles, green hydrogen and semiconductors.

The state, he said, provides reliable infrastructure, stable policy environment, and professional administration.

In January 2022, he said the company signed an agreement with the state to invest over Rs 1 lakh crore.

Further, he said that at a time when India is attracting the eyes of the world, there is a need to focus on talented manpower and industry 4.0.

Speaking at the event, Welspun Chairman B K Goenka said that the investor summit in Gujarat has helped in increasing investments and promoting socio-economic development

in the state.

The Vibrant Gujarat summit has become like WEF (World Economic Forum), where top global industry leaders participate.

He added that Kutch is going to be the capital of green hydrogen.

The next Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit is scheduled from January 10-12 next year in Gandhinagar. Takashi Suzuki, Director General, JETRO- The Japan External Trade Organisation, said that Japan contributes significantly to the ‘make in India’ initiative.

“We plan to invite a Japanese business delegation focusing on semiconductor electronics...In November,” he said, adding, “we would like to show every new opportunity and happening in Gujarat to attract them.”

Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated the Summit during his tenure as the chief minister of the state in 2003 with the aim of making Gujarat a leader on the global map of industry



Adani Ports to buy back another \$195 mn of bonds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone will prepay USD 195 million of debt due in 2024 as the conglomerate helmed by Gautam Adani looks to boost investors’ confidence post being targeted by a US short-seller.

In a stock exchange filing, APSEZ said it will buy back USD 195 million of bonds due in 2024 using its cash reserves. Out of the USD 520 million principal outstanding, USD 325 million will be left after the buyback, it said.

The company board “has approved tranche II of the tender offer to purchase for cash up to USD 195 million in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding 3.375 per cent senior notes due 2024 which represents 30 per cent of the principal amount of the notes,” it said.

In May, the company had bought back its July 2024 bonds for cash USD 130 million in aggregate of the principal amount and stated that it would buy back 20 per cent of the principal amount of the bonds in each of the next four quarters.

In the second tranche of this, the company is now proposing to purchase up to USD 195 million of bonds. This represents 30 per cent of the principal amount of the bonds (USD 650 million). After USD 130 million buyback in May, USD 520 million remained outstanding.

The buyback tender is open till October 26, the filing said.

Adani Group has been attempting to rebuild investors’ confidence since Hindenburg Research in a January 24 report accused it of accounting fraud and improper use of offshore tax havens for stock manipulation.

The group has denied all allegations. The company has engaged Barclays Bank, DBS Bank, Emirates NBD Bank PJSC, First Abu Dhabi Bank PJSC, Mizuho Securities (Singapore) Pte Ltd, MUFG Securities Asia Singapore Branch, SMBC Nikko Securities (Hong Kong) and Standard Chartered Bank to serve as deal managers for the offer. The company will pay accrued interest, in respect of any notes purchased in the tender offer.

Implementation of NFSA, LPG subsidy to be evaluated

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Niti Aayog is looking to hire a technical consultant to evaluate the implementation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and LPG subsidy to ensure benefits are reaching eligible beneficiaries.

The government think tank’s Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO) has floated a tender to select a technical consultant for “Central Coordinating Agency for Evaluation of the National Food Security Act and LPG Subsidy”.

“The government implements one the largest public food and nutritional safety nets in the world through the National Food Security Act (NFSA), enacted in 2013.

“...However, despite the large public expenditure, gains in the food security and nutritional outcomes in India have been slow, with the country accounting for roughly 30 per cent of the global burden of hunger,” DMEO said in the RFP (request for proposal) document.

The National Food Security Act provides a legal mandate for the distribution of foodgrains at subsidised prices, cooked meals, take-home rations, and food security allowance through a network of schemes — namely the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), and Mid-Day-Meal (MDM) scheme.



The cost of implementing the food subsidy under TPDS was Rs 4,22,618.11 crore in 2021 (Revised Estimate). The cost of implementing MDM and ICDS was Rs 12,900 crore and Rs 17,252.21 crore (Revised Estimate), respectively.

According to the DMEO report, “More than 1/3rd of children less than 5 years are stunted (35.5 per cent, NFHS-V, 2019-20), one-quarter of adolescents aged 10-14 years have low body-mass-index (BMI) for their age (24 per cent, CNNS, 2016-18), and more than half of all women aged 15-59 years and 15-19 years are anaemic (57 per cent and 59.1 per cent, NFHS-V, 2019-20)”.

Elaborating on the rationale behind the evaluation of the LPG subsidy, DMEO further said that India is the third largest energy consumer in the world after China and the US.

“The current consumption of LPG in India has risen to 12.3 per cent of total petroleum products compared to 1.13 per cent of kerosene. The ongoing

schemes will potentially increase the usage of LPG further, thus, making their evaluation imperative,” it added.

DMEO also said the demand for oil and gas has been burgeoning over the years with rising population, economic growth, and concomitant demand for cleaner energy.

To meet future energy demands, a market-determined price mechanism (MDPM) was introduced through price deregulation, which allowed the refineries to stipulate refinery gate prices of petroleum products that would compete with prices of imported products, it added.

DMEO pointed out that the LPG subsidy not only reflects the policy makers’ cognizance of the need to augment the transition from traditional cooking fuel, such as firewood and dung cake to cleaner cooking fuels but also to provide them to a majority of the underserved population — mostly from rural areas and economically weaker sections — at subsidised rates.

Rupee snaps two-day fall, recovers 6 paise against \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

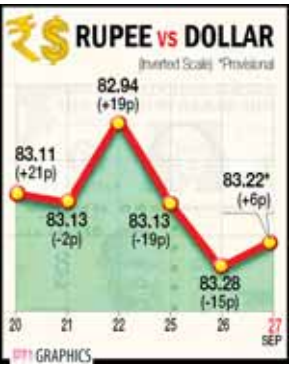
The rupee on Wednesday staged a recovery after two days of steep losses to end 6 paise higher at 83.22 (provisional) against the US dollar on positive cues from domestic equity markets.

However, selling pressure from foreign equity investors amid elevated levels of American currency and surging crude oil prices weighed on the local unit, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 83.23 and traded in a narrow range of 83.18 to 83.24 against the greenback. It finally settled at 83.22 (provisional), registering a gain of 6 paise from its previous close.

The rupee lost 34 paise in the past two sessions. It closed 15 paise lower at 83.28 against the dollar on Tuesday, a day after registering a decline of 19 paise.

The downward movement of the rupee was attributed to



a strengthening dollar amid a record rise in US Treasury yields. Also, the US dollar surged to a ten-month high level after a Federal Reserve policymaker hinted at a prolonged interest rate hike cycle.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.05 per cent to 106.28.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, were trading 0.87 per cent higher at USD 94.78 per barrel.



Churchill’s Old War Office launched as luxury hotel by Hinduja

PTI ■ LONDON

The Old War Office (OWO) of Britain’s World War II era prime minister Winston Churchill opened its doors as a brand-new luxury hotel in London with a glittering launch event, complete with surprise musical performances by musicians Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber and Andrea Bocelli.

Princess Anne - the Princess Royal, the sister of King Charles III, officially unveiled the plaque for The OWO after a tour of the hotel with Hinduja Group co-chairman GP Hinduja on Tuesday evening.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also made a quick stopover, along with parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, hoteliers and stars of film and television.

The Indian-origin Hinduja Group conglomerate and the UK’s richest family had acquired the landmark on Whitehall, opposite Downing Street, over eight years ago and tied up with Raffles Hotels to transform the building into an extravagant hub complete with luxury residences, restaurants and spas.

“We have always been working to see what best we can do between India and the UK because we believe our responsibility is to act as a bridge between the host country and the motherland,” said GP Hinduja.

“It took us eight years and in these eight years we had a lot to do, but finally this iconic building has been converted into peace and solace, not World Wars. It is the legacy not only of the Hinduja Group but London as a great destination. Everyone who lands in London will first come here to see what it is,” he said. After the launch event, which also showcased the food of 3-Michelin-starred chef Mauro Colagreco as the chef partner for The OWO, the hotel will welcome its first guests starting this Friday.

Raffles London at The OWO, as it is officially known, has been developed in partnership between the Hinduja Group and French multinational hospitality group Accor.

“When we came to Whitehall, the team were blown away by the size and beauty of this majestic building. No expense has been spared in bringing it back to its former glory and paying homage to its heritage, whilst breathing new life into it.

Along with Raffles London at The OWO, we hope to create a legacy that is both timeless and unsurpassed,” said Sanjay Hinduja, who has overseen the project.

IGST on ocean freight exempted from Oct 1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has exempted payments made for goods imported through ocean freight from 5 per cent integrated GST with effect from October 1.

The Finance Ministry has notified changes to the IGST Act with regard to payment of integrated GST on ‘ocean freight’ on imported goods with effect from October 1. Currently, importers are required to pay 5 per cent GST under the Reverse Charge Mechanism.

KPMG Indirect Tax Head & Partner Abhishek Jain said the amendments proposed are aligned with the apex court’s ruling in the case of Mohit Minerals and help explicitly mention the government’s alignment to the position. “While this has been issued prospectively, the indus-

try has been seeking and successfully claiming refund of taxes already paid for the past period, where credit has not been availed,” Jain added.

Giving its ruling in the Mohit Minerals case, the Supreme Court in May last year had held that since the Indian importer is liable to pay IGST on the ‘composite supply’, comprising of supply of goods and supply of services of transportation, insurance, etc in a CIF (Cost Insurance Freight) contract, a separate levy on the Indian importer for the ‘supply of services’ by the shipping line would be in violation of the GST Act.

In the Mohit Minerals case, the company challenged the validity of the CBIC notification regarding the levy of IGST on ocean freight in the Gujarat High Court.



Fire risk forces Hyundai, Kia to recall 3.4 mn vehicles

AP ■ DETROIT

Hyundai and Kia are recalling nearly 3.4 million vehicles in the US and telling owners to park them outside due to the risk of engine compartment fires.

The recalls cover multiple car and SUV models from the 2010 through 2019 model years including Hyundai’s Santa Fe SUV and Kia’s Sorento SUV.

Documents posted Wednesday by the US safety regulators say the anti-lock brake control module can leak fluid and cause an electrical short, which can touch off a fire while the vehicles are parked or being driven.

The automakers are advising owners to park outdoors and away from structures until repairs are done.

Dealers will replace the anti-lock brake fuse at no cost to owners. Kia says in documents that it will send notification letters to owners starting Nov 14. For Hyundai the date is Nov 21.

Messages were left early Wednesday seeking comment from both companies.

Moody’s downgrades Vedanta Resources

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Moody’s Investors Service has downgraded the rating of Vedanta Resources Ltd because of the elevated risk of debt restructuring over the next few months, as the firm has not made progress on refinancing its upcoming debt maturities.

Moody’s said it has downgraded to Caa2 from Caa1, the corporate family rating (CFR) of Vedanta Resources Limited (VRL).

At the same time, Moody’s has maintained a negative outlook.

“The downgrade reflects the elevated risk of debt restructuring over the next few months because VRL has not made any meaningful progress on refinancing its upcoming debt

maturities, in particular the USD 1 billion bonds maturing each in January 2024 and August 2024,” said Kaustubh Chaubal, a Moody’s Senior Vice President and lead analyst on VRL.

VRL’s credit quality is constrained by its weak liquidity because of large refinancing needs and interest expenses amid tightening financing conditions in global capital markets, the agency noted.

“The company continues to face challenges in refinancing its debt, a reflection of reduced appetite from the lending community, and a key credit concern,” the rating agency said.

“VRL’s Caa category CFR reflects the company’s unsustainable capital structure, aggressive risk appetite and weak financial management.”

Balmer Lawrie plans to expand revenue streams

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Balmer Lawrie & Company will engage a consultant to study the feasibility of entering new business areas, such as the production of ethanol and green hydrogen, to expand its revenue streams, a top official of the firm said on Wednesday.

The diversified PSU, under the administrative control of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, currently has eight strategic business units with industrial packaging and logistics services being the key revenue generators of the company.

The Kolkata-headquartered company recorded an annual turnover of Rs 2,380 crore in the last financial year.

“We are in the process of

engaging a consultant to study the feasibility of entering new areas of businesses like manufacturing of ethanol and green hydrogen and doing third-party logistics (3PL).

“The company has ambitious targets and growth plans. The study will find out whether we have the capability and bandwidth to enter these new lines of businesses”, Balmer Lawrie Chairman and Managing Director Adika Ratna Sekhar told reporters after the company’s AGM here.

The company aims at garnering a revenue of Rs 3,000-4,000 crore in the next two years, and Rs 5,000 crore in the next three to four years, he said, adding that there is a need to increase the revenue streams to meet these targets.

Travel & tourism sector sees 44 per cent jump in hiring in Aug: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With the country witnessing a boom in the travel and tourism sector, the industry saw a 44 per cent growth in hiring demand in August, compared to the same month last year, a report said on Wednesday. This optimistic growth can be attributed to increased disposable incomes and higher spending on leisure and business travel in the country, a report by foundit (formerly Monster APAC & ME) said.

Pre-pandemic trends indicate that the travel and tourism sector experienced a robust 16 per cent growth in 2019, however, with the pandemic-related disruptions,



travel restrictions and lockdowns, there was a 47 per cent fall in job postings in 2020 and 27 per cent dip in 2021.

While the industry began to bounce back with a marginal 3 per cent growth in hiring in 2022, it has dramatically recovered this year, as people regained confidence in travel, the report stated.

The foundit report is based on the data as of August 2023. The report also includes annual data comparisons for the period August 2023, against August 2022.

“The travel and tourism industry has truly bounced back from the pandemic with a boom, driven significantly by the government initiatives focused on infrastructural development and heritage promotion.

“India has also opened its doors by allowing 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) for tourism construction projects, and participation in the G20 summit has further bolstered sustainable tourism in the country,” foundit, a Quess company, CEO Sekhar Garisa said.

I N B R I E F

RUG UTSAV: CELEBRATION OF ARTISTRY, CRAFTSMANSHIP

New Delhi: Annual Rug Utsav started on September 27 offering interactive sessions with talented weavers, besides exclusive discounts on a wide array of rug categories. Jaipur Rugs organised the event to support education through the JR Meritorious Scholarship Program. We have always prioritised the pursuit of happiness and bringing light to the lives of our weavers, said Yogesh Chaudhary, Director, Jaipur Rugs.

WORLD HEART DAY DRIVE

New Delhi: In celebration of World Heart Day, MediBuddy, a major digital healthcare platform, has invited individuals to take a moment to reflect on their heart health and encourage everyone to #HeartYourOwnHeart. “Your heart is your most vital organ, and it deserves all the care and attention it can get. The campaign urges people to Eat Heart-Healthy, Get Active, Quit Smoking, Manage Stress, Regular Check-ups,” said Saibal Biswas of MediBuddy.

TATA POWER TO SET UP 41 MW CAPTIVE SOLAR PLANT

New Delhi: Tata Power Renewable Energy will set up a 41 MW captive solar plant at Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, for TP Solar’s new greenfield 4.3 GW solar cell and module manufacturing facility, the company said.

PTI

**Divisional Forest Officer,
Ravagada Division**

RESURGENT UTTARAKHAND



Aligned with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Uttarakhand government, under the leadership of Pushkar Singh Dhami, is actively seeking to draw investments into the state. The Dhami administration is set to host a Global Investors Summit in December 2023 and has implemented investor-friendly policies to stimulate investment. Additionally, the unveiling of the Uttarakhand Tourism Policy 2030 is expected to further bolster investments in the tourism sector.

NEW TOURISM POLICY PROVIDES NEW FULCRUM

New Tourism Policy has as its fulcrum a sustainable development strategy wherein the role of the State Government and its various departments is crucial. It resolves around policy, regulation and promotion of tourism; while

A World Tourism & Travel Council (WTTTC) report has pegged India as the 7th largest tourism economy globally, and further forecasted the sector to grow at 7% between 2017 and 2027. The state of Uttarakhand is expected to match this trend in terms of tourist arrivals

provision of services like accommodation, tourist facilitation, transportation, organisation of tours, activities, events have been included within the purview of the private sector, with State playing an enabling role.

ECOLOGICAL WEALTH SAFEGUARDED

Principles of sustainable tourism, analysis of carrying capacity of destinations and activities, and promotion of high-value-low-volume tourism shall be the cornerstones of tourism planning and policymaking in the state. Use of IT-enabled tools is being prioritised in all areas, such as state-wide MIS for capturing accurate footfall data, state-backed online travel aggregator (OTA), online accreditation of service providers & individuals in the tourism sector, information dissemination, promotion, etc.

The state would also create multiple axes of entry into the state, develop connectivity infrastructure including provision of heli-services, improve tourist utilities, wayside amenities, waste management, and telecom infrastructure at all tourist destinations in the state.

HIGHLIGHTS

- To establish tourist destinations, circuits and clusters with tourist-friendly

CAPITAL SUBSIDY FOR HOSPITALITY PROJECTS

Region Category	Maximum Capital Subsidy
Projects in Category A regions	25% of Eligible Capital Assets
Projects in Category B regions	35% of Eligible Capital Assets
Projects in Category C regions	50% of Eligible Capital Assets

ACTING UPON THE VISION OF PM NARENDRA MODI, THE CM PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI LED GOVERNMENT BHAS BROUGHT UTTARAKHAND TOURISM POLICY 2030 TO GIVE MOMENTUM TO TOURISM ECONOMY IN THE STATE

Rising tourism economy IN UTTARAKHAND



CM PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI INTERACTING WITH OFFICIALS AT AN EVENT FOR SIGNING OF MoUs TO PROMOTE TOURISM IN UTTARAKHAND

- infrastructure and to enable world-class tourism experiences in the State.
- Drive inclusive and sustainable tourism growth, leading to balanced development across the state.
- This policy shall remain in effect for 7 years from the date of this policy or until a new policy supersedes it.
- The policy shall be applicable to the entire state and shall give direction to future schemes / works concerning Uttarakhand's tourism sector.

TARGETS FOR 2030

- Tourism to contribute USD 10 billion to Uttarakhand's economy annually and at least 15% of the state's GDP
- Uttarakhand to attract investment of INR 40,000 crore in tourism, and take up minimum 100 PPP projects before 2030
- Tourism and supporting industries to employ 20 lakh people in state, with women ac-

- counting for at least 30% of the workforce
- To facilitate skill development of 10 lakh workers in tourism and supporting industries
- To increase average length of stay of tourists in Uttarakhand to 4-5 days
- To increase foreign tourist visits as a proportion of total non-religious tourist visits in Uttarakhand to 5%
- To reach 50 lakh followers on official social media handles of Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board
- To ensure that new tourism projects coming up in the State adopt sustainable measures in development and operations.

DEVELOPING TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

It is well understood that a combination of great natural endowments with good infrastructure makes for a successful and high-quality tourism ecosystem.

Improvement in tourism infrastructure is a key focus area of this policy, with the following objectives:

- To ensure provision of uninterrupted all-weather utility (water, power) supply, management of waste, especially in hilly, snow-covered destinations.
- To re-imagine and develop each tourism destination, suitably incorporating the expectations of the modern-day visitor.
- To develop Uttarakhand into an integrated tourism hub

INCENTIVE FOR INVESTORS

The Government of Uttarakhand intends to support the enterprises / projects in tourism sector with impressive incentive packages.

Capital Subsidy for Development of Tourism Products & Services

Eligible tourism units providing tourism services and/or developing tourism products can avail capital subsidy in the form of reimbursement of their proposed investment in eligible capital assets. Maximum capital subsidy shall be 100% of their investment in eligible capital assets. PPP projects of the state government of Uttarakhand shall not be eligible.

Subsidies for Units / Projects not eligible for Capital Subsidy

Eligible tourism units or projects operating in Uttarakhand and not undertaking capital investments or not availing of any other capital subsidy under this or any other State Government scheme can avail the following subsidies:

- Incentive for high-value hospitality
- Incentives for foreign tourists' attraction
- Organization of MICE, art, social and cultural events, fairs and festivals.



CM PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI DURING HIS VISIT TO CORBETT NATIONAL PARK

INCENTIVE FOR HIGH-VALUE PREMIUM HOSPITALITY

Eligible tourism units can avail incentive of 1% of eligible turnover for achieving turnover of more than Rs 50 lakhs per key per year. Revenue generated by all activities, shall be counted towards computing per key revenue.

INCENTIVES FOR FOREIGN TOURISTS' ATTRACTION

Eligible tourism units receiving foreign customers/ providing services to foreign customers



Uttarakhand is Devbhoomi. The manner in which Uttarakhand is carrying forward the campaign of development while keeping law and order paramount, is commendable. It is also important to preserve the identity of this Devbhoomi. And I believe that this Devbhoomi will become the centre of attraction for the spiritual consciousness of the whole world in the near future. We have to develop Uttarakhand according to this potential as well."

-Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

can avail incentive of 1% of eligible turnover generated from foreign customers. Such units would need to submit necessary proofs for the nationality of the customers.

INCENTIVES FOR PROMOTION OF HELI TRANSPORT

To promote high-value tourism, the state shall incentivise hotels for offering helicopter transport service to their customers. The state shall provide a subsidy of Rs 500 per leg per person of heli transport from Sahastradhara, Jolly Grant and Pant Nagar helipads to the helipad nearest to the accommodation. The subsidy shall be paid against proof of actual journeys facilitated and booked through the hotel.

EXEMPTION ON ELECTRICITY DUTY

State shall provide 100% exemption of electricity duty to the eligible tourism units in the state till the end of policy period.

EXEMPTION ON STAMP DUTY

New eligible tourism units shall qualify for reimbursement of stamp duty applicable on: a) Sale / lease deeds executed in respect of purchase / lease of land/ built-up area for a tourism project, provided that the sale / lease deed is entered into during the Policy period. b) Loan agreements entered for undertaking a tourism project during the Period of the Policy. c) Mortgage and hypothecation for undertaking a tourism project during the period policy.

Manaskhand Temple Circuit

A spiritual journey through state's enchanting temples

In a bid to boost tourism in the state, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has announced plans to develop tourist destinations in the Kumaon region. Read on...

ENCHANTING TEMPLES

Uttarakhand has unveiled its latest gem for travellers seeking an immersive spiritual experience — the Manaskhand Circuit. This newly introduced tourism destination encompasses a collection of ancient and revered temples spread across various districts, offering visitors to delve into the rich spiritual heritage of the region.

ALMORA

Almora holds a significant place in the Manaskhand Circuit. Here, pilgrims can immerse themselves in the divine aura of temples such as Jageshwar Mahadev, Chital Golu Devta Temple, Suryadeva Temple Katarmal, Kasar Devi Temple, and Nanda Devi Temple. Each temple carries a distinct charm and architectural brilliance.

PITHORAGARH

Pithoragarh forms an integral part of the Manaskhand Circuit. The ancient Patal Bhubaneswar Temple and Haat Kalika Temple in Gangolihat are known for their spiritual significance and intricate carvings.

BAGESHWAR

The spiritual journey through the Manaskhand Circuit would be incomplete



BAGNATH TEMPLE

without a visit to Bageshwar. Here, the revered Bagnath Mahadev Temple and Bagnath Temple stand as timeless testaments to ancient times' devotion and architectural prowess. These temples provide a serene ambience for reflection and introspection.

CHAMPAWAT

Champawat district is adorned with spiritual treasures that beckon visitors to explore



BAJINATH TEMPLE

their sacred splendour. The Patal Rudreshwar Gufa, also known as the Cave Temple, holds an air of mysticism, attracting devotees and adventure enthusiasts alike. Other prominent temples in the region include Purnagiri Temple and the Barahi Devi Temple in Devidhura. The Baleshwar Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, showcases exquisite stone carvings and is a visual delight for history and art enthusiasts.

NAINITAL

Nainital was the summer capital of the United Province. The Manaskhand Circuit also encompasses Nainital, a popular hill station known for its tranquil lakes and scenic vistas. The revered Naina Devi Temple, located on the banks of Naini Lake, holds immense religious significance and attracts devotees from far



KASAR DEVI TEMPLE

The Manaskhand Circuit in Uttarakhand is a testament to the rich spiritual heritage and architectural brilliance that the state has to offer. As travellers embark on this spiritual journey, they will find solace and enlightenment in the divine atmosphere of the temples proposed in the first phase of the circuit

and wide. Additionally, the Kainchi Dham Temple provides a serene retreat for spiritual seekers.

UDHAM SINGH NAGAR

Udham Singh Nagar district adds to the spiritual tapestry of the Manaskhand Circuit with the Chaiti Bala Sundari Temple. This temple, dedicated to the Goddess Bala Sundari, showcases stunning architecture and offers devotees a spiritual haven.

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MEDIA INITIATIVE



CM PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI AT GLOBAL INVESTORS SUMMIT CURTAIN RAISER HELD AT NEW DELHI

In the recent Global Investors Summit curtain raiser, ITC proposed an investment of Rs 5,000 crore to the Uttarakhand government. An MoU for investment of Rs 1,000 crore was signed with Mahindra Holidays and Resort India Limited and Rs 1,600 crore was signed with e-Kuber. The agreement on such a big investment proposal on the very first day shows the keenness of investors and the preparedness of the Uttarakhand government.

The Chief Minister said that for the convenience of tourists and devotees, facilities are being developed through innovation at all places in the state. A policy has also been set to promote exports. The CM further said that the aim was to develop all the mythological places of the state. Like Chardham Adikailash, a circuit of temples of Kumaon region is being made under the Manaskhand Temple Mala Mission. In this, religious tourism will be further promoted in the state.

Driving growth through investment in tourism

With natural bounties and enabling policies, Uttarakhand has become a preferred destination for investment in tourism sector

Uttarakhand is proud recipient of several awards such as 'Best Adventure Destination' by India Today in 2017, 'Best Destination for Adventure' by Lonely Planet Magazine 2013 and 'Best Emerging Destination' by Travel and Leisure Magazine 2012.

POPULAR TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Pilgrimage has traditionally been a major sector of tourism in Uttarakhand. However, with enormous resources for cultural, adventure, wildlife, nature, leisure and AYUSH, many new places have emerged as popular destinations such as — Naukuchiatal (aero sports), Rudraprayag to Gopeshwar Route (Mountain Biking), Auli (Skiing), Munsiyari and Roorkee (Trekking) and Rishikesh (Rafting and Wellness) and many more.

PRaiseworthy LAW AND ORDER SCENARIO:

The state is proud to be one of the lowest man-days lost due to industrial strife in the country. This is a huge advantage to the industrial sector and translates into profitability in many ways.

HAND-HOLDING THROUGHOUT THE INVESTMENT PROCESS

Proactive support by the government adds to the confidence of the investors and strengthens their efforts.

- Proximity to NCR and within the influence

region of AKIC are driving factors for strategic connectivity.

- Sector specific policies are designed to provide fiscal and non-fiscal incentives.

PM Narendra Modi's frequent visits to Uttarakhand and the development projects undertaken in the past have given new dynamics to tourism economy in Uttarakhand

- Skilled manpower availability is a huge advantage.
- World-class integrated industrial estates have been put in place & abundant avail-



A MUSSORIE-BASED HOMESTAY LISTED IN UTTARAKHAND HOMESTAY SCHEME

ability of good water resources.

- Availability of cheap reliable power & clean pollution-free environment.

THE SINGLE WINDOW CLEARANCE SYSTEM

The portal is a medium of information for investors on Government policies, incentive schemes and the availability of infrastructure. It provides manuals to help investors to understand the application process for proposed investment projects. The portal will also facilitate different stakeholder departments to process applications by investors and approve them online. It also aims to build a centralised repository of sector-wise investments in the state and government policies, and ultimately to deliver to investors a high-quality and responsive service.