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THE BOYCOTT
AT DOHA

WORLD 8
NETANYAHU SEEKS OPEN-ENDED
CONTROL IN GAZA

MONEY 10
SHAREHOLDERS
VOTE TO OUST BYJU

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OIPR-15001/13/0428/2324

ହାତପାଆନ୍ତାରେ 'ଆମ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ' ସେବା

ପ୍ରଥମ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟରେ ୭୫୦ଟି ପଞ୍ଚାୟତକୁ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ ସେବା

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'ଆମ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ' ହେବ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ଷମ



DSPL-704

Lok Sabha poll dates likely after March 13

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission is expected to announce the dates for the Lok Sabha elections after March 13. As part of the ongoing preparations for the General Elections and concurrent Assembly polls in select States, the Chief Election Commissioner is currently engaged in successive visits to these regions. States like Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Sikkim are gearing up for simultaneous Lok Sabha and State Assembly polls.

In 2014, the Election Commission announced the schedule for the nine-phased Lok Sabha elections on March 5, and the results were declared on May 16. In 2019, the poll panel announced the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections on March 10, and the results were declared on May 23. Sources indicate that senior officials of the Election Commission of India are actively engaged in regular meetings with the Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) of different States to address potential issues ahead of the elections. The focus is on



practical challenges such as the transportation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), the deployment of security personnel, and maintaining vigilance along state borders. Also, sources mentioned that the Central Board of Secondary Examination (CBSE) Class 10 board examination will end on March 13, freeing up many teachers and school buildings for election duties. A team from the EC is also expected to visit Jammu & Kashmir on March 13. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar

will meet representatives from as many as nine political parties, including the Dravidian majors, to discuss issues regarding conducting the poll. He will hold a review meeting with the district collector and superintendents of police. The CEC will also meet with the CEOs of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala, as well as officials from enforcement agencies, before wrapping up his meetings with the Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary and the State DGP. Earlier, a team from the EC reviewed preparations with

the Chief Electoral Officer of Bihar, the State police chief, and other agencies including Excise Department, DRI, ED, I-T, Forest Department, Postal Department, among others. During the meeting, the EC said that enforcement agencies have been instructed to take strict action against the use of money power during elections. The agency said in a post on X that action will be taken against 'liquor kingpins'. Directions have been given to dry up the inflow and distribution of liquor, cash, freebies, and drugs.



ବରିଷ୍ଠଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ମାନ | ଅସହାୟଙ୍କୁ ଭରସା

୫୮ ଲକ୍ଷରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ

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OIPR-15001/13/0426/2324

DSPL-702

CM launches Rs 660-cr sports projects



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Friday launched sports infrastructure projects worth Rs 660 crore that include 48 multipurpose indoor stadiums, Cuttack Table Tennis Academy, Rourkela Gymnastics Academy and 12 hockey training centres.

He also laid foundation-

stones for 11 sports projects.

The multipurpose indoor stadiums have been developed across Odisha.

The Rourkela Gymnastics Academy a new addition to the Gymnastics ecosystem features international standard equipments and also houses facilities for weightlifting, table tennis, yoga and gym.

The CM said, "We want to provide the best facilities for our young sportspersons so that they can realise their potentials and bring laurels to Odisha and India."

5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian interacted with sportspersons and assured them all support for their endeavours.

Cong to gherao Lok Seva Bhawan on Feb 26



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJD Government during its 24-year tenure in the State has failed in every sector. Whether it's in providing 35% irrigation in every block, preservation of agricultural produce, solving the problem of distress sale of paddy, solving the unemployment problem., the government has failed everywhere, said the Congress on Friday.

On the other hand, the Rs 1

lakh-crore mining scam, Rs 20,000-crore chit fund scam, Rs 33,000-crore scam in contracts for drinking water projects and other major scams have exposed the government. Besides, in atrocities against women and trafficking of girls the State has become a frontrunner. The Congress would gherao the Lok Seva Bhavan on February 26 to protest against these scams and injustice, said Pradesh Congress Committee president

Sarat Pattanayak in a Press meet here. The government is neck deep in corruption. Instead of carrying out real development of the State, it is only making big announcements during time of elections and hoodwinking the people. The law and order situation has crumbled. The education sector is in a precarious condition due to the large vacancies in the schools. The real farmers are deprived of benefits, said Pattanauak.

'Rs 200-cr scam in jute bag purchase'

Alleges Congress

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Congress on Thursday alleged a big scam in the State Government's decision to give two jute bags to the beneficiaries to carry PDS items.

The government has decided to procure 2 crore jute bags and 1 crore families would get two bags each. For this, a provision of Rs 300 crore has been allocated in the budget. But the bags which the government is giving would cost Rs 100 at the maximum in the market. Then, how the govern-

ment is spending Rs 150 per bag? This has raised a big question mark, said Congress spokesperson Prasant Satpathy. Besides, when one procures such a huge quantity of bags, the price per unit at wholesale rates is low. The bags which the government is giving would cost more than Rs 50 per unit. It means that there is a scam of Rs 100 per bag and there is a scam of Rs 200 crore in the purchase of 2 crore bags. The government must clarify from which company it is purchasing the bags and from which State, questioned Satpathy.

2.75L honorary workers to get EPF Act benefits

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The EPFO Bhubaneswar has extended benefits of EPF and MP Act 1952 to approximately 2.75 lakh honorary workers working in Odisha.

Assistant Provident Fund Commissioner, regional office, EPFO Bhubaneswar, Maushumi Lata padhi has issued direction to Commissioner cum Secretary, Labour and ESI Department, Government of Odisha on February 20 in this regard.

There are approximately 1.20 lakh Anganwadi workers and helpers, one lakh mid day meal (MDM) workers and

49,000 ASHAs working in Odisha who all are honorary workers and are deprived of the benefits of social security legislation earlier.

The action has been taken by the EPFO , Bhubaneswar on the complaint of RTI activist and advocate Rajnish Ratnakar who belongs to Bihar and is fighting for the noble cause and social security benefits to almost 60 lakh honorary workers working in the nation.

Due to his initiative same kind of letters have already been issued to Government of Bihar and Jharkhand a few months back.

Titanium metal complex to be set up

Kalyani Steel signs MoU with State Govt

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A Titanium Metal & Aerospace Components Manufacturing, and Integrated Advanced Specialty Steel and Automotive Components Manufacturing Complex will be set up in Odisha.

In this regard, the Kalyani Steel signed an MoU with the State Government in the pres-

ence of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik here on Friday.

The complex will be established at Gajamara in Dhenkanal district with an investment of Rs 11,751 crore. It will generate over 10,000 jobs.

The CM said this collaborative effort would lead to the creation of high-skill jobs.

"Odisha marks its grand entry into a highly advanced and precision manufacturing sector. This project is a perfect match for our aspirations for

creating an ecosystem conducive to new-age industries," Patnaik said. "This project will also catalyse the growth of MSMEs, spurring the development of a vibrant ecosystem of ancillary industries and OEM suppliers, providing many more employment opportunities," he added.

Kalyani Steels Limited Director Amit Kalyani underscored the project's significance as a milestone in the company's long-standing relationship with Odisha.

Pandian makes early morning visit to Ekamra Khetra



Says project must be ready by New Year

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Early in the morning on Friday, 5T & Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian visited the ongoing Ekamra Development Project in old town, Bhubaneswar.

During his visit between 6.30 am and 7.30 am, he directed the officials that the work must go on in full swing to complete the project by the New Year 2025 though the work is a mammoth one.

Pandian inspected all elements of the development

plan starting with north parking near Sanitarium Chhak, where besides bus parking and car parking, tourist conveniences, vending zone and Lingaraj police station will be constructed.

On the rehabilitation of the shopkeepers and vendors, he said their livelihoods must be ensured in all possible ways.

He visited the alternative road from Kotitirtheswar to Taleswar parallel to the Bindusagar road and reviewed the land requirements and drains.

Moving on towards the temple site, he inspected the area behind the Ananta Vasudev Temple, the location

of open Bhajan Mandap and Lingaraj Plaza area.

He advised to plan for foundation for queue management system in a manner not to disturb the landscape during annual requirements like Sivaratri.

To promote a clean environment around the temple, battery-operated vehicles will be used to ferry passengers around the temple.

At the end, he said the objective of the project is to develop a divine experience for the pilgrims. For this, beautiful gardens and designer Stonework would be created alongside the Parikrama surrounding the temple.

Self-employed mechanics' remuneration up

By 62.5%

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a significant move benefiting self-employed mechanics in Odisha, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has approved a substantial 62.5-per cent increase in their remuneration.

As per a release from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), the remuneration for

self-employed mechanics working in the gram panchayats has been raised from Rs 4,000 to Rs 6,500.

Around 13,000 self-employed mechanics across the State will benefit from this move.

The decision followed requests and suggestions received from self-employed mechanics and representatives during the visit of 5T and

Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian to various districts.

Self-employed mechanics play a crucial role in providing clean drinking water to villages across the State. Typically, two self-employed mechanics are deployed in each gram panchayat, diligently working on piped water supply as well as the maintenance and repair of tube-wells.

Temple renovation drive

Let Odisha Govt promote social harmony, equality

Allow SCs/STs to enter temples, appoint low-caste people as priests like in Kerala

Our country is home to the largest number of Hindu temples and it is estimated that we have on an average about 55 temples per one lakh population. As per the Census 2011, Hindus make up about 80 per cent of the population of India. The Hindu population of Odisha was 94 percent of the total population of the State.

Wherever Hindus of different sects migrate outside India, they build temples. In recent times, the Government of Odisha has launched temple beautification initiatives as a prime programme with engagement of top officials and allocation of finance for such work. Temples are the religious identities of Hindus and, with increasing identity politics in the country for political gain, non-religious bodies, such as political parties, are taking an equal interest in facilitating temple development work. The Government of Odisha



MANAS JENA

has allocated Rs 50 lakh to each panchyat for temple renovation work and the Government officials and panchyat raj institutions are engaged in the work. Privately, it is estimated that there are more than 30,000 temples in Odisha. It is featured among the top five States having a large number of temples.

As an individual, everyone has the right to religion, but the States do not have a religion. But these days, political parties and Governments are showing an interest in religion and using the religious sentiments of people to attract votes in the name of religion. This may lead to the establishment of theocratic States

by carving the secular credentials of the State.

During the freedom struggle our forefathers wanted to build a secular country because of our huge diversity and differences. Religion was not used as a point of unity among people to build a democratic society. Democracy is not about majority and minority, rather recognising minority rights is democracy. The use of majoritarian arguments for the majority of the population belonging to a particular religion is a threat to democracy.

Political parties must represent their people as a whole without abusing or appealing to any caste / religion/sect and work as protectors of our Constitution while cultivating constitutional values in the path of democracy and development.

It is observed that the temple movement of the Government is not inclusive of all Odia people.

It has created fear among religious minorities with majoritarian assertion in villages in the name of god and religion. It is a fact that a large segment of Hindus, the so-called untouchables,

SCs and ST, who are counted as Hindu in census, are not allowed to enter Hindu temples as fellow Hindus. It is a violation of the Right to Religion as citizens of the country.

Every day we have media reports about the conflict among caste

by teachers and priests is still continuing in spite of anti-discriminatory laws based on Constitution where it has been told for last 75 years that no one should be discriminated based on his gender, caste and religion. The Government of Odisha and the

SOCIAL CANVAS

Hindus and scheduled castes for temple entry in the villages. The so-called low caste people are subjected to indignity and social humiliation by the temple priests and others managing the temple affair on a daily basis. Religious functions and social gatherings in public places, such as temple premises in villages, are a place of social discrimination where SCs and women are mistreated by the male-dominated higher caste priests. The religious functions in educational institutions managed by upper-caste Hindus celebrating Puja and Ratha yatra and many other functions where the SC children are routinely humiliated and offended

ruling parties have not shown any interest in social reform or religious reform among the upper-caste Hindus to change their mindset and practices and a majority of them still hegemonically believes in caste supremacy by celebrating caste thread ceremonies. Even a few leaders in the Left parties celebrate a caste thread ceremony of their sons (not daughters) and organise public functions, though we all know the thread is an upper caste symbol. That represents social inequality in a hierarchical caste society.

By establishing and renovating temples, there has been a reassertion of the priesthood caste system which

will further disintegrate social life and lead to civil conflicts among different social groups and religions. As to the temple economy ,the temple movement by the Government has overlooked the ownership and management of huge temple property in the hands of the priestly class and others involved in management. The Endowment Department data says we have about 18,000 temples and around 400 mutts having huge landed property ,jewelry and other assets for gods and goddesses. It is reported by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India about huge encroachment of temple land. Who encroaches on temple land ? They are the people most closer to temple affairs. There are about 6,000 cases of encroachment ,changes of records and illegal transfer are pending in different endowment courts. Lord Jagannath, the biggest land lord of Odisha, also had more than 60,000 acres of land. But the Lord has been fighting encroachment cases to save His land.

As per revenue records in every village, we have allocated land for the temple under the category of

Debotar land. Unfortunately, the same villages having many landless families are still struggling to have a piece of land for construction of a house, but they are still denied the right to home by the Government. Temple properties are public property but a handful of people manage and use the resources for personal benefits. The most striking attempt by the Kerala Government that changed the history was when SCs and OBCs were appointed as temple priests by the Travencore Debaswam Temple Board in 1818. The board follows a recruitment process adhering to the norms of reservation policy for SCs and OBCs while conducting exams and interviews to recruit priests for its 1,252 temples in south and central Kerla having about more than 2,500 regular priests getting salary and pension while they are instrumental in generating an annual revenue of Rs 400 crore. This has given a boost to the social unity of Hindus and brought radical reforms in social and religious equality. Odisha must promote social harmony and equality through its temple movement. (manasbbsr15@gmail.com)



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DSPL-705



ମା' ଓ ଶିଶୁଙ୍କ ଉତ୍ତମ ପୁଷ୍ଟି ସାଧନ ଓ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟରକ୍ଷାକୁ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱ

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OIPR-15001/13/0429/2324



In a first, organ of deceased retrieved in AIIMS

Liver transported through green corridor to ILBS, Delhi

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

For the first time at the AIIMS, Bhubaneswar, surgeons collected the liver from a 14-year-old girl child who was declared dead in the ICU setup. The organ was transported to ILBS, New Delhi on Friday evening. For this, a green corridor was arranged.

Daughter of the brave parents Banita and Dukhabandhu Mahant, originally from Keonjhar district, currently residing at Bhubaneswar, was suffering from chronic kidney disease and was under dialysis for the last few months.

Recently, she developed a brain stroke and was admitted to the department of Medicine at AIIMS Bhubaneswar on



February 15. Subsequently, she went into a coma and was on a ventilator. Showing no signs of recovery, the girl child was declared brain stem death by the expert committee from

AIIMS Bhubaneswar after doing a series of Apnoea tests. Knowing the irreparable loss, the brave parents of the child came forward to show the highest degree of humanity

and gave consent to donate the organs of their daughter to save the life of another person. The expert surgeons retrieved her liver after declaration of the brain stem death.

AIIMS Bhubaneswar Executive Director Dr Ashutosh Biswas leading the entire process conveyed heartfelt gratitude to the brave parents for the great humanitarian gesture. Also, he congratulated the entire transplant team of the national institute for successfully conducting the first deceased donor organ retrieval.

AIIMS Bhubaneswar is always committed to serve the society through new approaches. The national institute has been running a successful renal transplant from living donors. The step will augment the complete liver transplant process at AIIMS, said Dr Biswas.

Maoists, police exchange fire in Bargarh

PNS ■ BARGARH

Maoists again made their presence felt in Bargarh district when they fired at security forces on Friday morning in the Paikamal forest.

As per reports, the security forces were undertaking a combing operation in the for-

est when the Maoists fired shots at them ensuing a gun battle between them.

Following the fire exchange, senior police officials including district SP and IGP of Northern Range rushed to the spot. Police have not shared any information about any casualty or injury from

either side.

The Maoist division from Chhattisgarh was active in the jungles of Bargarh. But they were silent for some months and there was not any extremist activity.

However, their presence in the jungle has yet again been established by the gun battle.

On Thursday, several jawans of the Special Operations Group (SOG) were reportedly injured in an IED explosion during a search operation at the Nalikumpa jungle under Boudh's Kantamal police station.

The IED was suspected to be planted by the Maoists.

BMC to remove all political posters

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to remove all the political banners and posters under its jurisdiction ahead of the 2024 general elections.

The BMC has decided to do so under the guidelines of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

BMC Commissioner Vijay Amruta Kulange said, "The BMC has started action as per the ECI guidelines. I have

directed all the staffs to remove all those political advertisements against the guideline. We have also requested all the political parties to adhere to the ECI guidelines. We will remove any further political adver-

tisements found in Bhubaneswar before the elections too."

Notably, an eight-member team of the ECI led by Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar recently concluded a three-day visit to Odisha.



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DSPL-703



ବିଜୁ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ କଲ୍ୟାଣ ଯୋଜନାର ବିଶେଷତ୍ୱ

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OIPR-15001/13/0427/2324

In Bhadrak

Matric student found hanging ahead of exam

PNS ■ BHADRAK

A Class-X student hanged himself a day before the Matric Examination in Bhadrak district on Friday morning. The boy was found hanging in a room of his house at Jahangir Sasan village under the Dhamnagar police limits. He was to appear in his English paper at the examination on Friday. The boy belonged to Radho village under Kaptipada

block in Mayurbhanj district and was staying at the residence of his aunt (mother's sister) for studies. Though the examination pressure was suspected behind the incident, he committed suicide allegedly after receiving a 'disturbing' phone message from a girl on Thursday night.

"He had received a message from a girl, who had written that she is going to die. When his aunt asked about the mes-

sage, he avoided answering and deleted the content from his phone," said Madhabananda Mishra, uncle of the boy.

As the relationship between the boy's parents was not good, his mother had sent the boy to her sister's home for studies, he added.

The boy's aunt Alaka Dash said, "My nephew received a message from a girl last night. When I inquired, he said that

the girl had mistakenly sent the message to him. He deleted all her messages after talking to her over phone. I went to my room for sleep after keeping his room's door half-open. Early in the morning, I found his door closed from inside. I knocked at the door repeatedly but did not get any response. With help of family members, we broke open the door and found him hanging with my saree."

In Brahmapur

Student ends life after caught for malpractice

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

A Plus 2 student died by suicide in Brahmapur city after allegedly being caught for malpractice during the ongoing CHSE Examination 2024.

The student was found hanging at his residence in the Ankuli locality in the city on Friday.

Debasish Sethi, a student of the Nilakantheswar Sishu Mandir in Brahmapur, was caught for allegedly malpractice during the Plus 2 Examination of his Physics paper at the Khallikote Higher Second-



ary School examination centre on Thursday. He took extreme step to end his life on Friday.

'D'nal to be centre of new-age communication'



Pradhan unveils Skill India Centre

PNS ■ DHENKANAL

While launching the Skill India Centre at Dhenkanal on Friday, Union Minister for Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Dharmendra Pradhan said that the centre will strengthen the skill development landscape of the region, enhancing access to 21st century skills.

It will fulfil aspirations, empower citizens, particularly youth and make them future ready. Skill India Centre (SIC) in Dhenkanal is a step towards fulfilling #ModiGuarantee of making India a Global Skill Capital, he said.

Among others, Ved Mani Tiwari, CEO, NSDC and MD,

NSDC International also addressed the event.

Pradhan said, "IIMC Dhenkanal has been given the status of Deemed University. Skill India Centre inaugurated today, if connected with IIMC Dhenkanal, will make it a futuristic centre of modern communication in the coming days." Under the Skill India Mission, the centre will train aspirants and young women in new-age skills like graphics designing, hospitality, technology services and leather industry, he informed. To ensure seamless implementation of the training ecosystem, NSDC will designate a Centre Manager who will monitor the implementation of training programs, ensure adherence to quality standards, and overall functioning of the Centre.

In Keonjhar

Father-son duo killed in road accident

Family member dies of heart attack on hearing news

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

In a tragic incident on Friday, a man and his son were killed in a road accident near Pipilia Chhak under the Ghatagaon police limits in Keonjhar district while one of their family members died of heart attack after hearing about the mishap.

As per reports, Kande Munda (57) and his son Laxman Munda (35) were heading towards the Bankapatuli vegetable market from their village Barigaon by

a scooter in the morning, during which a truck hit the ill-fated two-wheeler.

The two sustained critical injuries in the accident and died on the spot.

The tragedy for the family was far from over as Laxman's uncle Samara Munda, on knowing about the deaths, suffered a heart attack and died.

On the other hand, tension ran high at the accident spot as irate locals blocked the portion of NH-20 demanding compensation for the family. Vehicular movement was affected on the road due to the blockade.

On being informed, police reached the place and tried to pacify the angry locals.

Keonjhar: Man gets lifer for rape, murder

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

District and Sessions Judge Ashok Kumar Panda on Friday sentenced one Sushant Kumar Naik (23) of Balanipasi village under the Pandapada police station to life imprisonment for rape and murder of a 21-year-old girl.

The court also directed Sushant to pay a fine of Rs 5,000.

Three other accused were acquitted due to lack of evidence. .

The case records stated that Sushant called the victim from her home at Basantpur under the Pandapada police station

on October 23, 2021, Next day her dead body was recovered from a abandoned pond in the village.

Police after probe arrested the accused and forwarded him to court. During the investigation it was revealed that he along with three of his friends raped her and strangled her to death and threw her body in an abandoned pond

The judge pronounced the judgement based on the statements of 20 witnesses and on the basis of DNA report and police probe report.

Special Public Prosecutor Pradeep Kumar Das appeared from the prosecution side.

Landslide Early Warning Odisha Govt collaborates with Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a strategic move to mitigate the impact of landslides during storms, the Odisha Government in collaboration with Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham is gearing up to establish a user-friendly Landslide Early Warning System (EWS) in Gajapati district. The initiative aims to provide advanced information, especially regarding landslides caused by disturbances in the natural stability of a slope.

Representatives from Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham engaged in discussions with the Odisha Government regarding the system's implementation. Dr

System in G'pati soon

Maneesha V Ramesh, Provost for Strategic Initiatives, Research and Innovation and Director, Amrita Center for Wireless Networks and Applications, along with the Center's geoscience consultant, Dr Sudesh K Wadhawan, met Chief Secretary Pradeep Jena to discuss the implementation of the system. The discussions, which involved officers from the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) and other officials, focused on providing the essential knowledge and skills required for the successful execution of the system.

A team of experts from Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, led by Dr Maneesha, also conducted a comprehensive study and surveyed the most vulnerable areas for landslides, including Baragahra and Madha in Rayagada block of the district.

'Implement Journalist Protection Act'

SUJ delegation meets ADM Paradip, submit memo for CM

PNS ■ PARADIP

The State Union of Journalists (SUJ), Jagatsinghpur district, has taken a proactive step by issuing a demand letter to the Chief Minister of Odisha through the Additional District Collector of Paradip. The letter calls for the urgent implementation of the Journalist Protection Act aimed at ensuring the safety and welfare of working journalists across the State.

Led by district president Prasanta Kumar Rout and general secretary Sanjay Kumar Mishra, a delegation comprising key members of the SUJ, including State Journalist Welfare Fund chairman and chief

adviser of the district branch Gagan Bihari Sahoo, joint secretary Prabhat Kumar Mohapatra, vice president Harishchandra Lenka, State working member Sidheshwar Swain and treasurer Jagannath Satapathy, Prashant Kumar Rout and Satyashiva Parida among others conveyed their concerns to ADM Niranjan Behera and presented demand letter in a silent procession during a gathering at Madhuban on February 21.

The demand letter underscores the urgent need for legislative measures to safeguard the interests and well-being of journalists. Additionally, the letter advocates for the provision of grants and pensions for journalists, along with the establishment of a journalist guest house in Bhubaneswar to facilitate their accommodation needs.

K'mal digital media assn holds fest



PNS ■ PHULBANI

The Kandhamal Digital Media Association organised its annual function and felicitation programme at Phulbani.

A debate was held on the role of digital media in the

nation building. Certificate of excellence was given to about fifty digital media journalists. While SDC chairman Rodan Mallick was the chief guest, Dr Arup Jena joined as chief speaker, association State president Tusar Pattnaik, KUJ Association

general secretary Rajkishor Swain, working president Parameswar Das, PA, ITDA, Prabin Kumar Banua, District Press Club president Sunil Pattnaik, working president Ashok Parida joined as guests of honour.

District digital media association president presided over the meeting while Journalist Sibani Suar coordinated. Senior Citizen Association president KK Pandey, vice president Naba Kishor Rath and senior journalist Santosh Digal spoke.

Teachers crunch: GMU to recruit guest faculties

76 out of 144 positions lie vacant

NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR

The Gangadhar Meher University (GMU) is grappling with a significant shortage of teaching and non-teaching personnel, affecting various departments.

Out of 23 sanctioned professor positions, only two are filled, leaving 21 departments

without a professor. The overall teaching staff vacancy stands at 76 out of 144 positions, with departments like Botany, Zoology, Hindi, Sociology, and Commerce going without permanent teaching staff members.

Sources at GMU said in response to the acute shortage, the university is set to release a notice for recruitment of guest faculties. The university intends to address the void by hiring guest faculties and retired teachers to ensure the

smooth functioning of academic activities.

The scarcity of professors is particularly concerning for PhD scholars, as guest faculties have limitations in guiding thesis writing.

GMU VC N Nagaraju, acknowledging the issue, said, "We recognize the staff shortages and are initiating a guest faculty recruitment drive in the coming days to address these challenges effectively."

Subham Mohanty, a Commerce department student,

said, "With over 300 students in one BCom year, the reliance on guest faculties and PhD scholars to take classes for us compromises the quality of education in our department."

Apart from teaching staff shortages, non-teaching positions also face a deficit, with 38 out of 88 positions lying vacant. Key positions, including senior assistants, section officers, and personnel responsible for various administrative functions, remain unfilled.

R'gada DHH tops in hosp ranking in State

Patted by CM, provided cash award of Rs 1 cr

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

Chief Minister Naveen Pattanaik felicitated the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH), Rayagada, for securing top rank in the entire State for the Financial Year 2022-23. It got 1st position among 32 DHHs of the State.

As per the criteria and guidelines based on specific parameters set by the Health and Family Welfare Department, all Medical College and Hospitals, DHHs, SDHs and CHCs are graded in every financial year. Chief Minister felicitates the top performing health institution under DHH ranking. A cash award is also given to RKS, DHH for the development of health facilities.

The cash reward of RKS DHH of Rank 1,2 and 3 is Rs 100 lakh, Rs 50 lakh and Rs 30 lakh respectively. Accordingly, the DHH Rayagada has received Rs1 crore, which will boost the development of the hospital further, said District Programme Manager of Rayagada DHH, Rajeshawar Pattanaik.

The Health Department has specified certain criteria for the annual grading system like Bed Occupancy Rate, C Section Rate, types of diagnostic services, patient satisfaction score, quality certification score, etc. The prime objective of DHH ranking is to improve patient satisfaction through teamwork, technology, transparency and transformation of the healthcare delivery system in a time-bound manner. Rayagada DHH has surpassed these parameters.

Matrubhasha Diwas at IIT BBS

'Pragmatic approach towards mother tongue need of hour'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar celebrated the Matrubhasha Diwas (International Mother Language Day) on February 21.

The programme was organised to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and to promote multilingualism, in line with the worldwide celebration as per the UNESCO declaration. This year, the theme of International Mother Language Day was "Multilingual education is a pillar of intergenerational learning."



Speaking on the occasion, Prof Shreepat Karmalkar, Director, IIT Bhubaneswar, emphasized that mother language is the language of the heart. "Language is not just a means of communication; it is a repository of our culture, history, and identity. Evolving and adapting to contemporary demands, languages also serve as

poignant reminders of our historical roots," he added.

He also informed that IIT Bhubaneswar has made it a practice for the PhD scholars to submit their PhD thesis in any Indian language in addition to English to promote linguistic diversity.

Eminent orator, composer, editor, translator and com-

mentator in Odia, Sanskrit and Devnagari languages, Dr Krushna Keshab Sarangi, who works as Assistant Director, APICOL, was the chief guest on the occasion. He emphasized on the importance of the use of mother language for the growth of a society. He said: "In contemporary times, the pragmatic approach towards the use of mother language is the need of the hour. It should move beyond the theoretical framework." He also stressed the use of mother language in day-to-day activities for the promotion of the language, thereby ensuring the development of a particular society.

FM Varsity, IMI, BBSR ink MoU

To promote research, collaboration, training

PNS ■ BALESWAR

The Fakir Mohan University (FMU) here and the International Management Institute (IMI) Bhubaneswar have formalised a strategic partnership through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Thursday.

The MoU, inked on February 19 at the premises of IMI Bhubaneswar, marks a pivotal moment in the academic landscape of Odisha. It signifies the

commitment of both institutions to promote research, collaboration, and training initiatives, with a focus on driving entrepreneurial endeavours and incubation activities.

The FMU accredited with an esteemed A grade by NAAC and renowned for its interdisciplinary approach and culture of excellence, brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the partnership. Meanwhile, IMI Bhubaneswar, ranked 67th in the National Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2023, underscores its commitment to academic excellence and innovation.

The signing ceremony was attended by dignitaries from both institutions, including FMU's Vice-Chancellor Professor Santosh Kumar Tripathy, Registrar Kukumina Das and Chairman PG Council Professor Sabyasachi Pattnaik, among others. IMI Director Professor Ramesh Behl extended a warm welcome to the FMU delegation, emphasizing the potential for collaboration in driving impactful research and academic initiatives.

Following the formalities of the MoU signing, faculty members from both institutions engaged in constructive discussions, exploring avenues

for joint research projects, academic exchanges, and collaborative events such as conferences, seminars, and workshops.

The partnership between FMU and IMI is poised to serve as a catalyst for innovation and transformation in various domains, fostering a culture of excellence and driving socioeconomic development in the region. With a shared vision for academic advancement and societal impact, both institutions are committed to leveraging their respective strengths to propel Odisha's academic landscape to new heights.

PM Modi envisions India in his 3rd term



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being presented a memento by UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during dedication ceremony of Kashi Complex of Banas Dairy Plant in Varanasi on Friday. (Right) Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays tribute to Sant Ravidas during his 647th birth anniversary celebrations

RAMESH K SINGH ■ VARANASI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi rallied supporters in Varanasi on Friday, outlining his vision for the prospective third term of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), promising a transformation that would propel India to become the world's third-largest economy. Addressing an enthusiastic crowd at the Banas Dairy Complex, PM Modi pledged to secure all 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh, asserting that the NDA's return to power would elevate India's stature across economic, social, strategic, and cultural fronts. Highlighting the strides made during his tenure, PM Modi emphasised India's ascent from the 11th to the 5th largest economy globally over the past

decade, with ambitious plans to further climb the rankings in the next five years. Amid applause, he launched a scathing attack on Opposition leaders, implicitly referencing Congress scion Rahul Gandhi's recent remarks targeting local youths. Modi condemned what he termed as "frustrated" leaders resorting to divisive tactics due to dwindling political fortunes, accusing them of peddling dynasty, appeasement, and caste-based politics. Assuring accelerated developmental initiatives, PM Modi underscored the expansion of Digital India, infrastructure upgrades including modernised railway

stations, and the introduction of transformative projects like Vande Bharat, Amrit Bharat, and Namo Bharat trains. He pledged to harness the potential of eastern India, envisioning the region as a vital engine for national growth. The unveiling of the first phase of the Varanasi-Aurangabad six-lane highway and plans for the Varanasi-Ranchi-Kolkata Expressway underscored the government's commitment to bolster connectivity and regional development. Reflecting on past promises fulfilled, Modi highlighted the success story of Banas Dairy as a beacon of job creation and economic prosperity. He

announced plans to extend benefits to milk producers in neighboring districts, unveiling initiatives aimed at fostering agricultural growth and rural prosperity across Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Accompanied by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Deputy Chief Minister Brijesh Pathak, and other dignitaries, PM Modi bestowed a slew of projects worth ₹13,202.07 crore upon Purvanchal, including Varanasi. From infrastructure to cultural initiatives, the Prime Minister's visit epitomised a blend of developmental zeal and strategic political messaging, resonating with the electorate ahead of the crucial state elections. Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister paid homage at the Ravidas Temple, underlining the government's commitment to honour the legacy of Sant Ravidas and uplift marginalised communities. The symbolic gesture, coupled with a focus on inclusive growth and empowerment, served to galvanise support while underscoring the administration's unwavering dedication to social justice. In a culmination of his visit, PM Modi interacted with scholars at BHU, underscoring the importance of education and knowledge in India's journey towards prosperity.



DSPL-706

(Anaemia Mukta Lakshya Abhiyan)

- 6-59 months at AWC
- 5-9 years at Primary Schools
- 10-19 years adolescents at High Schools
- all women of reproductive age (20-24 yrs), pregnant women, lactating mothers at VHSND / UHSND.

Anaemia causes poor cognitive development, physical exhaustion, decreased immunity and pregnancy related complications.

Request the beneficiaries to get tested for anaemia accordingly and take complete treatment.

OIPR-10003/13/0169/2324

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Sai Abhilipsa Panda

Story Writing
Dilkash Fatima

Essay Writing
Debasish Ghosh

Sketching
Amit Patel

Bindusmita Pradhan
Bhumisuta Satnami

Painting
Aadyaa Mohapatra

13-16 YEARS

Poem Writing
Subhasmita Sahoo

Story Writing
Lisha Sahu

Essay Writing
Bandana Kumari

Sketching
Hira Soren

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Religious apartheid

Karnataka’s proposal to tax several Hindu temples smacks of discrimination

In a move reminiscent of the historically partisan practice of jizya, the Congress Government in Karnataka has proposed a plan to collect funds from Hindu temples as a form of tax. Understandably, the move has sparked a controversy and reignited debates over the treatment of Hindu places of worship and whether these are being unfairly targeted. While some argue that the move is a necessary step to ensure the upkeep of Hindu religious institutions and support the livelihoods of the priests involved, others see it as discriminatory and belonging to a regressive era when non-Muslims were subjected to jizya, a special tax. While the proposed tax is not explicitly religious in nature, its resemblance to jizya has not gone unnoticed and critics view it as a form of economic discrimination. One of the primary concerns raised by the move's opponents is the selective targeting of Hindu places of worship as similar demands are not being made of other religious institutions, such as mosques or churches. This asymmetry has led



to accusations of bias and favouritism on the part of the Government. If the aim is to genuinely improve facilities at religious places, it should be even-handed and not selective. Our Constitution is clear about religious freedom and equality and all Governments across the country must comply with that. Arguing that it is a matter of fiscal responsibility, however, the tax proponents point to the vast wealth accumulated by some temples. They reason that it is only fair for these temples to contribute to the broader welfare of society. Additionally, they contend that the funds collected will be used for the benefit of the community, including the preservation of cultural heritage and the support of religious practitioners. The proposal has sparked widespread outrage among certain segments of the Hindu population, which sees it as an encroachment on their religious freedoms and an attempt to undermine their heritage. For many Hindus, temples are not just places of worship but symbols of their cultural identity. Any attempt to impose financial burdens on these institutions is viewed as an attack on their way of life. Moreover, the Government's involvement in the financial affairs of temples raises broader questions about the separation of religion and State. By exerting control over the finances of Hindu religious institutions, the Govt risks overstepping its boundaries. In this light, it is essential for the policymakers to tread carefully and consider the implications of their actions. While temple maintenance and priest welfare are undoubtedly important issues, these must be addressed in a manner that respects the rights and sensitivities of all citizens. Ultimately, the debate over the temple tax in Karnataka raises fundamental questions about religious freedom and the role of the State in religious affairs. Meanwhile, it is crucial for all stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue and seek solutions upholding the principles of fairness; only then can we ensure that our society remains true to its values of pluralism and tolerance.

PICTALK



Youth employment: From seekers to innovators

Active participation in Govt schemes and emphasis on entrepreneurship offer promising avenues towards a brighter future for India’s rural youth

In 2023, India experienced a notable surge in unemployment rates, impacting both rural and urban areas. Particularly concerning was the rise in urban unemployment, escalating from 8.5% in October to 9.3% in November and further climbing to 10.1% in December, mirroring levels from a year prior. This surge has undeniably heightened stress among the younger generation, actively seeking job opportunities, with thousands applying for each available position. In the age of technology, however, a paradigm shift is encouraged—from job seekers to job providers. The youth grappling with unemployment challenges are urged to redefine their goals and leverage their potential and skills. Sayyed Toiba Kousar, a 22-year-old resident of the border district Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir, emphasises the transformative role technology can play in the employment landscape. Through the strategic use of technology, the younger generation can not only secure employment but also venture into



becoming job providers. Azhar Ali, a 24-year-old cricket enthusiast, underscores the importance of effective facilities for skill enhancement. He believes that with the provision of adequate facilities, the youth can excel in their respective fields, significantly contributing to societal and national development. Azhar contends that timely access to essential facilities is crucial for the younger generation to play a more impactful role in the country's progress. Muhammad Waqar, a 22-year-old, advocates for a focus on sports activities at the school level to divert youth from addictive behaviours and guide them towards establishing self-employment opportunities. Ajaz Hussain, aged 27, emphasises creating opportunities aligned with children's interests to inspire

self-reliance, benefiting both the individual and the country. Rashid highlights the importance of parental involvement in identifying and nurturing their children's interests, guiding them towards the numerous opportunities available today in areas such as sports, the internet, singing, dancing, art, painting, photography, and sculpture. In the current scenario, various skill-related schemes are being implemented by both central and state governments across India. Notably, the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), operated by the Ministry of Rural Development, stands out as one of the most effective projects. This initiative focuses on promoting self-employment and supporting rural individuals, especially economically disadvantaged young men and women. In Jammu and Kashmir, the Jammu and Kashmir State Rural Livelihood Mission (JKSRLM) oversees the implementation of NRLM, aiming to integrate the poor into self-help groups and connect them with self-employment opportunities.

The primary goal of JKSRLM is to reach 66% of the rural population in 125 blocks of Jammu and Kashmir, providing sustainable livelihood opportunities to uplift them from poverty and enhance their standard of living. The Indian government has initiated various poverty alleviation schemes to improve the quality of life for the poor. It is crucial for the youth to actively engage with and benefit from these government schemes, fostering self-reliance in employment matters and contributing to societal development. To ensure the success of these schemes, relevant departments should actively provide information and guidance, encouraging their 100% implementation and timely achievement of goals. By embracing the shift from job seekers to job providers, youth can play a vital role in shaping a more prosperous and self-sufficient future for themselves and the nation. *(The writer is from the Poonch district of J&K. He writes on socio-economic development challenges of his community; views are personal. Charkha features)*



SOHAIL ALI

The boycott at Doha

The Taliban’s obscurantist mindset and their harbouring of terrorist organisations pose a serious threat to Muslim countries

Given the obscurantist and misogynistic mindset of the Taliban, it is hardly surprising that they boycotted the conference, hosted by the United Nations, to discuss the humanitarian crisis facing Afghanistan, and cooperation on the human rights issue. They spurned the UN's invitation saying that they would attend only if they alone were officially representing Afghanistan, as inclusion of other groups would jeopardise progress. This exclusivist mindset, which reflects their intolerance of the existence of any organisation that does not share their obscurantist Islamist worldview, and does not owe allegiance to them, is at the core of their rejection of democracy, and advocacy of an Islamist theocracy manifest in their designation of Afghanistan as an Islamic Emirate, run according to the dictates of mullahs. The Taliban are unlikely to have realised that they have shot themselves in the foot by boycotting the conference held in Doha on February 18 and 19 under the chairmanship of the UN secretary-general, Antonio Guterres. Besides the special envoys of 25 countries, members of Afghanistan's civil society and women's groups, it was attended by representatives of the European Union (EU), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). By not attending the conference, the Taliban have only perpetuated their isolation in the world. They obviously do not seem to mind that since humanitarian assistance continues to come in for the sake of the country's people suffering from natural disasters like floods and earthquakes as well as the violence stalking the country. The OIC's role was outlined by Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, special envoy of organisation's secretary-general. During his interventions, Bakheet recalled his organisation's commitment to support Afghanistan and engage in a constructive dialogue with the country's de facto authorities [Taliban] "on issues and topics included in the relevant resolutions of the [OIC's]



Council of Foreign Ministers. In this regard, he reviewed OIC efforts in providing humanitarian assistance, sending scholars delegations, and holding a conference on women's rights in Islam hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." Ambassador Bakheet was referring to the international conference on "Women in Islam: Status and Empowerment" (November 6 to 8, 2023), organised by the OIC's general secretariat and hosted by Saudi Arabia. It included in its Final Declaration 20 recommendations highlighting the rights that Islam gave to women and the status of women in Islam. These also addressed the challenges and opportunities pertaining to the realisation of women's rights and enhancement of their role across all fields and at all levels of society. The conference also produced "The Jeddah Document on Women's Rights in Islam" which, as stated by OIC's secretary-general, Hissein Ibrahim Taha, in his address at the conference's closing session, would serve as an intellectual and practical reference document that could be adopted by legislative bodies and human rights organizations in member states and all Muslim societies when considering the



IF THE OIC AND THE MUSLIM COUNTRIES ARE SERIOUS ABOUT WOMEN'S RIGHTS, THEY MUST WORK OUT TOUGH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SANCTIONS THAT WOULD COMPEL THE TALIBAN TO CHANGE THEIR POLICIES IN THIS REGARD

rights of Muslim women. It will be submitted for adoption at the forthcoming Islamic Summit, scheduled to be held in Gambia at the end of this year, and subsequently presented to all relevant international fora. He hoped that those doubting Islam's fairness toward women would consider women's rights as set out in this document, and not on the basis some isolated social practices in some Muslim societies that in no way reflect the sublime vision and universality of Islam and its teachings. Taha's not-so-veiled rejection of the Taliban's views on women's rights in the last sentence above, will not please the mullahs running Afghanistan. Nor will they be amused by his affirmation that women's empowerment issues would remain high among the OIC's priorities, and that the OIC would launch and support numerous efforts and initiatives to elevate the status of women in Muslim societies. Taha's words carry a special significance as he spoke in Saudi Arabia where, under the leadership of the crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, significant steps have been taken to improve women's position. Women can now attend sporting events, need not wear the abayah, a long, loose-fitting, garment covering the entire body,

except the face, hands and feet, in public, and can get driving licenses and can go to work, study or run errands without male escorts. While women demanding more freedom are treated harshly and much more remains to be done, the gains have been considerable compared to the situation earlier. One can be certain that the Taliban would not change their views. Bigots dig their heels deeper and deeper the more people reject their creed. If the OIC and the Muslim countries are serious about women's rights, they must work out tough economic and political sanctions that would compel the Taliban to change their policies in this regard. They must also take measures to compel the Taliban to act against terrorist outfits like a Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) active in Afghanistan. The former is targeting Pakistan and the latter Iran. Given, however, their obscurantist creed, and determination to impose their version of sharia law globally, there is no reason why they will not strike other countries in future, particularly the Muslim ones they consider as apostatic. *(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT?

Sir — As per a report the Congress Party on Thursday alleged that democracy is being "murdered" in the country after microblogging platform X voiced disagreement with the Centre's order to block accounts and posts related to the ongoing farmers' protests. Congress MP Rahul Gandhi claimed the public knows that the government has "murdered democracy" and will give a strong answer. Rahul Gandhi asked "If farmers ask for MSP, shoot them. Is this the mother of democracy? When the youth ask for appointments, refuse to even listen to them this is the mother of democracy? If a former governor tells the truth, send the CBI to his house. Is this the mother of democracy?" Freeze the bank account of the most prominent opposition party. Is this the mother of democracy? Section 144, internet ban, sharp wires, tear gas shells is this the mother of democracy? Be it media or social media, suppressing every voice of truth — is this the mother of democracy?" the Congress leader Gandhi said. According to sources The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had ordered social media platforms to temporarily block 177 accounts linked to the farmers' protests at the request of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Farmers from across the country have been protesting to press the Centre for their demands, including a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP) for crops and farm loan waivers. **Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai**

PASSPORT OFFICE WOES

Sir — It is observed that a huge gathering above five hundred applicants including aged and mothers carrying just born babies are standing in queue, outside the office on Thursday i.e. open day, to get solve the problems of passports to be issued at RPO, Secunderabad. Moreover over the area traffic police lift the vehicles parking outside the said office. The concerned authorities of the passport

Two legendary figures depart



India has lost two of its most illustrious and influential personalities, Fali S Nariman and Ameen Sayani, who left behind a legacy of excellence and innovation in their respective fields of law and radio. Fali S Nariman was a renowned jurist and senior advocate of the Supreme Court of India. He was involved in several landmark cases that shaped India's constitutional law and judicial system. He was a champion of civil liberties and the independence of the judiciary. He resigned as Additional Solicitor General to protest against the Emergency in 1975, the only law officer to do so.

office should provide the same facility i.e. open day at all passport offices of Hyderabad to solve the aroused problems instead of a single door at Secunderabad. Thus the applicants can reach their nearest office and the rush at a single door will also be diluted. The concerned area traffic police should also provide sufficient parking places instead of lifting and imposing huge penalties on applicants. Hope the area Corporator, MLA, Concern Minister and the authorities of passport offices and traffic police will take necessary action soon and will provide mental and physical relaxation to the applicants. **Arif Hussain | Secunderabad**

ODISHA TO IMPROVE SPORTS INFRA

Sir — The Odisha government has decided to renovate Barabati Stadium in Cuttack. The Barabati stadium is one of the oldest stadiums in the state. This stadium has witnessed many national and international sporting events in the past. Barabati Stadium is also known to be the

He received several awards and honours, including the Padma Vibhushan, the Gruber Prize for Justice, and a nomination to the Rajya Sabha. He was also an avid reader, writer and speaker on various topics of law, politics and culture. Ameen Sayani was the iconic radio presenter and host of the popular radio show Binaca Geetmala, which ran from 1952 to 1994 on Radio Ceylon. He revolutionised Indian broadcasting with his signature greeting, "Behno aur Bhaiyo", and his warm and friendly style of hosting. Nariman and Sayani were both Parsis who belonged to Mumbai and made their mark on the national and international stage. They were both respected and admired by their peers and fans for their passion, integrity and innovation. They were both involved in the mission of nation-building and inspiring generations to fight for a just society. They will be dearly missed by their family, friends and fans. May their souls rest in peace. **Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh**

hub of cricket in Odisha. To revive Odisha's cricketing history and groom young cricket aspirants in the state, it was necessary to redevelop it. A Sports complex having world-class facilities for other sports will also be built along with the new stadium. A few days back a cricket stadium in Sambalpur was also decided for renovated. After Hockey and Football, Odisha is now investing in the cricketing ecosystem and infrastructure. This move will assist youths in the state who want to make a career in sports. The developed sports infrastructure will make Odisha a hub for many national and international sporting events. The development of sports in the state will boost the economy as well. Odisha has already hosted the Hockey World Cup and FIFA World Cup and in its way to becoming the sports capital of India. **Deba Prasad Nayak | Dhenkanal**

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

THE STRESS BEHIND THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Teachers have alarming rates of burnout and attrition worldwide



College degrees, good education and satisfying jobs are all things that people generally strive for. Teaching is one of the most visceral jobs most people will ever experience. Teachers since ages have proven to be vital because they shape the lives of students and help them develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the world.

It is interesting to note that many people today believe the stereotype that teaching is a stress-free job. It is the only profession that gets summers and weekends off. Moreover, it is typically a job that people only do because they cannot do anything else. The adage those who can, do; those who can't, teach is widely believed. However, the reality is that there is a great amount of stress associated with this type of profession.

There is no denying the fact that the teaching profession is emotionally, physically and mentally exhausting. Many teachers across the world are experiencing teacher shortages. As per the latest survey, it was found that almost 50% of the new teachers who join with super excitement, passion and a dream to take on the world quit within the first five years of teaching, which begs the question: why do so many of them leave after going through years of college for this profession? Without enough teacher, one cannot successfully educate their children. Moreover, the most disturbing part is that the education system relies on massive amounts of unpaid labour. According to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the average teacher works for 52.5 hours a week, over 30% more than they are contracted for. Multiple surveys declare uncertainty, workload, negative perception about the job, concern for others' well-being, health struggles and playing multiple roles have hampered school teachers' mental health and well-being.



Not only this, research also indicates that burnout contributes to high attrition rates among educators. Making teachers work beyond their contracted hours and not paying for it: giving them five hours or less per week to plan for 30 hours of instructions, grading and providing feedback on assignments for almost 200 students on an average, analysing data, contacting parents, attending meetings, preparing teaching materials, expecting teachers to implement new initiatives, programs and practices without proper training, completing administrative tasks, expecting teachers to differentiate and individualise instructions for a class with 30+ students and above all blaming teachers for all education-related issues despite not including teachers in decision making of education-related issues prove out to be a few reasons for teacher burnout. The constant turnover rate of teachers, lack of interest in teaching and lack of commitment to the profession continue to be a major concern for school systems all over the nation. Stress has become a common characteristic of teachers and with the increased amount of accountability, teachers play a significant role in students and schools resulting in poor classroom engagement and ultimately low student achievement.

To be an effective educator, all teachers need to maintain their psychological well-being. For an ordinary human being not related to this profession, a teacher is a person who is working around 1800 hours a year, whereas in reality, they are the ones who are working around 2300 hours a year on average which shows that approximately 550 hours are unpaid working.

Remember, the teachers cannot effectively accomplish all necessary tasks only during their contract hours. The growing concern is the psychological well-being of teachers not only at the school level but also at the college level.

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

Farmers demand MSP protection

The imperative need for a legislation-backed MSP grows ever more urgent, promising stability and prosperity for the backbone of India's economy

The resurgence of protests by farmers has brought attention to their longstanding struggle for sustainable profitability in the agricultural sector. Although their demands are diverse, their primary request is for a legal guarantee for MSP (Minimum Support Prices). Farmers believe that the government has not shown genuine interest in effectively implementing MSP, which has led to distrust, frustration, and the need for a legal guarantee. These issues have forced them to leave their homes and farms and take to the highways in protest, resulting in the death of three farmers a couple of injuries, and disruption of normalcy that has affected the commuters and business activities.

In September 2020, the government introduced three controversial farm laws that were met with widespread protests and demands for their repeal. While the laws were eventually repealed in November 2021, there has been no interim report from the Committee on MSP formed to address farmers' concerns. This delay in decision-making perpetuates uncertainties in the agricultural sector and undermines the effectiveness of the present MSP as a stabilizing force.

MSP was introduced in 1966-67 to ensure food security amid food scarcity. Despite broad political support for a legal guarantee for MSP, successive governments have failed to formalize this issue, leaving the agricultural sector in a state of uncertainty. However, it is high time to address the weakening of the decades-old MSP policy, remove the complexities surrounding its legislation, and recognise the potential benefits of legalising MSP to fuel the wholesome growth of the agriculture sector, which is the country's lifeline. The Modi government has demonstrated its commendable ability to revamp decades-old mechanisms with various robust reforms such as the amendments to Indian Penal Codes and the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir, and now they must take bold steps to address this pressing issue.

Why farmers asking for legal guarantee: The MSP is an administered advisory price for 23 crops and is determined annually by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) as a key government intervention to insulate farmers from price volatility when the market prices fall below the MSP as well as of consumers against corrupt manipulative market inflation and maintains food security. It has been in existence in India for more than five decades. Why, then, are farmers asking for a legal guarantee? Only 6% of farmers benefit from MSP, and it procures just 11% of total agricultural output in the country, according to the latest available NITI Aayog data.

Over 90 % of crops are sold at prices that are 20-30% lower than the declared MSP, leading to average losses of Rs 20,000 per acre and about Rs 10 lakh crore annually for farmers. A study by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that Indian farmers have been suffering losses since 2000 due to ineffective policies. The report revealed that Indian farmers lost Rs 45 lakh crore during 2000-2017 due to low prices.

Misconceptions in legalising: The legalisation of MSP has been hindered by exag-



LEGALISING MSP FOR A WIDER VARIETY OF CROPS ENSURES THAT THE BENEFITS OF PRICE STABILITY ARE NOT LIMITED TO SPECIFIC SEGMENTS OF THE FARMING COMMUNITY

gerated claims about its fiscal costs. These claims have misled successive governments, and it is essential to clarify that legalising MSP does not entail the government procuring all agricultural produce. The apprehensions over excessive fiscal requirements are unfounded and should not prevent the legalisation of MSP.

To make MSP a legal guarantee, necessary amendments are needed in the Agricultural Produce & Livestock Market Committee (APMC) Act by incorporating a clause that 'auction of farm produce in APMC's markets is legally not permitted below the declared MSP prices'. The apprehensions on the operation of MSP legal guarantee are that most of the sales of farm produce are not in APMCs, and traders may boycott the purchases of farm produce. The government does not have physical and economic resources to purchase, store, and market the procured farm produce, which is an irrational argument. Government intervention is necessary only when market prices fall below MSP, and it does not require the procurement of the entire marketable surplus.

The potential boycott of farm produce in places MSP legal regimes by the traders is an irrational argument because the commodity's supply is tight against the demand for farm produce. First, this was also evident from the fact that the government could manage to procure only 26 million tonnes of wheat at MSP against the target of 44.4 million tonnes fixed for the 2023 season. Second, the government's expenditure on procurement and imports of farm produce like edible oil and pulses, and on procurement of food grains on MSP in 2022-23, has already surpassed Rs 5 lakh crore and Rs 2.28 lakh crore, respectively. Claims that the MSP legal guaran-

tee will create fiscal disasters for India are baseless. According to government estimates, the MSP values of the total production of the 23 crops worked out to be around Rs 17 lakh crore, and some studies worked out to be around Rs 10 lakh crore. Furthermore, only 70% of the farm produce comes to markets as a marketable surplus, and farmers' families consume the rest for household purposes. The MSP legal guarantee will cost the government about Rs 5 lakh crore if traders or big corporations engaged in processing boycott the APMC's markets, which is an unlikely scenario. It is time to dismiss the misconceptions surrounding the legalisation of MSP and focus on the merits of providing a legal guarantee for MSP. Merits of legalising MSP: Farming is inherently risky, influenced by factors such as weather conditions, pest attacks, and market dynamics. By establishing a legally binding framework for minimum floor prices across all crops, will mitigate the current challenges and safeguard farmers from unpredictable fluctuations in the prices of their produce.

However, the government has proposed buying cotton, maize, tur, urad and Masur for five years directly from the farmers at the MSP without any quantitative limit. Notably, these crops are grown outside Punjab and Haryana, the home states of the protesting farmers. From this, can it infer that small pulses growing farmers all over the country stand to benefit? Legalising MSP for a wider variety of crops ensures that the benefits of price stability are not limited to specific segments of the farming community. Small and marginal farmers cultivating diverse crops can access the protective shield of MSP, contributing to inclusive agricultural growth, and playing a pivotal role in ensuring food security for the

nation by maintaining a stable production environment for key staples, contributing to the overall food security of the country. A legal framework enables the government to conduct strategic operations in domestic and international markets. By selling procured produce at minimal markups during times of higher market prices, the government can manage inflation surges, ensuring price stability for consumers.

MSP reduces the vulnerability of farmers to market fluctuations, ensuring a minimum income for their produce. Farmers can navigate uncertainties more confidently, knowing that the government is legally bound to intervene when market prices fall below the MSP. A guaranteed MSP leads to increased rural income. This, in turn, stimulates the rural economy by boosting demand for goods and services, creating a positive ripple effect in various sectors. The way forward: Policymakers can pave the way for a more secure and prosperous future for farmers by dispelling misconceptions and addressing concerns. Replacing the decades-old and inefficient MSP policy with a legislatively guaranteed MSP offers a comprehensive solution to the challenges faced by the agricultural sector. It not only ensures consistent implementation but also promotes diversification, inclusivity, and economic resilience, contributing to the wholesome well-being of farmers and the prosperity of the rural economy. This will help to fuel the dream of a 'Viksit Bharat'.

(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)



The enduring legacy of Ameen Sayani, the radio icon

Sayani's influence extended far beyond the confines of the studio, earning him a place in the hearts and minds of millions

In the melodic realm of post-independence, India emerged a captivating voice that transcended mere broadcasting to become a cherished companion for countless listeners for almost four decades. With the resounding greeting, "Namaskar bhaiyon aur behno, main apka dost Ameen Sayani bol raha hoon," Ameen Sayani forged an indelible connection through the airwaves, beckoning listeners to join him on a journey of music and camaraderie. This golden voice of radio passed into eternity on February 21, 2024, in Mumbai. He was 91. His voice, emanating from vintage radio sets, possessed a captivating charm, diverging from the seriousness of his



RAJDEEP PATHAK

peers. Ameen Sayani's pioneering radio show, starting as a modest segment on Radio Ceylon, swiftly became a cultural sensation in the 1950s. From Binaca Geetmala to Hit Parade and Cibaca Geetmala, his presentation remained timeless, bridging simplicity and connection, resonating with ordinary hearts. Geetmala transcended borders, captivating audiences across Asia and East Africa

and fostering unity through Hindi film melodies. With 90 million listeners, it has evolved into a cherished tradition, binding families over enchanting tunes.

They were not merely a fleeting waltz through the sonic realms; it was a timeless symphony, a melody that lingered in the hearts of generations. With the gentle caress of nostalgia, it continued its melodious journey, spanning the years from 1952 to 1994, a testament to its enduring charm and universal appeal. And like a phoenix rising from the ashes of bygone eras, it experienced resurgences in the dawn of new millennia, revivals in 2000-2001 and 2001-2003, each breathing new life into its hallowed name.

Beyond the airwaves, Ameen Sayani's unparalleled contribution as a voiceover artist echoes through the annals of time, with over 54,000 radio programmes and approximately 19,000 jingles to his credit — a testament to his lasting impact on the hearts and minds of a nation. Bhajan Samrat, Anup Jalota while sharing his thoughts with me on hearing the news of Ameen Sahab's demise said that he was one of the pioneers in the field of entertainment in broadcasting media and the texture of his voice captivated many people. "Today many of the anchors try to copy his texture and finesse", he said, adding, "It was almost a miracle that any song that Ameen Sahab would announce in his Binaca Geetmala, would go on

to become a hit. Phrases like "Aawaz ke duniya ke doston", and "Bhaiyon aur Beheno" were introduced by him which people are using today and trying to establish themselves. He was very mild in his behaviour and very gentle. "Listening to Ameen Sayani's iconic radio show, 'Binaca Geet Mala,' with my siblings was a cherished ritual in our household," reminisces Dr Sumitra Guha, a renowned classical vocalist and recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademy award. "The mesmerising voice of Ameen Sayani filled our hearts with joy, as we eagerly awaited the melodious tunes of legendary playback singers like Lata Mangeshkar. His captivating narration and the golden era of Bollywood music left an indelible mark

on my soul. It was truly a magical time, enhanced by the charm of our beloved host." Writer, social activist and President of the Guild of Services, Meera Khanna shares her memories of growing up listening to Ameen Sayani. She says, "With the passing away of Ameen Sayani it is as if a precious memory of childhood has slipped away. The 'Binaca Geetmala' which he hosted in his amazing voice was an integral part of a childhood when television had not invaded homes. Gathered around the radio or with the transistor stuck to the ear Ameen Sayani invited you to float on the melody or foot tap to the rhythm of the most popular Hindi film songs. Thus, every week Ameen Sayani was the friend who vis-

ited with a bouquet of melody rhythm and poetry. Millions in this country will remember with the nostalgia of the times when pleasures were simple and radio hosts made you feel good about our world." Smita Vats, Founder and President of ITIHAAS (Indian Traditions Heritage and Society) kept it simple when she said, "My memories are just of his voice... diction, and metre while reading and talking. All lost now, as no one speaks well these days." Throughout his illustrious career spanning decades, Sayani epitomised innovation and authenticity. Amidst evolving media landscapes, he championed radio's timeless ability to unite communities. Beyond the airwaves, Sayani's magnetic charisma

made him a sought-after emcee, infusing every event he hosted with enchantment. Veteran journalist and author, Khushwant Singh eloquently captured Sayani's significance, saying, "Ameen Sayani wasn't just a radio presenter; he was a storyteller whose voice painted vivid images in the minds of his listeners." In the words of the man himself, "This is Ameen Sayani, signing off with the hope that you'll join me again next week, same time, same station." As we bid farewell to this titan of the airwaves, his voice and legacy will long be cherished. Farewell Ameen Sahab!

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

Netanyahu seeks open-ended control in Gaza

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

Israel seeks open-ended control over security and civilian affairs in the Gaza Strip, according to a long-awaited postwar plan by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It was swiftly rejected Friday by Palestinian leaders and runs counter to Washington's vision for the war-ravaged enclave.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented the two-page document to his security Cabinet late Thursday for approval. Deep disagreements over Gaza's future have led to increasingly public friction between Israel and the United States, its closest ally. The Biden administration seeks eventual Palestinian governance in Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank as a precursor to Palestinian statehood, an outcome vehemently opposed by Netanyahu and his right-wing government. Netanyahu's plan envisions hand-picked Palestinians in Gaza adminis-

tering the territory. Separately, cease-fire efforts appeared to gain traction, with mediators to present a new proposal at an expected high-level meeting this weekend in Paris. The US, Egypt and Qatar have been struggling for weeks to find a formula that could halt Israel's devastating offensive in Gaza, but now face an unofficial deadline as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approaches. In Gaza, Israeli airstrikes in the centre and south of the territory killed at least 68 Palestinians, including children and women, overnight and into Friday, health officials and an Associated Press journalist said. Another 24 bodies remained trapped under the rubble. Fidaa Ashour, whose sister was killed in a strike early Friday in the city of Rafah in southern Gaza, said "the world does not feel what we are enduring." At a hospital in the central town of Deir al-Balah, relatives wept over bodies laid out in burial shrouds in the



A Palestinian holds the body of a child killed in the Israeli bombardments of the Gaza Strip in front of the morgue to pray over them at Al Aqsa Hospital in Deir al Balah on Friday.

AP/PTI

courtyard, and a man cradled a dead infant.

The overall Palestinian death toll since the start of the war rose to more than 29,500, with close to 70,000 people wounded, Gaza health officials said. The death toll amounts to close to 1.3% of Gaza's popula-

tion of 2.3 million.

NETANYAHU'S VISION

Netanyahu's plan, while lacking specifics, marks the first time he has presented a formal postwar vision. It reiterates that Israel is determined to crush Hamas, the militant

group that overran the Gaza Strip in 2007. Polls have indicated that a majority of Palestinians don't support Hamas, but the group has deep roots in Palestinian society. Critics, including some in Israel, say the goal of eliminating Hamas is unattainable.

Netanyahu's plan calls for freedom of action for Israel's military across a demilitarized Gaza after the war to thwart any security threat. It says Israel would establish a buffer zone inside Gaza, which is likely to provoke US objections.

The plan also envisions Gaza being governed by local officials who it says would "not be identified with countries or entities that support terrorism and will not receive payment from them". It's not clear if any Palestinians would agree to such sub-contractor roles. Over the past decades, Israel has repeatedly tried and failed to set up hand-picked local Palestinian governing bodies. The Palestinian Authority,

which administers pockets of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Friday denounced Netanyahu's plan as "colonialist and racist," saying it would amount to Israeli reoccupation of Gaza. Israel withdrew its soldiers and settlers from Gaza in 2005, but maintained control of access to the territory. The Biden administration wants to see a reformed Palestinian Authority govern both Gaza and the West Bank as a step toward Palestinian statehood. It has sought to chip away at Netanyahu's resistance by holding out the prospect of the normalisation of ties between Israel and Arab powerhouse Saudi Arabia.

THE WAR DRAGS ON

Israel declared war on Hamas on Oct 7, after the militants stormed into southern Israel, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking about 250 hostages. More than 100 hostages were freed in a weeklong cease-fire in late

November. Since the start of the war, 29,514 Palestinians were killed in Israel's offensive and close to 70,000 were wounded, the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said Friday. Two-thirds of those killed have been women and children, said the ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count.

Israel says it has killed at least 10,000 Hamas fighters, without presenting details. It holds Hamas responsible for civilian casualties because the group operates and fights from within civilian areas. The United States has repeatedly urged Israel to do more to avoid harm to civilians, but the daily number of deaths reported in Gaza appears to be relatively constant. The Israeli offensive has inflicted immense suffering in Gaza. About 80% of the population have been displaced, infectious diseases run rampant and hundreds of thousands of people are facing hunger.

Hamas leader leaves Egypt after cease-fire talks

Beirut (AP): Hamas says its political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, has left Egypt after holding talks with Egyptian officials about a possible cease-fire in the Gaza Strip and an exchange of hostages held by the militants for Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. The statement released early Friday by Hamas did not say whether Haniyeh's talks with Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel about ways of ending the war, a hostage deal and the flow of aid to Gaza were successful or led to a breakthrough. The talks in Cairo came ahead of a high-level meeting expected over the weekend in Paris, where international mediators will present a new proposal. The United States, Egypt and Qatar have been struggling for weeks to find a formula that could halt Israel's devastating offensive in Gaza, but now face an unofficial deadline as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approaches.

Israel seeks a phased deal, including a temporary pause in fighting in exchange for the release of some of the roughly 100 hostages still held by militants since the brutal October 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel. Israel has vowed to keep fighting until Hamas is crushed. Hamas initially demanded to end the war, now in its fifth month, before hostages can be released. Hamas has said that it would release the Israeli hostages in return for the all Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Israel rejected that demand, and mediators have been working on a new deal.

During Hamas' October 7 attack on southern Israel, militants killed about 1,200 people and took some 250 hostages. Roughly half of the hostages were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November.

About 100 hostages remain in captivity, in addition to the bodies of 30 others who were killed on October 7 or died in captivity. Israel's subsequent offensive in Gaza has killed more than 29,000 Palestinians and driven some 80 per cent of the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes. Most heeded Israeli orders to flee south, and around 1.5 million are packed into Rafah near the border with Egypt.

4 die, 14 missing after apartment fire in Spain

AP ■ VALENCIA (SPAIN)

As firefighters and scientific apolice Friday began inspecting the interior of two residential towers that were destroyed by fire in the eastern Spanish city of Valencia, killing four people, questions abounded as to how the fire spread so rapidly. Authorities said 14 people were still missing following the blaze at the complex Thursday. Valencia Mayor Maria José Catalá said that the danger of the 14-story building collapsing and the intense heat from the fire initially prevented emergency workers from getting in to search for possible survivors.

The fire started Thursday evening and quickly engulfed the buildings. Experts said that the building's polyurethane cladding may have contributed to the fire's ferocity. The vice-president of the Valencia College of Industrial and Technical Engineers, Esther

Puchades, who once inspected the building, told the state news agency Efe that when the material "is heated it is like plastic and it ignites".

She said it was the first fire of its type in Spain, but that other blazes involving the material have been similarly destructive in the United Kingdom and China.

The June 2017 fire at Grenfell Tower in London, which also had polyurethane cladding, caused more than 70 deaths. Catalá said the cause of the fire was still not known and it was too early to comment on reports that suggested materials used in construction might have contributed. Puchades said polyurethane was no longer widely used in buildings without extra safety measures to offset its flammability. The complex in Valencia was finished in 2009. In a promotional video, the now bankrupt construction company Fbex boasted that it used a new alu-

minum-based material as part of its façade.

Fifteen people were treated for injuries and five remained Friday in city hospitals, including four firefighters. All were said to be stable.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez visited the scene, promising support for those affected and expressing gratitude to firefighters and military personnel who worked to extinguish the blaze.

It was not immediately known how many people were in the two buildings when the fire broke out, but dozens are believed to have lost their homes and belongings. The complex had some 140 apartments. The Valencia regional government declared three days of mourning and announced financial aid to cover accommodation, clothing and food. Residents were housed overnight in hotels or in the homes of relatives and neighbours, authorities said.

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Former President Donald Trump urged a Florida judge to dismiss the criminal case charging him with illegally retaining classified documents, claiming in part that presidential immunity protects him from prosecution even as that sweeping argument has so far failed in federal appeals courts in a separate case.

In one of a slew of motions attacking the case brought by special counsel Jack Smith, Trump's lawyers late on Thursday echoed arguments that were roundly rejected by a federal appeals court this month in his 2020 election interference case in Washington. Trump has asked the US Supreme Court to intervene in that case as the Republican presidential primary front-runner seeks to delay the trial until after the November election. Trump's lawyers wrote that the classified



documents charges turn on his alleged decision to designate the papers as "personal" records under the Presidential Records Act, and argued that he cannot be prosecuted since that was an "official act" made while he was still in the White House. Washington's federal appeals court in its decision this month was unsparing in its repudiation of Trump's novel claim that former presidents enjoy absolute immunity for actions that fall within their official job duties.

But Trump's lawyers argued that the appeals court's decision was wrong, telling US District Judge Aileen Cannon she should not follow the court's "poorly reasoned decision" in the classified documents case.

In other court filings late Thursday, Trump's lawyers argued that Attorney General Merrick Garland's appointment of special counsel Smith to investigate the former president was "unlawful" and grounds for dismissing the documents case. They also are attacking the law Trump is accused of violating as "unconstitutionally vague" as applied in his case.

The case accuses Trump of illegally hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate and obstructing government efforts to retrieve them. A June 2023 indictment charging him with dozens of felony counts alleges investigators found boxes of sensitive docu-

ments recklessly stored at Mar-a-Lago in spaces including a ballroom, a bathroom and shower, his bedroom and a storage room.

Prosecutors have said the documents he stowed, refused to return and in some cases showed to visitors risked jeopardizing not only relations with foreign nations but also the safety of troops and confidential sources. They've also accused Trump of asking a staffer to delete camera footage at his Florida estate in an effort to obstruct the federal investigation into his records.

The case is currently scheduled to go to trial in May, but Judge Cannon has pushed back multiple other deadlines and signaled an openness to revisiting the trial date during a pivotal pretrial conference set for March. It's one of four criminal cases the former president is facing as he vies to reclaim the White House in November.

Rape, sexual violence in Sudan's ongoing conflict may amount to war crimes: New UN report

AP ■ GENEVA

The UN human rights office said in a new report on Friday that scores of people, including children, have been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence in the ongoing conflict in Sudan, assaults that may amount to war crimes. Sudan plunged into chaos in mid-April when clashes erupted in the capital, Khartoum, between rival Sudanese forces — the country's military, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and a paramilitary faction known as the Rapid Support Forces, under the command of Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo.

The fighting quickly spread across the African country, especially urban areas but also the restive western Darfur region, and has so far killed at least 12,000 people and sent over 8 million fleeing their homes, the report said.

The report, which covers a period from the outbreak of the fighting up to December 15, documents abuses in a country that has been largely inaccessible to aid groups and rights monitors recently, clouding the impact of a conflict that been overshadowed by wars in places like Gaza and Ukraine.

The report found that at least 118 people had been subjected to sexual violence, including rape — with many of the assaults committed by members of the paramilitary forces, in homes and on the streets.

One woman, the UN said, "was held in a building and repeatedly gang-raped over a period of 35 days."

The report also pointed to recruitment of child soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

"Some of these violations would amount to war crimes," said UN human rights chief Volker Türk, calling for

prompt, thorough and independent investigations into alleged rights abuses and violations.

The report is based on interview of more than 300 victims and witnesses, some conducted in neighbouring Ethiopia and Chad where many Sudanese have fled, along with analysis of photographs, videos, and satellite imagery from the conflict areas.

The ravages of the war, beyond the period examined, are continuing, the UN said.

The UN cited video that emerged last week from the country's North Kordofan State showing men wearing Sudanese army uniforms carrying severed heads of members of the rival paramilitary faction.

"For nearly a year now, accounts coming out of Sudan have been of death, suffering and despair, as the senseless

conflict and human rights violations and abuses have persisted with no end in sight," Türk said.

"The guns must be silenced, and civilians must be protected," he added.

Speaking from Nairobi, Kenya, by videoconference to the UN briefing in Geneva on Friday, Seif Magango, a regional spokesman for the UN human rights office said that "the number of people displaced (in Sudan) has now crossed the 8 million mark, which should concern everyone."

Earlier in February, UN Secretary-General António Guterres told reporters that there is no military solution to Sudan's conflict and urged the rival generals to start talking about ending the conflict.

He stressed that continued fighting "will not bring any solution so we must stop this as soon as possible."

Angry French farmers with tractors back to Paris for another protest

AP ■ PARIS

Angry farmers were back to Paris on their tractors Friday in a new protest demanding more government support and simpler regulations, on the eve of a major agricultural fair in the French capital. Dozens of tractors drove peacefully into a neighbourhood on the capital's west side carrying flags from Rural Coordination, the farmers' union that staged the protest. The protesters then posed with their tractors on a bridge over the Seine River with the Eiffel Tower in the background.

The latest protest comes three weeks after farmers lifted roadblocks around Paris and elsewhere in the country after the government offered over 400 million euros (USD 433 million) to address their grievances over low earnings, heavy regulation and what they describe as unfair competi-



tion from abroad. "Save our agriculture," the Rural Coordination said on X, formerly Twitter. One tractor was carrying a poster reading: "Death is in the field."

The convoy temporarily slowed traffic on the A4 highway, east of the capital, and on the Paris ring-road earlier on Friday morning. French farmers' actions are part of a broad-

er protest movement in Europe against EU agriculture policies, bureaucracy and overall business conditions.

Farmers complain that the 27-nation bloc's environmental policies, such as the Green Deal, which calls for limits on the use of chemicals and on greenhouse gas emissions, limit their business and make their products more expensive than

non-EU imports.

Other protests are being staged across France as farmers seek to put pressure on the government to implement its promises.

Government officials have held a series of meetings with farmers unions in recent weeks to discuss a new bill meant to defend France's "agricultural sovereignty." Will to be debated at parliament this spring.

The government's plan also includes hundreds of millions of euros in aid, tax breaks and a promise not to ban pesticides in France that are allowed elsewhere in Europe, which French farmers say puts them at an unfair disadvantage. French President Emmanuel Macron is to visit the Paris Agricultural Fair, on Saturday where he is planning to have a "big debate" with farmers, supermarket CEOs and members of environmental groups, his office said.

ISIS bride loses appeal to regain British citizenship

PTI ■ LONDON



Shamima Begum, the London-born Bangladeshi-origin woman, who fled the UK as a 15-year-old schoolgirl to join the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist network, on Friday lost yet another legal bid to regain her British citizenship and return to the UK from Syria. Previously in 2022, the UK Supreme Court upheld the decision to bar the now 24-year-old from returning to the UK. After a series of legal battles, Begum lost a challenge at the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) in February last year and then took her case to the Court of Appeal. However, the appeal judges unanimously agreed with the special tribunal's decision and turned down the appeal. "Ms Begum may well

have been influenced and manipulated by others but still have made a calculated decision to travel to Syria and align with ISIL [ISIS]," said Judge Dame Sue Carr, delivering the verdict in London.

Begum, who is in a refugee camp in northern Syria, was represented at her appeal by barrister Samantha Knights who had argued that the government had failed to consider legal duties owed to a potential victim of trafficking. The

UK Home Office stressed that the main focus of the case was around national security.

The British government has maintained Begum could seek a Bangladeshi passport given her heritage but her family has argued that she is British and has never held Bangladeshi citizenship.

Last year, the specialist tribunal had accepted then Home Secretary Sajid Javid's conclusion that revoking her British citizenship was "an integral part of the overall national security assessment carried out by the Security Service" and therefore not a matter for the court.

Begum, referred to as an ISIS bride for marrying a Dutch member of the terror network in Syria, gave birth to three children — all of whom later died.

'Indian-origin student in US died due to acute alcohol intoxication'

New York (PTI): An 18-year-old Indian-origin University of Illinois student, who was found dead last month, died due to hypothermia and acute alcohol intoxication with prolonged exposure to extremely cold temperatures significantly contributing to his death, authorities have said. Akul B Dhawan was found dead outside the campus building around 11 am on January 20. Arrow Ambulance, Urbana Fire Department and the University of Illinois Police Department were dispatched to the location after they received a report of an unresponsive male on a porch.

An autopsy that was performed on January 23 confirmed Dhawan's death was due to hypothermia. "Acute alcohol intoxication and prolonged exposure to extremely cold temperatures significantly contributed to his death," Champaign County Coroner Stephen Thuney said.

Thuney ruled the death accidental. A report in WANDTV.com said that according to the University of Illinois Police Department's investigation, Dhawan had met with friends at approximately 9 pm on January 19 and had consumed alcohol. At approximately 10 pm, they said Dhawan and his friends went to a local club in Urbana.

"Security video showed him consuming more alcohol before the group returned to the club," the report cited police as saying. University police said Dhawan's friends re-entered the club between 11:25 pm and 11:29 pm while Dhawan stayed outside.

Private US company lands first commercial spacecraft on Moon

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A private American company has scripted history by landing the first commercial spacecraft on the Moon as well as the first US vehicle on the Earth's only natural satellite in more than 50 years, joining earlier feats by India, Russia, the US and China.

Built by Intuitive Machines, the lander — named Odysseus — touched down on the Moon at around 6:23 p.m. ET on Thursday, making it the first American spacecraft on the Moon since the Apollo 17 mission in 1972.

"Today, for the first time in half a century, America has returned to the Moon," Bill Nelson, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Administrator said



after Intuitive Machines, a Houston-based company, landed its Odysseus robot near the lunar south pole.

The lander carries a bounty of NASA scientific instruments, "and bearing the dream of a new adventure in science, innovation and American leadership in space, well, all of that aced the landing of the lifetime," Nelson said. "What we

can confirm, without a doubt, is our equipment is on the surface of the Moon, and we are transmitting." Flight Director and Chief Technology Officer Tim Crain announced amidst cheers among his colleagues and others across the country as there were some tense moments before the landing on the Moon.

As the spacecraft made its final descent, mission controllers lost contact with it, as was expected to occur, NBC News reported. "After troubleshooting communications, flight controllers have confirmed Odysseus is upright and starting to send data. Right now, we are working to downlink the first images from the lunar surface," Intuitive Machines said, announcing the historic feat.

US, EU pile new sanctions on Russia

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The United States and the European Union are piling new sanctions on Russia on the eve of the second anniversary of its invasion of Ukraine and in retaliation for the death of noted Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny last week in an Arctic penal colony. The US Treasury Department plans Friday to impose more than 500 new sanctions on Russia and its war machine in the largest single tranche of penalties since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

They come on the heels of a series of new arrests and indictments announced by the Justice Department on Thursday that target Russian businessmen, including the head of Russia's second-largest bank, and their middlemen in five separate federal cases. The European Union announced Friday that it is imposing sanctions on several foreign companies over allegations that they have exported dual-use goods to Russia that could be used in its war against Ukraine.

The 27-nation bloc also said that it was targeting scores of Russian officials, including "members of the judiciary, local politicians and people responsible for the illegal deportation and military re-education of Ukrainian children."

"The American people and people around the world understand that the stakes of this fight extend far beyond Ukraine," President Joe Biden said in a statement announcing the sanctions.

"If Putin does not pay the price for his death and destruction, he will keep going. And the costs to the United States — along with our NATO Allies and partners in Europe and around the world — will rise,"

The US specifically was to target individuals associated with Navalny's imprisonment a day after Biden met with the opposition leader's widow and daughter in California.

It was also hitting "Russia's financial sector, defense industrial base, procurement networks and sanctions evaders

Ukrainians live in agony, uncertainty

Kyiv (AP): Iryna Reva stares at her phone, replaying the last video her 25-year-old son Vladyslav sent her from the front line before the volunteer soldier disappeared 19 months ago in a battle with Russian forces in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region.

Reva is one of the thousands of Ukrainians desperately seeking news of loved ones who have disappeared in the two years since Russia's full-scale invasion began. According to Ukraine's National Police, more than 30,000 people have been reported missing in the last 24 months. "Up to this day, I am searching for my son," Reva said. "He is alive to me. Regardless of the circumstances, there is no evidence that he has perished."

The last time Reva spoke to her son, she begged him not to take part in a battle the next morning. "Don't go, say your arm hurts," she told him over the phone.

"Mom, I'm sorry. I love you very much," Vladyslav replied. "I'm going into battle. I don't know if I'll be back. I'll be out of touch. Pray," were his last words to her. The missing include soldiers like Vladyslav lost on the battlefield, but also civilians and children who have vanished in a variety of circumstances. For many relatives, the agonising uncertainty and relentless search for answers has already gone on for two years with no end in



A Ukrainian soldier takes his position on the frontline near Klischchiivka the Donetsk region, in Ukraine on Friday

sight. Inna Usenko left her hometown of Mariupol on a business trip the day before the war began in 2022. She lost contact with her brother, Herman Sikorskyi, on March 1 as Russia laid siege to the eastern city and thousands of civilians were trapped. Several weeks later, a Russian airstrike hit the house where he had lived. "I don't know what to think, whether he's alive or not," she said. "I understand perfectly well that if I were there, he would have come to me, and maybe something would have been different, so I feel guilty all the time."

In an attempt to find her brother, Usenko filed a missing person's report with the occupation authorities, the Russian Federation and the Russian

Red Cross. From her home, which is now in Spain, she came to Ukraine to file a police report and provide DNA to Ukrainian authorities. Despite the efforts, neither side was able to provide her with any information. "I would like, of course, to believe that he is alive," Usenko said, adding that the uncertainty not only drains her but also affects close friends, relatives and his children. The International Committee of the Red Cross says since February 2022 its team has been contacted more than 100,000 times by families searching for their loved ones. "That doesn't mean a hundred thousand missing people. But this gives you an idea of just the amount of suffering that this creates on both sides," Achille

Després, a spokesperson at the ICRC in Kyiv, said.

For relatives looking for information, the official search often begins with submitting a DNA sample. Andrii Levytskyi, head of forensics at the National Police's main investigation department, said more than 18,000 DNA samples of relatives of servicemen and civilians have been collected and processed.

DNA is a vital part of establishing the status of the missing person, especially if they are military. Even if fellow soldiers said they witnessed a soldier killed in battle, it's not enough to confirm the death, said Petro Yatsenko, the head of a press office at the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of POWs.

"Until we have the body, until we have DNA analysis, this person will have the status of missing," he said. He said they have had cases in which soldiers were found wounded in captivity, despite testimony from their comrades that they were killed in battle. Over the past two years, numerous volunteer projects have arisen to aid in the search for missing people, often serving as a last resort for relatives who receive no official information from authorities. Mariia Reshetova, who runs the Search for the Missing project under the Kateryna Osadcha Foundation, said they have around 1,000 open cases and have already closed hundreds.

PML-N candidates' victory notified from Islamabad

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's election commission on Friday notified the victories of three candidates from Nawaz Sharif's PML-N in the federal capital, delivering a fresh blow to jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party, which had challenged the original poll results.

Backed by the 71-year-old Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, three losing candidates - Amir Mughal, Shoaib Shaheen and Mohammad Ali Bukhari - had petitioned in the Islamabad High Court (IHC), alleging manipulation of the results.

On Wednesday, the IHC suspended poll result notifications issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) from NA-46, NA-47 and NA-48, putting on hold the success of three candidates of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, who had won respectively on the three seats.

While Anjum Aqeel Khan and Chaudhry won on the PML-N tickets, Raja Khurram Nawaz won as an independent candidate and joined the party after his victory. After hearing the parties on Friday, the elec-

toral watchdog restored the order suspended by the IHC and issued the notification announcing the victory of the three candidates, Geo News reported.

"Now the Commission, after hearing the parties, has finally disposed of the petitions filed by Mr Aamer Masood, contesting candidate NA-46 ICT-I, Mr Shoaib Shaheen, contesting candidate NA-47 ICT-II, and Syed Muhammad Ali Bokhari, Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, Ch. Azhar Mehmood contesting candidates NA-48 ICT-III, in light of the order passed by the Hon'ble Islamabad High Court," the ECP said.

Earlier, the three PTI-backed losing candidates had challenged the election results before the ECP on February 10, and the commission issued a status quo order. However, on February 11, the ECP also issued the notification that declared Khan, Chaudhry, and Nawaz as returned candidates.

Speaking to media outside the ECP, PML-N-backed Chaudhry slammed his rivals for creating controversy over the election results. "We are ready for a political battle," he was quoted as saying. Chaudhry accused the PTI of

fraudulent activities and misguiding the high court and advised the party not to fight against the state.

Independent candidates backed by the PTI won more than 90 seats in the National Assembly in the February 8 general election. The PML-N won 75 seats while the PPP came third with 54 seats. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) has 17 seats. To form a government, a party must win 133 out of 265 contested seats in the 266-member National Assembly.

However, the PML-N and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) have agreed on a power-sharing deal to form a new coalition government, which may effectively end former prime minister Khan's chances of returning to power. PML-N's Shehbaz Sharif has been nominated as the prime minister candidate, while PPP's Asif Ali Zardari is for the president's office.

On Wednesday, the PTI rejected the attempts by two of its arch-rivals to form a coalition government, warning that robbing its public endorsement by the "mandate thieves" will result in the worst political instability.

IMF ready to work with new govt; mum on Imran's demand

Washington/Islamabad: The IMF is looking forward to working with the new government in Pakistan, a top official has said while keeping mum on jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's demand that the global lender should conduct an "audit" of the election results before approving any new loan for the cash-strapped country. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Khan on Thursday said he will write to the International Monetary Fund, demanding the Washington-based institution stop its support to Pakistan where his political rivals, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan Peoples Party, were on the verge of forming a coalition government with a "stolen mandate."

The 71-year-old former prime minister's message from jail was conveyed through Barrister Ali Zafar, who met him in the Adiala Jail Rawalpindi where he has been incarcerated since last year after being convicted in corruption and other cases.

The IMF is looking for-

ward to engaging with Pakistan's new government on policies to ensure "macroeconomic stability and prosperity" for the country, Julie Kozack, the head of the Communications Department of the IMF said, while maintaining silence on any communication to the organisation from jailed former premier Khan on the outcome of the February 8 polls in the country. During the press conference in Washington on Thursday, Kozack was asked about whether Pakistan was on track to secure the third tranche of the stand-by agreement reached in June 2023 and also if the IMF would entertain any letter by Khan calling for investigations into election irregularities.

"We look forward to work-

ing with the new government on policies to ensure macroeconomic stability and prosperity for all of Pakistan's citizens. And I am going to leave it at that," Kozack said.

She said that on January 11, the IMF Executive Board approved the first review of the Stand-By Arrangement, with Pakistan that brought total disbursements under the Stand-By Arrangement to USD 1.9 billion. "The Stand-By Arrangement is supporting the authority's efforts to stabilise the economy and to, of course, with a strong focus on protecting the most vulnerable," she said. Talking of the fiscal conditions of Pakistan, she said that during the tenure of the interim government, the authorities had "maintained economic stability".

Return Navalny's body to family, authorities urged

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russians including Nobel Prize-winning journalist Dmitry Muratov and ballet star Mikhail Baryshnikov have released videos calling on Russian authorities to return the body of opposition leader Alexei Navalny to his family, a week after his death in an Arctic penal colony.

Navalny's mother said on Thursday that she has seen her son's body and that she is resisting heavy pressure to agree to a secret burial away from the public eye. Lyudmila Navalnaya said investigators allowed her to see her son's body in the city morgue. She said she repeated her demand to have Navalny's body returned to her and protested what she described as authorities trying to force her to agree to a secret burial.

"They are blackmailing me. They are setting conditions where, when and how my son should be buried," she said Thursday in a video statement from the Arctic city of Salekhard. "They want it to do

it secretly without a mourning ceremony." Navalny's spokesman, Kira Yarmysh said on X, formerly Twitter, that his mother was also shown a medical certificate stating that the released videos calling on Russian authorities to return the body of opposition leader Alexei Navalny to his family, a week after his death in an Arctic penal colony.

Nadya Tolokonnikova, who became widely known after spending nearly two years in prison for taking part in a 2012 protest with the band Pussy Riot inside Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral, also released a video. "We were imprisoned for allegedly trampling on traditional values. But no one tramples on traditional Russian values more than you, Putin, your officials and your priests who pray for all the

murder that you do, year after year, day after day," Tolokonnikova said.

"Putin, have a conscience, give his mother the body of her son," she added. Navalny, Russia's most well-known opposition politician, suddenly died in an Arctic prison last week, prompting hundreds of Russians across the country to stream to impromptu memorials with flowers and candles. The Russian authorities have detained scores of people as they seek to suppress any major outpouring of sympathy for President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe before the presidential election he is almost certain to win. Across the ocean in San Francisco Thursday, US President Joe Biden met with Navalny's widow Yulia Navalnaya and 20-year-old daughter Dasha, expressing "condolences for their devastating loss."

"To state the obvious, he was a man of incredible courage," Biden said after the meeting. "It's amazing how his wife and daughter are emulating that."

Imran, wife move lower court against 'un-Islamic marriage' case verdict

Islamabad (PTI): Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi on Friday separately moved a lower court challenging the verdict in the "un-Islamic" marriage case in which they were jailed for seven years and their marriage in 2018 declared illegal. Earlier this month, a trial court sentenced Khan, 71, and his wife Bushra Bibi, 49, to seven years in jail and imposed a Rs 5,00,000 fine on each for "contracting marriage during the 'iddat' (period of waiting)" in a case filed by Bibi's former husband Khawar Maneka in November last year.

The district and sessions court will mark the former first couple's appeals on Friday, Geo News reported. Bushra Bibi filed her appeal at the court through her lawyers seeking annulment of the trial court's decision, the report said.

The third spouse of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party founder petitioned that the judgment delivered by civil judge Quadrattullah on February

3 was against the facts, while the indictment issued against her in the case on January 16 was also illegal. The petition said that the plea of jurisdiction was rejected without assigning any reason and that the civil court did not conduct the trial properly.

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR
MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
(Garden and Tree Authority)

Tel. No. (0240) 2333536-40
Fax No. 2040-2331213

Address:- Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation
Head Office:- Town Hall, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar 413001 (Maharashtra)
E-Mail ID:- uidssmt.csmc@gmail.com

No. CSMC/Garden Section/1168/2024
Dated :- 17/02/2024

S.No	Work Name	Final Date of Tender Submission
1.	Construction Multiplay System In CSMC Main Gardens.	Date :- 04/03/2024 5 PM
Amount Put to Tender:- Rs.44,76,029/-		
Note:- Tender Notice is Published on Website www.mahatenders.gov.in		

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar
Municipal Corporation

CORRIGENDUM

No. SS/CW/SMO/LIFT/50/2024/148
In continuation of the tender No. SS/CW/SMO/LIFT/50/2024/140 dated 16th Feb 2024 invited for the work, "Design, fabrication, supply, installation and commissioning of passenger lift (8 person) including civil & structural works for construction of New Lift Structure at the State Mission Office (G+4 storey), Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19", the following changes will be effective:

Clause ref. with page no. in the tender document	Present clause	Modified clause
Short Notice Inviting tender, page-3 of IFB	Time of completion – 45 days	Time of completion – 90 days
Short Notice Inviting tender, page-3 of IFB	Last date & time for submission of tender : 23-02-2024	Last date & time for submission of tender : 27-02-2024
National/ local competitive bidding, page-2 of IFB	Last date & time for submission of tender : 23-02-2024	Last date & time for submission of tender : 27-02-2024
Calender of events, page-4 of IFB	Last date & time for submission of tender : 23-02-2024	Last date & time for submission of tender : 27-02-2024
Page-5 of IFB	Time of completion – 45 days	Time of completion – 90 days
Clause no. 8 of Appendix-I, page 28	The bids will be opened at the Office of the Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19 at 1500 hours on 23-02-2024	The bids will be opened at the Office of the Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19 at 1500 hours on 27-02-2024

Sd/- Executive Director
Samagra Shiksha, Assam
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/CF/5863/23/24-Feb-24

Buddhist monks among 100 held in Sichuan over dam protests

Beijing (PTI): Chinese security officials have arrested more than 100 Tibetan Buddhist monks and local people in the southwestern Sichuan province to quell protests against the construction of a massive dam that would submerge six Buddhist monasteries and force the relocation of two villages, a media report said.

In a rare act of defiance, residents have taken to the streets of Wangbuding township of Dege County in the Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture since February 14 to oppose the plan to build the 2,240-megawatt Gangtuo hydropower station on the Drichu River (Jinsha in Chinese). The dam is located on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, one of China's most important waterways, Radio Free Asia reported on Thursday.

The protests started on February 14, when at least 300 Tibetans gathered outside the Dege county town hall to oppose the dam's construction, defying strict controls on public gatherings and extensive surveillance by authorities in Sichuan and Tibet regions. The detentions reportedly occurred in the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan, an area with a large population of ethnic Tibetans.

Some of the arrested protesters required hospitalisation due to rough treatment, the report said. Police used water cannons, pepper spray and tasers to subdue the protesters.

Videos of protests showed monks prostrating before the officials, pleading with them not to resort to demolition when they inspected Yena and Wonto monasteries in prepara-

tion for their destruction.

The USD 4.6 billion Yebatan hydropower station, the largest hydropower project in the upper reaches of the Jinsha River, exceeded 100 metres in December last year, achieving a major milestone, state-run Global Times reported earlier. The total installed capacity of the power station is expected to reach 2,240 megawatts after completion, with a maximum dam height of 217 metres. It is the tallest hyperbolic arch dam project under construction in China, according to the report.

The protesting locals were particularly distraught over the construction of the hydroelectric dam, as it would destroy six monasteries, including the Wonto Monastery, which includes ancient murals that date to the 13th century, the RFA report said.

Office of the Managing Director
Uttarakhand Co-Operative Dairy Federation Ltd.
Mangal Parao, Haldwani - 263139 (Nainital) Uttarakhand

प्रांक : सी-4921/बुधरीसीदीपा/निविदा पीएचडीडी/2023-24 दिनांक: 23/02/2024
E-Tender Notice No.: 33(12)/UCDF/P&I/2023-24, Date- 23.02.2024

Following E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned, from experienced and financially sound Authorized Manufacturers/Dealers/Firms for the following works so as to reach this office on or before 01.03.2024 up to 5.00 PM. The Tender will be opened on 02.03.2024 at 11:00 AM.

S. No.	Name of Work
1.	Supply of fodder seed.
2.	Supply of various food grade flavors in powder forms.

Tender fee, EMD and other related details can be seen on E-tender portal. Detailed Tender documents may be downloaded/uploaded from E-tender portal <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>.
Administrator Managing Director

THE MAHARAJA BHUPINDER SINGH
PUNJAB SPORTS UNIVERSITY,
(MBSPSU), PATIALA
Mahindra Kothi, Near Fountain Chowk, Patiala-147001

TENDER NOTICE

The Maharaja Bhupinder Singh Punjab Sports University, Patiala invites bids from reputed software Design/ Website Design/ Website Development / Portal Design, firms for making a website for The Maharaja Bhupinder Singh Punjab Sports University, Patiala. The sealed bids (Technical and Financial) both in separate sealed envelopes i.e. double envelop system as per prescribed format must be submitted upto **06-03-2024 upto 4:00 PM**. The details of the tender will be available on the University website <https://mbpspu.ac.in> on **24th Feb 2024**. Important Note: In case of any query bidders can contact office during working hours. Detail terms and conditions are given on <https://mbpspu.ac.in>

-Sd/-
Registrar

NA/12/22297/2023/32822 Dated CHD :- 2/23/2024

NEW DELHI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
Office of the Executive Engineer (E)
RDSS Division, Electricity Department-II, New Delhi Municipal Council,
Room No. 1705, 17th Floor, Palika Kendra, New Delhi: 110001
Office Tel. :- 011-41501389 Extn. 3705

3RD CALL E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

Name of Work:- Request for Proposal/Bid (RFP)/RFB for appointment of PMA for "Consultancy Services for Assisting and Supporting in Project Management to NDMC for Implementation of (i) Smart System Metering Work (DT and Feeder Metering) and (ii) Implementation of Loss Reduction Infrastructure Works under Phase-I of RDSS, GoI".

Tender Value :- Rs.4,83,00,000/-
Tender ID No. :- 2024_NDMC_1
Date of Release of tender through e-procurement solution :- 21.02.2024
Pre-Bid Meeting (In the O/o CE(E)-I, Palika Kendra, ND) :- 28.02.2024 at 1500 Hrs
Last date/time for receipt of tenders through e-procurement :- 07.03.2024 at 1500 Hrs
Date/time for opening of Bid through e-procurement: 07.03.2024 at 1530 Hrs
Further details can be seen at <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in> and <https://www.ndmc.gov.in/tenders.aspx>
Note: - To participate in e-tender in NDMC registration with application services provider NIC is mandatory.
Executive Engineer (E) RDSS

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

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items upto 09.03.2024.
1) Automated Blood Culture System Machine. 2) Tilt Table Test Machine 3) High End Digital Mammography Machine 4) High End DEXA Scan Machine 5) CRRT (Continuous Renal Replacement Therapy Machine 6) 3 Tesla MRI Machine.

E-tenders are invited for the procurement of following items upto 16.03.2024
1) Lab material for GSGMCH 2) procurement of Ophthalmology equipments (Slit Lamp & Perimeter) at GSGMCH 3) Rate contract for supply of Chemotherapy supportive Drugs/Surgical material at GSGMCH 4) Signing rate contract of TKR implants.

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

Registrar

00/12/207/2023/32775 Dated CHD :- 2/23/2024

Shareholders vote to oust Byju

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

More than 60 per cent of shareholders of edutech Byju's on Friday voted for removal of founder CEO Byju Raveendran and his family over alleged "mismanagement and failures" at what was once India's hottest tech startup, but the company dug in its heels, calling the voting done in the absence of founders as "invalid".

Prosus - one of the six investors who had called the extraordinary general

meeting (EGM) - in a statement said "shareholders unanimously passed all resolutions put forward for vote.

"These included a request for the resolution of the outstanding governance, financial mismanagement and compliance issues at Byju's; the reconstitution of the board of directors, so that it is no longer controlled by the founder of T&L; and a change of leadership of the company."

Raveendran and his family stayed away from the EGM,



calling it "procedurally invalid."

However, the outcome of the vote at the EGM will not be applicable until March 13, when the Karnataka High Court will next hear Raveendran's plea challenging the move by certain investors to call the EGM.

The High Court on Wednesday had refused to stay the EGM, called by shareholders collectively holding more than 32 per cent stake in Think & Learn (T&L) - the firm that operates

Byju's, but any resolution passed shall not be given effect till the next date of hearing.

Raveendran and family own 26.3 per cent in the company. Byju's in a statement, issued even before the EGM results were declared, said it "firmly declares that the resolutions passed during the recently concluded EGM -- attended by a small cohort of select shareholders - are invalid and ineffective. The passing of the unenforceable resolutions challenges the rule of law at worst."

NPCI to help Paytm UPI users migrate to banks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank has asked the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to examine the possibility of migrating Paytm Payments Bank customers using the UPI handle @paytm to 4-5 other banks, in a bid to prevent any disruptions in the payment ecosystem.

On Friday, the central bank came out with additional steps for the benefit of customers, wallet holders and merchants who are availing banking services from Paytm Payments Bank, which has been barred from accepting deposits and credits after March 15, 2024.

As per the website of Paytm Payments Bank (PPBL), it has 30 crore wallets and 3 crore bank customers.

NPCI, an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India, is an initiative of RBI and Indian Banks' Association (IBA) for creating a payment and settlement infrastructure in India.

As the PPBL cannot accept further credits into its customer accounts and wallets after March 15, 2024, certain additional steps have become necessary to ensure seamless digital payments by UPI customers using @paytm handle operated by the bank, and minimise concentration risk in the UPI system by having multiple payment app providers, the RBI said in a statement.

"NPCI has been advised by the RBI to examine the request of One97 Communication Ltd (OCL) to become a Third-Party Application Provider (TPAP) for UPI channel for continued UPI operation of the Paytm app, as per the norms," it said.

One97 Communications Ltd (OCL), which owns the Paytm brand, holds a 49 per cent stake in PPBL.

RBI further said that in the event of NPCI granting TPAP



status to OCL, it may be stipulated that '@paytm' handles are to be migrated in a seamless manner from PPBL to a set of newly identified banks to avoid any disruption.

"No new users are to be added by the said TPAP until all the existing users are migrated satisfactorily to a new handle," it added.

"For seamless migration of '@paytm' handle to other banks, NPCI may facilitate certification of 4-5 banks as Payment Service Provider (PSP) Banks with demonstrated capabilities to process high volume UPI transactions. This is in line with NPCI norms for minimising concentration risk," RBI said.

Also, for the merchants using PayTM QR Codes, OCL may open the settlement accounts with one or more PSP Banks (other than Paytm Payments Bank), the Reserve Bank said.

It further said the migration of UPI handles is applicable only to such customers and merchants who have a UPI handle '@Paytm'. For others who have a UPI address or handle other than '@Paytm', no action is required to be taken by them.

RBI again asked the customers, whose underlying account/wallet is currently with Paytm Payments Bank, to make an alternative arrangement with other banks well before March 15, 2024.

Rupee falls 8 paise to close at 82.93 a dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and depreciated by 8 paise to close at 82.93 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking a strong American currency and muted trend in domestic equities.

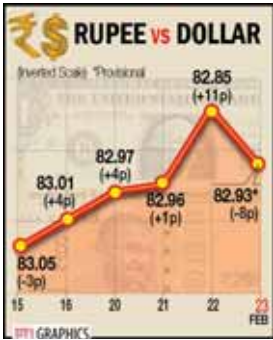
Forex traders said the Indian currency depreciated as foreign fund outflows weighed on the rupee.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.87 and finally settled at 82.93 (provisional) against the dollar, down by 8 paise from its previous close.

During the day, the rupee witnessed a range-bound movement. It saw an intra-day high of 82.84 and a low of 82.96 against the American currency.

On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 82.85 against the US dollar. The Indian rupee depreciated on Friday on dollar demand from importers. Elevated crude oil prices also weighed on the rupee, said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on positive global equities and soft US dollar. However, any bounce back in crude oil prices may cap sharp upside. Geopolitical



tension in the Middle East may put pressure on rupee at higher levels," Choudhary said, adding that USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 82.60 to Rs 83.10.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was 0.05 per cent up at 104.00.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, was trading 1.33 per cent lower to USD 82.56 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex declined 15.44 points, or 0.02 per cent, to settle at 73,142.80 points. The Nifty fell 4.75 points, or 0.02 per cent, to 22,212.70 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday as they sold shares worth Rs 1,410.05 crore, according to exchange data.

Sensex edges lower, Nifty settles flat

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty edged lower in a volatile trade on Friday, reversing early gains due to selling in IT and select banking shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex slipped 15.44 points or 0.02 per cent to close at 73,142.80 points with 17 of its constituents closing in the red and 13 in the green.

The index opened higher but later slipped into losses due to profit-taking by investors. The barometer oscillated between a high of 73,413.93 and a low of 73,022 during the day.

The broader Nifty of NSE closed lower by 4.75 points or 0.02 per cent at 22,212.70 points as gains in FMCG, pharma and financial shares were offset by losses in IT and private bank shares.

The 50-share barometer scaled a record high of 22,297.50 in intra-day trade.

"Nifty opened higher but failed to sustain the morning momentum, leading to a closing at the day's low due to profit booking," Rupak De, Senior Technical Analyst,



LKP Securities, said.

Among Sensex shares, HCLTech, Asian Paints, Maruti, JSW Steel, TCS, SBI, ITC and Bharti Airtel were the major losers.

On the other hand, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan, L&T and Wipro were the major gainers.

"The domestic market paused momentarily today after reaching another record high earlier in the day, driven by positive signals from global markets," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

The capital goods and industrial sectors showed strength, supported by advancements in



manufacturing and services.

BSE Midcap advanced 0.25 per cent while Smallcap rose by 0.53 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Oil & Gas dropped by 0.81 per cent, BSE Metal by 0.33 per cent, BSE Energy by 0.36 per cent and Bankex 0.29 per cent.

On the other hand, BSE Industrials spurred by 1.22 per cent, Telecommunications by 1.52 per cent, Capital Goods by 1.18 per cent, and Consumer Durables 0.76 per cent.

Reliance Industries rose by around 1 per cent to hit a 52-week high intra-day. Its arm Reliance Jio Financial Services soared by more than 14.5 per cent to hit a year's high level,

taking its market valuation to more than Rs 2 lakh crore.

Global markets were mostly higher following sharp overnight gains in US markets driven mainly by stunning December quarter results by technology company Nvidia.

The Shanghai Composite index added 0.6 per cent while Hong Kong's Hang Seng was unchanged. Tokyo's markets were closed for a holiday.

Germany's DAX, the CAC 40 in Paris and FTSE 100 in London rose up to 0.1 per cent.

In the domestic market, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) were net sellers on Thursday as they offloaded securities worth Rs 1,410.05 crore.

Renewable Energy to rise to 170 GW by March 2025: ICRA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's installed Renewable Energy (RE) capacity, excluding large hydro plants, is estimated to increase to 170 GW by March 2025 from a level of 135 GW in December 2023, rating agency ICRA said on Friday.

"ICRA estimates that the rise in the RE capacity over the next five-six years is estimated to enhance the share of RE plus large hydro in the all-India electricity generation from about 23 per cent in FY24 to around 40 per cent in FY30," ICRA said in a statement.

Given the intermittency associated with RE generation, the availability of Round The

Clock (RTC) supply from RE sources remains important, it stated.

This can be made possible through the use of wind and solar power projects complemented with energy storage systems, it suggested.

According to the statement, ICRA expects the installed RE capacity, excluding hydro energy, in India to increase to about 170 GW by March 2025 from 135 GW as of December 2023.

Thereafter, the capacity addition is likely to be supported by the significant improvement in tendering activity in the current fiscal with over 16 GW projects bid so far, and another 17 GW bids



underway by central nodal agencies, it stated.

This is in line with the 50 GW annual bidding trajectory announced by the Government of India in March 2023, it noted.

Girishkumar Kadam, Senior Vice-President and Group Head, Corporate Ratings,

ICRA, said in the statement that the tariffs discovered in the RE-RTC tenders remain higher as against the standalone solar and wind energy tenders, with recent RTC bid tariffs seen in the range of Rs 4-4.5 per unit, mainly on account of the cost associated with the storage

component and higher share of wind energy component expected.

Further, based on the prevailing capital cost of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and Pumped Hydro Storage Projects (PSP), the viability of the RTC projects remains relatively better with the use of PSP capacity, he said.

Nonetheless, the supply chain challenges in the wind energy segment could pose challenges for execution of RTC projects, he said.

As per ICRA, the sharp decline in solar PV cell and module prices, abeyance of the Approved List of Module Manufacturers (ALMM) order

till March 2024 and the timeline extension approved for solar and hybrid projects, is expected to lead to an improvement in RE capacity addition to 18 GW to 20 GW in FY24 from 15 GW in FY23.

This, along with the growing project pipeline, is likely to support the scale-up in capacity addition to 23-25 GW in FY25, as per ICRA estimates, mainly driven by the solar power segment.

However, it stated that challenges remain on the execution front with respect to delays in land acquisition and transmission connectivity, which could hamper the capacity-addition prospects

GSTN to share data with RBI frictionless credit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has permitted GST Network to share data about GST-registered businesses, based on their consent, with the Reserve Bank's 'Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit'.

The move will help entities get loans faster on the basis of shared Goods and Services Tax (GST)-related information.

The platform, created by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) subsidiary Reserve Bank Innovation Hub, is intended to enable seamless flow of necessary information to lenders to help in disbursing credit.

In a notification, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has said "the Central Government, on the recommendation of the Council, notifies 'Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit' as the system with which information may be shared by the common portal based on consent..."

The platform has been developed for the operation of a large ecosystem of credit, to ensure access of information from various data sources digitally.

The financial service providers and multiple data

service providers can converge on the platform using standard and protocol driven architecture, the notification said.

Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said with appropriate consent from the supplier/recipient, GSTN is empowered to disclose specific details submitted in the GST registration application, along with data from outward tax returns, monthly and annual tax returns, and invoice preparations.

"This arrangement ensures that borrowers cannot withhold any transactional information provided to lenders or the government portal. It enhances credit efficiency by minimising costs and the time required for processing."

"Moreover, lenders gain access to authenticated monthly sales and purchase data directly from government-sanctioned sources, allowing for a more accurate and timely assessment of credit risk," Mohan said.

GST filings will become a crucial factor for businesses seeking to obtain credit and leverage government-sponsored credit programmes in future, Mohan added.

Tata sells ₹650 cr residential plots in Bengaluru

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Tata Housing has sold plots worth Rs 650 crore in its recently launched residential project in Bengaluru.

In a statement, the company on Friday said it has sold all inventories in the first phase of its project, Raagam, achieving revenue of over Rs 650 crore within one week of its launch.

"With 576 plots sold and a total area of 9 lakh square feet, the project's overwhelming response reflects the robust demand for premium residential offerings in Bengaluru's real estate market," it said.

The project is part of township 'Tata Carnatica' in Devanahalli, North Bengaluru.

Tata Housing Development Company Ltd is a subsidiary of Tata Realty and Infrastructure Ltd.

Tata Housing currently has more than 33 projects with a total development potential of over 51 million square feet spread across major cities in India, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Tata and Tata Housing are registered trademarks of Tata Sons Private Ltd.

World Bank needs to reinvent: NK Singh



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The World Bank needs to reinvent and restructure itself so as to become 'better, bolder and bigger' and harness private capital on the strength of its own balance sheet, said N K Singh, Co-Convenor, Expert Group on MDB Reforms.

The World Bank should also look at the possibility of tapping pension funds to increase its capital base and its capacity to fund development projects in developing nations.

"Bretton Woods was the first one, it certainly needs to be reinvented, restructured and recreated. But there is no substitute for multilateral

cooperation. And that's why better, bolder and bigger," Singh said at a panel discussion at the Raisina Dialogue, 2024.

A high-level expert group, led by N K Singh and former US Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, was set up by the G20 under India's presidency.

In its report, the group had proposed a 30-point roadmap to reform Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and triple their lending by 2030, which includes attracting private investors and introducing pooled portfolio guarantees.

Currently, there are 17 MDBs, including Asian Development Bank, African

Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and Inter-American Development Bank.

Bretton Woods institutions, including the World Bank and IMF, were set up for funding reconstruction activities post World War II.

The expert group had said that MDBs would need USD 3 trillion each year between now and 2030. Of this, USD 2 trillion can come from domestic resource mobilisation.


Out of the balance of USD 1 trillion, USD 500 billion could come from the private sector and USD 500 billion could come through official development financing.

Addressing the discussion, titled 'Democratic Dollars: Can the Planet Reclaim the Bretton Wood', Singh said the money has to come from shareholders, as well as the private sector.

However, the World Bank's track record to be able to use its balance sheet to harness private capital has been disappointing, Singh said.


"I would say if the World Bank needs recapitalisation, shareholders have to put in more money, but equally the World Bank needs to harness its ability to attract private capital and improve on its record," he added.

BUSINESS BRIEF




POWERGRID ACQUIRES TWO TRANSMISSION PROJECTS

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited has acquired two Project Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) viz. Sikar Khetri Transmission Limited and Bidar Transmission Limited on 09 th February 2024 for the Transmission System Projects for evacuation of power from REZ in Rajasthan (20GW) under Phase-II Part D Phase I and Solar Energy Zone (2500 MW) in Bidar, Karnataka respectively after competing with various private sector players and emerging as successful bidder in Tariff Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) process.



GLOBAL MEET ON MATERIAL CHEMISTRY AT SRM

The Department of Chemistry at SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattakulathur organised the 8th International Conference on Recent Advances in Material Chemistry recently. This three-day conference was organised in association with Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), France and University Gustave Eiffel, France. The idea of ICRAMC-2024 was to provide an excellent platform for the world's Material Scientists to share the latest developments in the area of Materials Chemistry.



VIT-AP UNVEILS V-TAPP 2024

VIT AP University announced the launch of V-TAPP'2024 on Friday, marking the beginning of a two-day extravaganza that brings together students from various colleges, universities, and institutions. Dr Buddha Chandrasekhar, Chief Coordinating officer, AICTE, Ministry of Education, Government of India and Vithal



MEGHALAYA A SYMPHONY OF LIFE AND NATURAL BEAUTY

Every moment in Meghalaya is a step into a world where nature and culture coexist in perfect harmony. It's a place where the clouds meet the earth, and the heart meets the soul, leaving an indelible mark on all who venture into its embrace writes
GYANESHWAR DAYAL.
PANKAJ KUMAR
captured a glimpse of the abode of clouds with his roving eye



With its captivating landscapes and rich cultural heritage, Meghalaya is a destination that beckons the adventurous spirit and the nature lover alike. Pankaj Kumar takes a whirlwind tour of the state to capture a glimpse of the abode of clouds. Nestled in the northeastern part of India, Meghalaya, aptly named the “abode of clouds,” is a state that mesmerises visitors with its enchanting landscapes, warm people, and unique cultural treasures. Renowned for its lush greenery, cascading waterfalls, and vibrant traditions, Meghalaya is a paradise for nature enthusiasts and cultural explorers alike.

Meghalaya's natural beauty is unparalleled, offering a breathtaking panorama of rolling hills, dense forests, and meandering rivers. The state is blessed with an abundance of rainfall, contributing to its luxuriant greenery and earning it the distinction of being one of the wettest places on Earth. The picturesque landscapes come alive with a vibrant mix of flora and fauna, making Meghalaya a haven for biodiversity.

Waterfalls, such as the Nohkalikai Falls, plunge



dramatically from towering cliffs, creating a spectacle that leaves visitors in awe. The living root bridges, a testament to the harmonious coexistence between nature and humans, are iconic to the region. These intricate bridges, crafted from the aerial roots of the ancient rubber trees, showcase the indigenous wisdom of the Khasi and Jaintia tribes.

Meghalaya is not only a haven for nature lovers but also a place where the warmth of its people adds an extra layer of charm. The locals, known for their friendliness and hospitality, embrace visitors with open arms. The Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia communities contribute to the



state's rich tapestry of cultures, and their traditions are reflected in everyday life.

The indigenous communities of Meghalaya are proud of their heritage and are eager to share their customs with visitors. Engaging in conversation with the locals provides a glimpse into their way of life, from traditional music and dance to folklore that has been passed down through generations.

One of Meghalaya's most fascinating features is its living root bridges, which exemplify the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. The Khasi and Jaintia tribes have mastered the art of training the aerial roots of the *Ficus elastica* tree to form sturdy and durable bridges over rivers and streams. These bridges, some of which are centuries old, are a testament to sustainable living and the ingenious use of natural resources.

Meghalaya's markets are vibrant hubs of commerce where local women play a crucial role in selling a variety of products. The bustling markets showcase the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of Meghalaya's women. From handmade crafts and traditional textiles to fresh produce and local delicacies, the markets are a treasure trove for those seeking authentic experiences and unique souvenirs.

The markets also serve as social spaces where visitors can interact with the locals, learn about traditional cooking methods, and sample indigenous cuisines. This exchange of cultures adds to the richness of the Meghalayan experience.

Meghalaya, with its mesmerizing landscapes, warm people, and unique cultural treasures, stands as a testament to the incredible diversity India has to offer. Whether exploring the lush greenery, marvelling at the living root bridges, or engaging with the locals in vibrant markets,

INDIA DISCOVERS NEW PACE OPTION IN AKASH

PTI ■ RANCHI

India unearthed a fresh pace talent in debutant Akash Deep but veteran Joe Root single-handedly kept England afloat with a tenacious hundred that shunned 'Bazball' for a more conservative approach as the visitors hobbled to 302 for 7 on the opening day of the fourth Test here on Friday.

At stumps, the 33-year-old Root was unbeaten on 106 and had used up 226 deliveries during his classical Test knock. Giving him company at the other end was Ollie Robinson (26) as England staged a decent recovery from the early jolts given by Akash Deep.

The 27-year-old Bengal pacer, who hails from Bihar, picked up three wickets in his 17 overs, marking yet another confident debut for the home side in the ongoing series.

He made life miserable for England's top-order with the new ball, grabbing the top-three in 10 balls as the visitors lost half of their side in the first session. But Root decided to drop anchor after that, reverting to his natural style of playing the waiting game. The move got him and England the desired results as he struck his first century in 15 innings.

With the sun playing hide and seek during the fog end of the day, the Yorkshire man hit the



three-figure mark for the 31st time in his Test career, striking a classy cover-drive off Akash Deep. It took him 219 balls to get there and the former skipper did not show much emotion, fully aware that his job was not yet done. A record 10 of his 31 Test centuries are against India and the latest one came at just the right juncture.

England are reeling from back-to-back losses in Visakhapatnam and Rajkot to trail the five-match series 1-2. He hit nine fours in his innings and was a picture of determination, noticeably

avoiding the sweep shot due to the variable bounce of the pitch.

The absence of rested pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who had dismissed Root thrice in this series, also gave the Englishman some breathing space. He was happy to play the spinners on the back-foot and slice the field.

His biggest ally in England's splendid recovery was wicketkeeper-batter Ben Foakes (47 off 126 balls). The visiting side went through the second session without losing a wicket for the first time in the

series.

The duo took their time and frustrated India by adding 86 runs in the post-lunch session when the wicket flattened out. Post tea, Mohammed Siraj (2/60) gave the much-needed breakthrough dismissing Foakes three runs short of his half-century, caught by Ravindra Jadeja at short mid-wicket. The dismissal ended a 113-run sixth wicket partnership.

Siraj also dismissed Tom Hartley (13 off 26 balls) with a brilliant delivery that exhibited late movement off the pitch,

crashing into the off stump. Hartley had earlier narrowly avoided a catch by the second slip following an edge that didn't carry. Instead, it went past Yashasvi Jaiswal and reached the boundary rope.

He departed after scoring 13, which included a powerful six off Ravichandran Ashwin over long-on. Ashwin got the scalp of Jonny Bairstow, who made a quick-fire 38 off 35 balls.

STUNNING DEBUT FOR AKASH DEEP: Earlier, India's good run with debutants continued as pacer Akash Deep, the fourth newcomer for the hosts in this series, showed promise for this level.

Bowling one of the finest maiden spells in a Test debut — 7-0-24-3 — Akash Deep dismissed Ben Duckett (11), Ollie Pope (0) and Zak Crawley (42) in 10 deliveries while bowling from the dressing room end.

The pacer, who came through the ranks playing domestic cricket in Bengal, hit the deck hard in a sensational display during the first hour's play after Ben Stokes opted to bat.

He, however, had to wait a bit for his maiden Test wicket.

In his second over of the day, he uprooted Crawley's off-stump that cartwheeled a couple of metres but the celebration was short-lived as he was found guilty of overstepping.

Root century was due: Crawley

PTI ■ RANCHI

England opener Zak Crawley on Friday said that a century from Joe Root was long due and the veteran batter's unbeaten 106 on Day 1 of the fourth Test against India was a "phenomenal" knock under the circumstances.

After losing half of the side at lunch for 112, England rode on Root's determined 106 not out to end day one on 302 for 7 in the fourth Test against India here.

"He (Root) is unbelievable. We fully expected him to get a good score at some point in this series; he was due, he's the best player we've ever had and he played phenomenally today," said Crawley after the day's play.

"He deserves everything he gets, he works so hard at his game and he always comes good."

Root was in the middle of a lean patch and his highest score before Friday's knock in this series was 37.

"He's probably the only bloke in our team who could have done that knock; he's that good, he's our best player and he's stepped up when we needed him to.

"We needed him to get a score and he got a score like he's done for so many years now, he's a phenomenal player," said Crawley who made run-a-ball 42 at the top of the order.

Root first got a fine ally in



wicketkeeper-batter Ben Foakes who contributed a valuable 47 runs in a century-plus stand.

"It was tricky with the fields they were setting but we just always talk about the present, and the situation required a bit more caution with that kind of pitch and the variable bounce and that's what they delivered.

"At other times, we counter-punched but they played it perfectly and read it well," he said.

Regarding the pitch, Crawley said, "It was nipping a lot and nipping quickly. It felt like you

had to throw a counter-punch, you couldn't really sit there like those boys did later on in the day. "I expected variable bounce from the look of those cracks. It certainly did less and less as that opening spell went on. I got out still fairly early but it looked like it wasn't bouncing anywhere near as much or as quickly as earlier on against seam.

"It got harder against the spin, it will continue to break up. It might be a new-ball wicket, hopefully it is when we bowl but the I think the spin's only going to get harder," he added.

Australia beat New Zealand in 2nd T20, win series

AP ■ AUCKLAND (NEW ZEALAND)

Adam Zampa took four for 34 as Australia rolled New Zealand for 102 in 17 overs to win the second Twenty20 International by 72 runs Friday and take an insurmountable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

The Australians will head towards the T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and United States in June with more confidence after a comprehensive series win over New Zealand which is the world's second-ranked team.

Australia won the first match by six wickets with a four off the last ball and the third match between the teams is at Eden Park on Sunday.

"It was a great win for Australia," captain Mitch Marsh said. "Our backs were against the wall and we thought we were probably 50 runs short.

"But, the way our bowlers came out and performed was outstanding. All of our teams over the last 12 months have been backed into a lot of corners and we've managed to find a way to get out of them. Tonight was another example of that."

Australia looked to have fallen short of a competitive total when it was bowled out for 174 in 19.5 overs after being 72 for one at the end of the six-over power play.



Opener Travis Head blasted 45 from 22 balls including five sixes to give Australia a fast start as it batted after losing the toss. But, Lockie Ferguson took four for 12 and Ben Sears two for 29 as the New Zealand seamers turned things around and provoked a sustained collapse of the Australian innings.

Australia lost six wickets for 59 runs in the last 9.5 overs.

New Zealand's batting was depleted by the loss of Rachin Ravindra just before

the start of play with a slight knee injury and Devon Conway suffered a thumb injury keeping wicket and was taken to hospital for X-rays. He returned to the ground when it was found there was no fracture.

Conway still was unable to bat and his opening partner Finn Allen had to take the gloves for the first time in his international career.

Regardless of injuries, New Zealand collapsed in the face of outstanding

Australian fast bowling on a fast and bouncy wicket. Allen hit a six from the third ball of the first over and was out to the last ball, walking down to a good-length ball from Josh Hazlewood which he edged onto his stumps.

Will Young (5) was promoted to open and was out to a brilliant catch by wicketkeeper Matthew Wade. Young top-edged a ball from Pat Cummins which he had attempted to pull and Wade took a catch on the edge of the circle running back toward fine leg.

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner promoted himself from his regular place at No. 7 to No. 3 in the order and was seven when he chopped a short ball from Nathan Ellis onto his stumps.

Mark Chapman also fell to a short ball, slashing at a ball from Marsh which was caught by Tim David at mid-on. New Zealand was 29 for four and its hopes of saving the series looked over.

Glenn Phillips and Josh Clarkson put on 45 for the fifth wicket in a brief display of defiance. But, Clarkson was bowled by Adam Zampa when he was 10 and Adam Milne fell in the same fashion to the next ball. New Zealand was 74 for six.

Head was impressive at the top of the Australian order, blasting 20 runs including two sixes from the first over of the match bowled by Trent Boult.

India women eye victory against Hong Kong in Turkish Cup

PTI ■ ALANYA (TURKEY)

Having played determined football to get the better of Estonia in their opening match, India would be looking forward to another successful outing when they face Hong Kong in the Turkish Women's Cup here on Saturday.

The 4-3 victory against Estonia was the first-ever for a senior Indian women's national team against an European side, and it would have raised the morale of the Chaoba Devi-coached side in the four-team round-robin tournament.

This will be India's fifth encounter against Hong Kong, ranked 79th in the FIFA rankings, and India would be buoyed by the fact that they have won all four previous games, netting 11 goals, while the opponents have managed



just two. In their most recent clash, a friendly in 2019, India won by a solitary goal courtesy Pyari Xaxa, who also found the net in India's victory against Estonia in the ongoing tournament.

India currently lead the table with three points and a goal difference of plus one, while Hong Kong are at the bottom having yet to open their account and a goal difference of -1 after losing 0-1 to Kosovo. Coach Chaoba Devi said Hong Kong had made a marked

improvement since they last played in 2019 and her team would not underestimate the opponents.

"We played against Hong Kong a while ago, but they have shown significant improvement since then. We watched their recent match against Kosovo, where they put up a good fight despite losing by only one goal," said Chaoba Devi on the eve of the match.

"So, we can't underestimate them. We need to focus on our finishing, as we could have scored more goals in our first match against Estonia if our finishing was better. Today, we will do some finishing drills in our training to prepare for the Hong Kong match and ensure the girls are ready to perform well. It's our time to win this tournament," added Chaoba Devi.



Diksha, Pranavi in top five after first round in Morocco

PTI ■ RABAT (MOROCCO)

Diksha Dagar and Pranavi Urs got off to a great start, carding a fine two-under 71 each to tie tied fifth after the opening round of Lalla Meryem Cup on the Ladies European Tour here.

The two Indian golfers, who had Top-25 finishes in the Magical Kenya Ladies Open, suffered a double bogey each, but did well to birdie three of the five Par-5s that this course has. Starting from the 10th, Diksha birdied the 12th and the 16th, but also dropped shots on the 13th and 18th for an even par stretch.

On the second nine, the front side of Royal Golf Dar es Salam, Diksha was in full flow with birdies on the second, third, fifth and eight, before a double bogey set her back on the closing ninth.

Pranavi was off to a flier with four birdies in first six holes but a bogey on 17th and a double on 18th meant she was just 1-under after her first nine. She had one bogey on first and two birdies on the fifth and the eighth for a 71.


Mexico's Maria Fassi showed off her explosive power and fine form during the opening round, firing a flawless eight-under 65 to lead by three shots on the Par-73 golf course.

The 25-year-old, who represented Mexico at the Tokyo Olympics, started on the 10th and picked up three birdies within the first five holes. At the turn, the LPGA player fired up her flatstick to roll in three consecutive birdies before rolling in another two on holes five and eight.

Home favourite Ines Laklalech got the crowds fired up with a phenomenal first round of five-under-par. Spain's Teresa Toscano, who earned her LET card through Q School in December, sits one shot behind Laklalech on four-under-par.


Fellow Spaniard Marta Martin, winner of the 2023 Amundi Czech Ladies Challenge on the LET Access Series (LETAS) sits in fourth on three-under-par.

There is a nine-way tie for fifth place and that includes the two Indians — Diksha and Pranavi, and the 2023 LET Order of Merit winner Trichat Cheenglab.



C-3172

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସହସ୍ରାକ୍ଷୀ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ : କଟକ



OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL: JEYPOR

Main Road, Jeypore Dist. Koraput, Odisha Phone No. 06854-231098e-Mail : ulbjeypore@gmail.com

Letter No. 612/JM


Date: 15 February 2024

CANCELLATION OF TENDER CALL NOTICE FOR DISPOSAL OF OBSOLETE / SCRAP JKSTTT BUSES BY JEYPORE MUNICIPALITY.

The tender call notice published by Jeypore Municipality vide Notice No. 560 Dated 13/02/2024 and 559 Dated 13/02/2024 regarding disposal of the obsolete / scrap of 20 no. of JKSTTT buses are hereby cancelled.

Executive Officer,
Jeypore, Municipality

OIPR-13079/11/0079/2324



B-1827

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, KHORDHA (R&B) CIRCLE, KHORDHA

WORKS DEPARTMENT

Short Tender call Notice

E-mail: rbcirclekhurda@gmail.com

Bid-Identification No. CCE-Khordha (R&B) Circle-43/2023-24 Memo No - 527


Dt. 20.02.2024

The Chief Construction Engineer, Khordha (R&B) Circle, Khordha on behalf of Governor of Odisha inviting percentage rate bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for building works as detailed in the table below:

1.	Nature of Work	:	Building Works
2.	No of Work	:	8Nos
3.	Tender Cost	:	Rs. 10000.00 (On-Line)
4.	Class of Contractor	:	B, & A Class & Original Equipment manufacturer (OEM)/ Regd. Firm
5.	Available of Bid document in the Website	:	From 10.00 AM of Dt.26.02.2024 up to 05.00 PM of Dt.04.03.2024 up to 5.00 PM
6.	Date of opening of Bid	:	Dt.06.03.2024 at 11.30 AM
6.	The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the Website: https://tendersodisha.gov.in . Any Addendum / Corrigendum / Cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.	:	

Chief Construction Engineer
Khordha (R&B) Circle, Khordha

OIPR-34127/11/0054/2324



C-3163

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, RANPUR

NAYAGARH(ODISHA),PIN-752026

e-Mail : eoranpumac.ranpur@gmail.com

Tender Call Notice No.426Dt.20.02.2024

E- Procurement Notice No. : RNP NAC- 07/ 2023-24

1	Name of the Work	:	Individual Civil Construction Works as per DTCN
2	No. of Works	:	13 Nos.
3	Value of Work	:	As per DTCN
4	Class of Contractor	:	"D"& "C"
5	Period of Completion	:	As Per DTCN
6	Date of Publication	:	Dt.22.02.2024
7	Date and Time of availability of document in the portal	:	From Dt.22.02.2024at 1 PM to Dt. 01.03.2024 upto6 PM
8	Last Date/Time for receipt of bids in portal	:	Dt.01.03.2024 upto6 PM
9	Date and Time of opening Bid	:	Dt.02.03.2024 up to 11AM.

Name and address of the officer inviting bid

Sd/-
Executive officer,
NAC Ranpur

Further details can be seen from e-Procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>

Executive Officer
N.A.C, Ranpur

OIPR-13196/11/0014/2324