



the pioneer

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL
BHUBANESWAR RANCHI RAIPUR
CHANDIGARH DEHRADUN
HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

City Vol. 20 Issue 8
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

www.dailypioneer.com

DADLS-75

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OIPR-15001/13/0246/2324



Hi-tech Hosp mishap Student Cong members hurl eggs at Min's residence

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Student Congress on Monday held a demonstration over the mishap and body swapping incidents at the Hi-Tech Medical College Hospital in Bhubaneswar recently.

Members of the Student Congress led by its State president Yasser Nawaz staged the demonstration in front of the quarters of Health Minister Niranjan Pujari and hurled eggs.

The agitators demanded cancellation of the licence of the Hi-tech Medical College and arrest of its owner Tirupati Panigrahi.



"The government is shielding Tirupati Panigrahi as he is a BJD leader. A similar incident had happened at the SUM Hospital and its owner Manoj Nayak was arrested

before the probe. If Nayak could be arrested, why not Panigrahi," questioned Nawaz.

This is not the first time. There were prior complaints against the

hospital too. We demand immediate arrest of Panigrahi, cancellation of Hi-Tech Medical College's licence and compensation of Rs 50 lakh each for the family of each deceased in the tragedy," Nawaz said.

Panigrahi commenting on the allegations said, "The informant informed the hospital about the accident. The doctors received the injured patients and started service. The (concerned) doctor prepared the Medico Legal certificate (MLC) and allotted bed for patients. The informant identified the patients and their family members carried the body. We only provided service. We do not need to know the patients to treat them."

IIT-BBS signs MoUs with 3 overseas varsities

For collaboration in teaching, research

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bhubaneswar, signed MoUs with three overseas universities on January 5.

The institute has signed the MoUs with Plovdiv University of Bulgaria, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, and Jahangirnagar University, both from Bangladesh.

Director, IIT Bhubaneswar Prof Shreepad Karmalkar and Rector of Plovdiv University Professor Rumen Mladenov signed the MoU with Plovdiv University. Professor Prasant Kumar Sahu, Dean (Alumni Affairs and International Relations), IIT Bhubaneswar, signed the



rest two MoUs with Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, represented by Prof Md Jarez Miah and Jahangirnagar University of Bangladesh, represented by Prof M Shammim Kaiser.

The three MoUs aim at development of a collaborative relationship in academics and research through various joint projects and faculty exchange.

The Deans and faculty members of IIT Bhubaneswar were present on the occasion, attended by around 40 delegates from different universities and institutions from the UK, Bulgaria, Bangladesh, Latvia, Belgium, Turkey and India.

G Udayagiri coldest in State at 7.5 deg

Warning for dense fog issued

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The minimum temperature dipped below 12 degree Celsius at eight places in the State in the last 24 hours with G Udayagiri in Kandhamal district being the coldest place at 7.5 degree, the Regional Office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD here said on Monday.

G Udayagiri has been recording the lowest night temperature in the State for the last four days.

Besides G Udayagiri, Koraput recorded 8.3 degree Daringbadi and Phulbani, both in Kandhamal, 9.5 and 10 degree, respectively, followed by Angul at 11 degree, Nabarangpur and Kirei in Sundargarh at 11.4 degree each and Semilguda in Koraput at 11.5 degree

The twin cities of Cuttack and

Bhubaneswar recorded 15 degree and 16.2 degree, respectively. The State capital witnessed a slight rise in the mercury after registering below-normal temperature for two days.

Dense fog also engulfed Cuttack, Balangir, Rourkela and Phulbani this morning. Shallow and moderate fog was witnessed in Kendrapada, Baripada, Chandbali, Bhawanipatna and Keonjhar.

The weather office has issued Yellow warning for dense fog for one or two places in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, Angul, Dhankhal, Jajpur, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapada, Puri, Khordha, Nayagarh, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Rayagada and Koraput till 8.30 am on Tuesday.

Shallow to moderate fog may also occur at a few places in coastal Odisha, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Keonjhar and at one or two places in remaining parts of the State.

In State Ajoy Kumar faces tough task to salvage Cong



NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

The former IPS officer, on the very day of his arrival on Saturday, said the BJD has been hijacked by non-Odias and exhorted Congress workers to save the State from their clutches.

On Sunday, he accused the BJD and the BJP of entering into a tacit understanding in helping each other in Lok Sabha elections.

"The BJP has been assured 15 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats. Similarly, the BJD has got an assurance from the BJP that it would not stand in its way of coming to the power for the sixth consecutive term," alleged Dr Kumar.

He is also given the task of increasing the party's Lok Sabha tally from one to a maximum possible number in the State.

In the past three days, Dr Kumar has managed to generate a lot of enthusiasm in the party State unit through his meticulous attack on the BJD and the BJP.

Ex-MLA Majhi quits BJD

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Former MLA Balabhadra Majhi on Monday tendered his resignation from the primary membership of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

He sent the resignation letter to party supremo Naveen Patnaik.

"I do hereby relinquish from the primary membership of the Biju Janata Dal. Thanks a lot for allowing me to work for long period along with you since formation of the party in 1997," he wrote in the



letter. The ex-Lanjigarh MLA quit the BJD citing that he was being neglected in the party.

P'khemundi' techie in Ram Temple making

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

Saroj Kumar Panigrahy of Paralakhemundi who heads the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), Roorkee, has done a commendable job by contributing to the architecture of the Sri Ram Temple in Ayodhya which has been a matter of pride here.

A short film on the Surjya Tilak Abhishek by a team that was led by him would be screened for 3-4 minutes on the inauguration of the shrine on January 22.

Saroj is an alumnus from VISSUT, Burla and REC, Rourkela.



Besides, he has got his doctorate degree from IIT, Roorkee. He is the younger son of late Gourang Panigrahy who was a reputed teacher in Paralakhemundi area.

Interview of the week

Number of poetry lovers declining world over



SUGYAN CHOUDHURY



DR PHANI MOHANTY

Dr Phani Mohanty, a neo-romantic poet of Odisha, has been enriching the literary firmament and the cultural mosaic of the State over the last five decades. A prolific poet, he has more than 25 poetry anthologies to his credit till date. Some of his poetry books have been published both in India and abroad as in Toronto (Canada), Ohio (USA) rendered into English, Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Gujarati, Nepali, Santali and Sanskrit. Awards and accolades have come cascading upon him like Odisha and Kendra Sahitya Akademi Awards besides Odisha Sanskriti Samman, Fakir Mohan Sahitya Sri Award, Bhanuji Rao Kabita Award, Sachi Routray Kabita Samman and Sahitya Sikkhar Samman by International Hindi Parishad, Patna (Bihar), etc. A noteworthy translated versions of Dr Mohanty's poems entitled as "Mellifluous voices of Phani Mohanty's Poetry" compiled and edited by Dr Sonali Sahu has recently been published by Vidya Prakashon INC Toronto, Canada. His monumental contributions culminated in publication of his 'Hundred Years of Odia Poetry in English & contemporary Odia Kavita in Hindi'.

In an interview to *The Pioneer*, Mohanty spoke to *Sugyan Choudhury* from his residential cottage Puspadhanu at Bomikhal, Bhubaneswar dealing at length on varied aspects concerning current Odia poetry.

How did you stumble upon the world of poetry? Who was your inspiration?

I was born and brought up in a very small village. Most people around me were illiterate. Only my father and a few others had education up to Class-7. However, the atmosphere around was bubbling with life and spirit. The Puranas were regularly recited, so was Bhagabat, the guide book in simple lyrical verse for everyday life and living in the right path. My father and of my grandmother

were lovers of drama. There was also daily recitation of the Puranas and the Bhagabat. The rhyme, rhythm, music and the theme in them entered my soul. The serenity of abundant nature, the mango groves, my father, mother and the surrounding formed the backdrop of my inspiration. Once, while in Class-7, I had the opportunity to recite the poems of two veteran poets of the time, Radhamohan Garnaik and Ananta Patnaik, in their presence. I won the first prize and my desire to become a poet got a huge boosting.

Does modern poetry unpretentiously portray the pains of our times?

The age and the milieu always shape the nature of literature and modern poetry also represents the pains and pangs of our times authentically. However, when it comes to the new generation of poets, quite a few seems to have failed to grasp the reality of our times. They have to intensely experience the depths and the magnitude of the complexities of life today to be able to portray them genuinely in their poems.

Are the numbers of poetry lovers dwindling by every passing day; if so, why?

The number of poetry lovers is on the decline the world over on account of overwhelming changes in the lives of people in the fragmented society due to the impact of technology. The internet, social media, easy access to smart phones, the digital entertainment platforms have left people acutely short of time and inclination for the kind of experience poetry and literature provide. People hardly have time to read and life has become more prosaic.

What are the trends and styles Odia poets follow these days?

Themes relating to social happenings are the preferred mode for many. The larger picture of the struggle of the individual vis-a-vis the society and the challenges confronting him is largely ignored.

With regard to the style or technique, free verse is most common. There is superficiality of emotion and lack of feeling. There is excessive use of metaphors and too much experimentation. Evolving a generally-accepted poetic convention would create a more positive atmosphere for both the poet and the reader.

Does Odisha Sahitya Akademi take proper steps for popularising Odia literature at the international level?

The best way to introduce Odia literature to the international readers and audience is to translate Odia works in English and other languages. Not much has been done by the Odisha Sahitya Akademi in this respect. The Akademi should at least start the translation of award-winning books into English and Hindi to reach out to the national and international readership. The government has now put generous grants and the Akademi should lose no time in acting in this much-needed and much-awaited direction.

What are your creations and which one is acclaimed by the readers as the best and why?

My creations comprise 27 collections of poems, one collection of short stories and a short novel. Some of my award-winning books have been translated into Hindi, English, Santali, etc. My most popular collection "Priyatama" has been translated into English, Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Maithili, Nepali and Gujarati. The poems deal with love as a deeply emotional experience transcending the limitations of this world and attaining a kind of higher awakening. I consider "Priyatama" as my most-acclaimed book. The directness of its appeal, rhyme, rhythm and musicality of words and the sense of "Thinking Beyond" that it encompasses may be the reasons for its popularity.

What is your advice for the younger generation of Odia poets?

Who am I to advise younger poet as I'm not competent? The younger generation needs to introspect and find out why poetry has fewer readers these days in comparison to the number of poets writing poetry. They need to be well-acquainted with the roots of our literature, acquire richer experience and get more exposed to Indian as well as world literature. I am happy that some young poets are doing wonders because of their dedication and devotion to poetry. Their example should be an eye opener for other budding poets.

Transport workers call off strike Anjana files Rs 10-cr case against 'Barang 1999'

After meeting with CS

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The All Odisha Motor Transport Workers' Federation that had called for an indefinite strike against the proposed new central law called off the protest following a discussion with Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena on Monday.

"We discussed with the All Odisha Motor Transport Workers' Federation's president and other key members regarding the stir. We convinced the association that the Union Home Secretary in a video message has clarified that the notification regarding the proposed law is yet to be issued. He has assured to discuss with all stakeholders before the notification. We requested the association to withdraw the strike and the latter agreed



following the meeting," said the Chief Secretary.

The federation called for the strike from the day opposing the proposed penalty regulations for drivers under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

However, the Odisha Bus Owners' Association and the Odisha

Truck Owners' Association did not extend support to the strike.

The strike by the Odisha Motor Transportation Workers' Federation had resulted in shortage of petrol and diesel at petrol pumps across the State as members of the association stopped loading petrol and diesel from the fuel depots.

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Anjana Mishra (Padhi), the survivor of a gang-rape incident in 1999, on Monday filed a defamation suit against OTT platform Kanchna Lannka in connection with its web series 'Barang 1999'.

Anjana (55) filed the case at the Bhubaneswar Senior Division Civil Judge's Court and sought Rs 10 crore as damages from the OTT platform for defaming her through the web series.

Anjana had earlier served a legal notice on Kanncha Lannka, the OTT platform's cofounder-cum-managing director Bibhu Prasad Rath, cofounder-cum-executive director Chitta Ranjan Nayak, Camera Queen Production, its founder Himadri Tanaya Das, YouTube India, Facebook developed by Meta, and the managing director and editor of Argus Pratham Broadcast



India Private Limited in connection with the web series.

Anjana had served the legal notice through her advocate Bibhu Prasad Tripathy.

"The trailer of the web series 'Barang 1999' made false and defamatory descriptions of the gang-rape incident with an intention of harming the reputation of Anjana Mishra," Tripathy had said.

The trailer of the web series was widely circulated through social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, he added.

"All the noticees are jointly and severally liable for damages caused to my client. The trailer of the web series has concocted versions of the incident but the makers of the web series have just named the gang-rape survivor's name to 'Amrita

Padhi," Tripathy claimed.

While serving the legal notice, Anjana had asked Kanchna Lannka and other noticees to take down the web series 'Barang 1999' from the OTT platform and all social media sites within 72 hours. She had threatened to initiate appropriate civil and criminal proceedings against the noticees if they fail to comply with the legal notice.



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Rousing welcome to Arpan Rath in Rayagada

Streets filled with spiritual ambience

BADAL TAH ■ RAYAGADA

Scores of households from thousands of villages in eleven blocks of Rayagada district offered betel nuts and rice in "Kalash" to the Jagannath Arpan Rath, which has started moving from block headquarters to different panchayats, including interior villages. With the chanting of "Jay Jagannath", the chariot is rolling out in the village streets with the people welcoming it carrying their offerings. The offerings would be sent to Puri to be used on the occasion of the inauguration of the Jagannath Temple Parikrama Prakalp on January 17. Locals in the tribal district like Rayagada believe that Lord Jagannath has deep connection with the tribal culture.

Lalita-Viswabasu-Nila Madhava-Sabara episode is well described in our Puranas. Therefore, there is an emotional attachment of the area to the Lord. So, people in large numbers are turning up to welcome the chariot, perform puja and making their offerings. Rangolis were drawn by the young girls and women on the streets. Tribal Affairs Minister Jagannath Saraka, BSKY advisor Sudhir Das, Gunupur MLA Raghunath Gomango, ZP President Saraswati Majhi, SDC Chairperson Anusuya Majhi along with all block chairpersons and BDOs have taken a lead role in the smooth passage of the pageant in blocks like Kolnara, Bissam Cuttack, Gudari, Gunupur, Padmapur, K Singhpur, Ramanagada,



Kashipur, Muniguda, Chandrapur and Rayagada. Peoples' representatives assembled at Sraddha Srikhetra of Rayagada, Durgi Jagannath Temple and Gunupur Jagannath Temple to greet the chariot with devotional songs and dances.



Arpan Rath moves out in Haramal GP of Kalampur block of Kalahandi district on Monday

Arpan Rath rolls out in Harichandanpur block of Keonjhar district



Arpana Rath is on the move in Rambha NAC in Ganjam district on Monday.



5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman VK Pandian again takes stock of the Parikrama Prakalpa works on Monday. Ranijan Ganguly

Fanfare marks Arpan Rath rallies in K'pada

Chariots taken out in 9 blocks

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

Spiritual fervour gripped the whole of Kendrapada after participants accompanying the Jagannath Arpan Rath fanned out in the nook and corner of the district. The processions were carried out on the village streets of all the nine blocks to collect betel nut and raw rice. There was a lot of fanfare among the people as they waited to welcome the chariots and make their offerings. Local BJD leaders including PRI members were present at every location where the chariots moved through. Each Rath carries images of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Maa Subhadra with lights and

sounds. Kirtan troupes presented Bhajans and chanted 'Jay Jagannath.' Earlier, a symbolic pot was consecrated for the collection of the offerings for the Parikrama project launch in Puri. "The propagation, conservation and protection of Jagannath culture is being carried out under the aegis of 'Ama Odisha, Nabin Odisha' programme of the State Government. The chariots are designed on the theme of Srimandir Parikrama Prakalpa. Women from every household offered fistfuls of raw rice and betel nuts as the chariots rolled on the village roads. The offerings have been kept in local temples which will be sent to Puri on January 15 in a special vehicle," stated district Collector Amrit Raturaj.



Laxmi Majhi death Forensic team holds probe in Rayagada

PNS ■ RAYAGADA
A two-member Central forensic team reached Rayagada town and conducted scientific tests on Monday to ascertain the cause of crime in connection with the death of NGO staffer Laxmi Majhi. 'Maa Gruha' warden Laxmi was found dead in Chandrapur of Rayagada district. The forensic team visited Maa Gruha

and went to the spot where her body was spotted on December 21. The team examined the spot and questioned a security guard of the Chandrapur Community Health Centre (CHC). The team also discussed with several other staffs of the CHC, sources said. Notably, Zilla Adivasi Mahasangh, observed Rayagada Bandh on January 5 seeking justice against torture and murder of tribal people in the district. The Crime Branch earlier commenced its inquiry at the Maa Gruha. The team led by DSP Narendra Behera conducted probe, questioning four colleagues and the organisation's director Nrusinghanath Mohapatra. Sources revealed that Majhi's neighbours were also

In Jharsuguda 3 killed as 4-wheeler hits bike

PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA
As many as three persons were killed when an unidentified vehicle hit a motorcycle by which the trio was travelling on NH-49 at Goudapada under the Belpahar police limits in Jharsuguda district on Monday. As per reports, the accident took place when the three youths of Sahajbahal village were heading towards Lakhanpur on the ill-fated two-wheeler. The driver of the four-wheeler fled the spot after the vehicle hit the motorcycle. The three sustained critical injuries in the road mishap and died on the spot. On being informed, police reached the place and started an investigation into the matter. Cops were examining footage of nearby CCTV cameras to identify the vehicle.

'Let parties include environ safety in poll manifestoes'

Environmentalism
Rout submits memo to ECI
PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR
Environmentalism and Green Man of Odisha, Sudhir Kumar Rout has submitted a memorandum to Election Commissioner of India Rajeev Kumar on Thursday, demanding mandatory inclusion of environment protection in the election manifestos of the political parties and a pledge by the candidates for the same during the filing of nomination in the upcoming simultaneous elections 2024. Rout said that global warming and climate change have been a matter of grave concern worldwide, as they are threatening the very existence of human beings. Frequent unprecedented natural disasters are striking at great frequency across the globe. Consequently, it has become exigent that every human being has to act, the memorandum pointed out. "The political parties of democracy have a greater responsibility towards the environment. They should declare their plans to protect the environment and arrest the climate change on assuming power; avoid using plastic banners, placards, flags and other materials made of single use plastics and high decibel election campaigns, leading to sound pollution," said Rout.

In Sundargarh Male students sexually exploited in hostel



Case registered against school's father
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
An allegation of sexual exploitation of male students at a hostel of a school in Sundargarh district has come to the fore after a police complaint in this regard was lodged on Monday by the parents of the children. The parents alleged that their wards were being sexually exploited by the father

Blast in furnace Notice to KJS Ahluwalia plant in K'jhar

NARAESH PATTNAYAK ■ KEONJHAR
The Directorate of Factories and Boilers sealed a furnace and issued an order to stop work there in a plant of KJS Ahluwalia Company located at Rugudi in Keonjhar district after a blast took place in the unit on Wednesday. The Directorate sealed the furnace No. 2 where the explosion took place. Though no one was killed or injured, but the explosion was so big that its sound was heard in about 2km radius of the plant site. Sources alleged that it is totally a failure of the technical team of the plant, which was engaged for its regular check-up. A team of the Factories and Boilers, Keonjhar, headed by Assistant Director Kedarnath Hansda rushed to the plant to inquire about the incident. During the inquiry the team found some faults in the furnace and issued notice to the manager of the plant to stop work where the blast took place. The team also wrote a letter to the company and asked to give an undertaking to provide importance to safety so that no such incident happens in future. Meanwhile, it was alleged that the company was ignoring the safety and security side though it was running on profit. The laborers are working in a poor environment. In 2013, three laborers were killed after a boiler exploded and five persons were killed in two such incidents in the year 2017. Besides, many minor incidents have been taking place in which the plant authority allegedly managed to suppress the facts.



In Jagatsinghpur 2 held for robbing gas agency owner

PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR
Police on Monday cracked the robbery of Rs 3.85 lakh from a gas agency owner in the Alipingala area under Jagatsinghpur block by arresting two persons. The police seized cash of Rs 1.10 lakh, a country-made gun, a mobile phone and a motorcycle from their possession. The arrested were identified as Santosh Patra from the Niali area under Cuttack district and Saroj Kumar Mallick hailing from Sagadialo village under the Niali police station. The robbery had occurred on December 12, 2023 at Kathapola in Ashramapatana village when gas agency owner Kuttam Kishore Sarjansingh was on his way to village Odishagada. All of a sudden, two bike-borne miscreants waylaid Kuttam and snatched away the cash bag after terrorising him at gunpoint. Later, a case was registered at the Jagatsinghpur police station, following which a probe was initiated. Police on Saturday nabbed Santosh Patra from his village. During interrogation, he revealed Saroj's name who incidentally is an employee of the gas agency. The cops are on the lookout for another accused who is involved in the case.

"Nua-O" prog ends at B'pada Govt Sanskrit College

PNS ■ BARIPADA
The State Government's Integrated Youth Development Programme (IYDP), otherwise known as "Nua-O", came to a close in the local Baripada Government Degree Sanskrit College here on Friday. The concluding function was presided over by college principal Dr Padma Devi, who highlighted the aim, objective and the importance of the entire programme. Baripada MLA Prakash Chandra Soren, who graced the function as the chief guest, spoke of the role played by the programme with regard to educational and intellectual development of the students. Journalist and educationist Kavi Vishnu Satpathy, who was the chief speaker on the occasion, stressed the significance of different sports, cultural and social awareness programmes in building and moulding the personality of the students. Senior Lecturer Chowdhry Aditya Prasad Das conducted the meeting, while senior Lecturer Dr Subal Chandra Sahoo delivered the welcome speech. Lecturer Sudesna Dash read out the programme report, while Lecturer Devashish Panigrahi proposed the vote of thanks at the end. Lecturers Dr Priyanka Mohanta and Jabashree Panigrahi and staff members Pradeep Kumar Nayak and Dinabandhu Behera also contributed towards the successful completion of the programme. The chanting of Vedic hymns and the singing of Jagannath Stuti were the special attractions of the occasion.

Vaishnaw declares dev projects for A'garh



DINESH DAS ■ ATHAGARH
Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw visited Athagarh Sub-Division on Sunday. In the morning, he worshipped Lord Dhableswar in the shrine where he assured the priests to restore the banned suspension bridge and make certain developmental works of the shrine after discussion with the DM of Cuttack. Then he proceeded to Athagarh town where he attended in a core meeting of BJP. Meeting the mediapersons, he declared that a railway over bridge would soon be formed near Ghanthikhal for the ease of the road commuters. At Panchagaon, he attended a football tournament, congratulated the players and declared to turn the ground as a mini stadium soon, through a special assistance of Rs 50 lakh. At Maniabandha, he interacted with the weavers and assured to fulfill their demands soon. Then he visited Goddess Bhattarika temple and participated in the worship. At Champeswar, he attended a mega BJP party meeting. Political experts observed that he might be a ticket holder from Cuttack Lok Sabha constituency this time as he told that he is a disciplined party leader and must obey the instructions of his party.

In Keonjhar Youth attempts to set officer on fire, held

PNS ■ KEONJHAR
A youth allegedly attempted to set Barbil Municipality Executive Officer Abhishek Panda on fire by pouring petrol on him on Monday. However, some staffs of the civic body foiled the youth's attempt and rescued Panda. Later, the accused identified as Abhishek Gupta was arrested by police. According to sources, Gupta all of a sudden barged into the office chamber of Panda and poured around two litres of petrol on him. "The Executive Officer had a close shave as some staffs overpowered the accused and rescued Panda. The accused was arrested and is being interrogated," a police official said. "Some people had previously encroached government land in front of Gupta's house and had constructed shops on it. He insisted on evicting the encroachments and was dissatisfied over the issue. Probably, for this reason, he attempted a murderous bid," the official added.

Paradip Fishing Port set for facelift



Stone laid for Rs 108-cr modernisation
PNS ■ PARADIP
The Central Government has allocated a substantial sum of Rs 108 crore for the comprehensive modernisation and environmental development of Paradip's expansive fishing harbour. Union Minister of Fisheries Development, Purushottam Rupala and Agriculture Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain jointly laid the foundation-stone for the project. The initiative is poised to elevate Paradip fishing port to a prominent position among India's major fishing ports, the Union Minister said. The foundation stone was laid in an event attended by Paradip Port Chairman PL Haranadh and Odisha Marine Fish Producers Association president Srikanta Parida. The fishing industry is grappling with a crisis exacerbated by a significant increase in diesel prices. Demand letters have been issued to the Union and State Ministers on crucial issues, including diesel subsidies and the establishment of ice block factories in fishing ports, said OMFPA president Parida.

Khairguda Sulia Jatra to be held on Jan 16

Committee representatives meet Balangir admn for smooth conduct of event
SUDHIR MISHRA ■ BALANGIR
The annual Sulia Jatra, which is one of the major festivals of tribals of Balangir, is going to be held on January 16. This was announced to mediapersons by Sulia Jatra Mahostov Khairguda/Kumuria Committee president Maya Pradhani on Friday evening here after a meeting with the district administration. Every year, the Jatra is held in the month of Pausha Sukla Pakhya, on the first Tuesday at Khairguda under Kultapda Panchayat of Deogaon Block in Balangir district, 20 km from here. The place where major killing of animals for the deity takes place is popularly known as Badkhala. Besides, Sulia Jatra is also observed at another place at Kumuria, 2 km from Badkhala. It is known as Saankhala. The Sulia Jatra would be held as per its traditions of making huge animal sacrifices. Many people from in and around through the spot to witness the Jatra with animals and birds like goat, sheep, buffalo, hen and pigeon for sacrificing them at the altar of the deity as a means of appeasing the deity and getting their wishes fulfilled. "We discussed many aspects of Sulia Jatra, including law and order, traffic management, drinking water, health and other issues, related to smooth holding of the event this year," said Balangir Sub Collector Prabhas Dandsena.



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WILL MODI MAGIC WORK IN THE SOUTH?

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BNP REJECTS 'DUMMY POLLS' IN BANGLADESH

MONEY 10
SENSEX, NIFTY TUMBLE NEARLY 1 PER CENT ON GLOBAL WEAKNESS

BHUBANESWAR, TUESDAY JANUARY 9, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4



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INDIA WOMEN EYE MAIDEN T20I SERIES WIN 12 SPORTS

SC sends Bilkis rapists back to jail

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a massive setback to the Gujarat Government, the Supreme Court on Monday quashed the remission it had granted to 11 convicts in the high-profile gang-rape case of Bilkis Bano and the killing of her seven family members, while slamming the state for being "complicit" with an accused and abusing its discretion. It ordered all the convicts, who were released prematurely on Independence Day in 2022, to be sent back to jail within two weeks.

Excoriating the Gujarat Government, the apex court said it "usurped" the power of the Maharashtra Government to grant remission to the convicts.

It held as nullity the May 13, 2022 judgment of another bench of the apex court, which had directed the Gujarat Government to consider the remission applications of the 11 convicts in the case, saying it was obtained by "playing fraud on court".

"This is a classic case where the order of this court dated May 13, 2022, has been used for violating the rule of law while passing orders of remission in favour of respondent nos 3 to 13 (convicts) in the absence of any jurisdiction by the State of Gujarat. Therefore, without going into the manner in which the power of remission has been exercised, we strike



down the orders of remission on the ground of usurpation of powers by the State of Gujarat not vested in it. The orders of remission are hence quashed," a bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan said.

It asked whether "heinous crimes against women permit remission" irrespective of the faith she may follow or creed she may belong to. Bilkis Bano was 21 years old and five months pregnant when she was raped while fleeing the horror of the communal riots that broke out after the Godhra train burning incident in February 2002. Her three-year-old daughter was among the seven family members killed. In its 251-page judgment, the Supreme Court said the

Gujarat Government had no jurisdiction to entertain the applications for remission of sentences and only the government of the State where the offenders were sentenced was competent to consider an application for remission and pass an order. "Government of State of Gujarat (respondent No. 1 herein) had no jurisdiction to entertain the applications for remission or pass the orders of remission on August 10, 2022 in favour of respondent No. 3 to 13 (convicts) herein as it was not the appropriate government within the meaning of sub-section (7) of Section 432 of the CrPC," the bench said.

The Supreme Court said just as an order passed by a court without jurisdiction is a

nullity, in the same vein, an order passed or action taken by an authority lacking in jurisdiction is a nullity and is non est (does not exist) in the eye of law. "On that short ground alone the orders of remission have to be quashed. This aspect of competency of the Government of State of Gujarat to pass the impugned orders of remission goes to the root of the matter and the impugned orders of remission are lacking in competency and hence a nullity. The writ petition filed by the victim would have to succeed on this reasoning," the bench said. The top court said if the Gujarat Government really had in mind the provisions of law and had adhered to the

rule of law, it would have filed a review petition against the May 13, 2022 judgment of another bench of the apex court by contending that it was not the appropriate government.

While holding as nullity the May 13, 2022 judgment of the apex court, which had directed the Gujarat Government to consider the remission applications of the 11 convicts, the Supreme Court said on Monday it was obtained by "playing fraud on court".

In its previous verdict, a bench comprising Justices Ajay Rastogi (now retired) and Vikram Nath had asked the Gujarat Government to consider the plea of convict Radheshyam Shah for premature release in terms of its remission policy of July 9, 1992, holding that the Government of the State where the offence had taken place has the jurisdiction to decide the application.

On Monday, the top court noted that Shah had initially approached the Gujarat High Court in 2019 for a direction to consider his application for remission.

"By order dated July 17, 2019 the High Court disposed of Criminal Application by observing that he should approach the appropriate Government being the State of Maharashtra. His second such application before the Gujarat High Court was also dismissed in 2020," it said.

Maldives loses traction, tourists head to Lakshadweep

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In the midst of an escalating dispute between India and the Maldives, the hashtag #BoycottMaldives gained traction on social media as Indian tourists began canceling their scheduled vacations to the island nation. The travel agency firm EaseMyTrip has suspended all flight bookings to the Maldives on its website, while the Confederation of All India Traders has urged traders and exporters to refrain from conducting business dealings with the Maldives.

The Indian Association of Tour Operators predicts that the repercussions of recent events and the call for a boycott will become apparent within the next 20-25 days. Meanwhile, MakeMyTrip announced on Monday that it has observed a 3,400 per cent increase in on-platform searches for Lakshadweep ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the islands.

In a series of posts on the social media platform X, EaseMyTrip CEO Nishant Pitti said, "The water and beaches of Lakshadweep are as good as those in Maldives/Seychelles. We, at @EaseMyTrip, will come up with crazy special offers to promote this pristine



destination that our PM @narendramodi has recently visited!" The EaseMyTrip CEO also urged travellers "to discover the enchanting beauty of Ayodhya and the pristine allure of Lakshadweep" and encouraged them to "say no to Maldives bookings and explore the wonders of Ayodhya and Lakshadweep". Indian tourists constituted the highest number of visitors to the Maldives until December 2023, according to data from the country's tourism ministry. Out of the total 17.57 lakh tourists who travelled to the island nation, India had the highest share in terms of the number of visitors at 2,09,198 lakh, followed by Russia (2,09,146) and China (1,87,118). The number was more than 2.4 lakh in 2022, while over 2.11 lakh Indians flew to the Maldives in 2021. The Maldives was also one of the

few countries open for international tourists during the pandemic, and nearly 63,000 Indians visited the country in that period. In 2018, India was the fifth-largest source of tourist arrivals in the Maldives, with 90,474 visitors. In 2019, India reached the second spot with nearly double the number (1,66,030). The Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has urged all tour and flight operators to boycott the Maldives and redirect their focus to the Lakshadweep and Andaman Islands. Additionally, the ICC has called upon the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India and the Hotel Association of India to explore investment opportunities in the Lakshadweep Islands, promising better returns compared to the Maldives.

Empowering poor, women must for a strong India: PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said that an empowered India would be ensured when the poor, farmers, women, and youth are empowered. Noting that his government has made all-round efforts to alleviate the difficulties of farmers, and beneficiaries have received ₹30,000 crore under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned that the governments in the past had a "narrow ambit" regarding issues linked to farmers.

The Prime Minister highlighted that Toor or Arhar dal farmers can now sell their produce directly to the government online, ensuring purchases at MSP and better prices in the market. The scope of this scheme will be extended to other pulses as well, he added. "Our effort is to make the money we send abroad to buy pulses available to the farmers of the country," said the Prime Minister.

Addressing the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY) via video conferencing, Modi said the biggest objective of the Yatra is to ensure that no rightful beneficiary of government schemes is left out. Thousands of Viksit



Bharat Sankalp Yatra beneficiaries from across the country, along with Union Ministers, MPs, MLAs, and local-level representatives, joined the event.

Prime Minister Modi noted that the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra recently completed 50 days and has connected with about 11 crore people. "Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra has become not only the Government's journey but also the country's journey," he said. The Prime Minister mentioned, "Modi Ki Guarantee ki Gadi is reaching every nook and corner of the country. The poor, who spent their lives waiting to benefit from government schemes, are experiencing meaningful change today. The Government is reaching the doorsteps of the beneficiaries and proactively providing benefits. Along with Modi Ki Guarantee ki Gadi, government offices and people's representatives are reaching the people." Referring to the buss about

"Modi ki guarantee," the Prime Minister emphasised the mission-mode approach to cover beneficiaries and highlighted the link between the resolution of "Viksit Bharat" (developed Bharat) and the saturation of scheme coverage. Earlier, Modi interacted with beneficiaries of Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra via video conferencing, where they praised government initiatives. Prime Minister Modi highlighted the enduring struggles of the poor, youth, women, and farmers over many generations. "Our government aims to spare present and future generations from the hardships endured by earlier ones. We aspire to liberate a significant portion of the population from the daily struggles for basic needs," Modi said. "For us, the empowerment of the poor, farmers, women, and youth is paramount. These are the four primary pillars of our nation. When

these segments are empowered, the country will become stronger," he said. Since the Yatra began, we have received 12 lakh new applications for Ujjwala connections, along with numerous applications for Suraksha Bima Yojana, Jeevan Jyoti Yojana, and PM SVANidhi, Modi reported.

Highlighting the Yatra's impact, the Prime Minister mentioned health checkups for over two crore people, including one crore TB checkups and 22 lakh sickle cell checkups. Doctors are reaching the doorsteps of the poor, Dalits, deprived, and tribals, overcoming challenges faced by previous governments, Modi said. He emphasised Ayushman Yojna, providing ₹5 lakh health insurance, free dialysis, and low-cost medicines at Jan Aushadhi Kendras. "Ayushman Aarogya Mandirs across the country have become significant health centres for villages and the poor."

Modi underscored the government's impact on women empowerment, citing loans through the Mudra Yojna, women serving as Bank Mitras, Pashu Sakhis, and Asha workers. Over the last decade, 10 crore women have joined self-help groups, receiving over ₹7.5 lakh crore. As a result, many sisters have become 'Lakshpati Didis.'

Swindlers invoke business tycoons to con gullible

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A massive fraud is underway through social media, aiming to deceive gullible Indians of their hard-earned savings. The modus operandi of these fly-by-night operators is to exploit the words of industrialist Ratan Tata and corporate wizards NR Narayana Murthy and Nandan Nilekani, who are allegedly endorsing a business proposal by a company called BTC Ai Evex. This company claims to be an automated trading platform aimed at improving the lives of regular Indians. Vijay Mohan Valiathan, a leading chartered

accountant in Kerala, told *The Pioneer* that the entire operation reeks of a major financial scam and deceit. The company, BTC Ai Evex, in advertisements disguised as news reports, quotes Narayana Murthy addressing an investors' meeting (with the date and place of the meeting remaining a mystery) and attributes to him the statement: "BTC Ai Evex is our brainchild, offering substantial earning potential for countless Indians."

The advertisement, presenting itself as a news report, claims that the publication featuring the news decided to revisit a few

details related to investing on Narayana Murthy's platform and contacted the entrepreneur on the same day. The dubious report posted on the portal of a leading newspaper based in New Delhi states, "Before doing so, we agreed that we were entitled to publish an interview for our publication. So now readers can listen to our call with exclusive information." "We began creating an account on the official BTC Ai Evex website. The process, taking a mere 90 seconds, revealed a reduced minimum deposit, confirming Murthy's claims. With ₹21,000 deposited, our video operator

Rahul Kumar was promptly assigned a personal manager who provided insights, even during the late evening hours.

"The following day witnessed a surge in our balance to ₹32,385, a revelation that left our team astounded. Engaging our personal manager, we delved into understanding BTC Ai Evex operations. Bolstered by this confidence, we tested the platform's withdrawal process, successfully transferring funds to our video operator Rahul Kumar's bank account within minutes. The statement of accounts issued by the public sector Bank of India has been posted to substantiate their claim.

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8.01.2024	Odia Melodies Dedicated to Late Akshaya Mohanty & Late Sikandar Alam
9.01.2024	Folk Dance Chhau • Dhamsa Dance • Bajasal Dance Gotipua Dance by Department of Culture
10.01.2024	Sambalpuri Nights by Mantu Chhuria
11.01.2024	Odia melody by Susmita Das, Kuldeep Pattnaik and Group
12.01.2024	Singari – Tribal folk • Talabadya – Folk Dance, Bhajana Sandhya (Mahaprasad Kar, Subas Das, Manmath Mishra, Geeta Das • Prince Dance Group
13.01.2024	Fashion Show on Odisha Handloom
14.01.2024	Musical Night by Mohd. Faiz
15.01.2024	Closing & Validation Ceremony Odia Band (Vighnanz)

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Facile victory

Sheikh Hasina wins fourth term as Bangladesh PM, Opposition gives poll a miss

The just-concluded election in neighbouring Bangladesh, notable for yet another boycott by the Opposition, saw the Awami League emerging victorious and Sheikh Hasina securing a landmark fourth term as the Prime Minister. The poll, however, remains embroiled in controversy over allegations of lack of fairness levelled by the Khaleda Zia-led main Opposition, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The election was held against the backdrop of violence during the campaign. Though the Awami League secured 222 of the 300 seats, it is interesting to note that no party came second; the 'independents' --- Awami League's own candidates who were allowed to contest the poll to give it the semblance of a "competition" --- finished as runners-up. While 63 such 'independents' made it to the House, the third largest party in the country, the Jatiya Party, could win just 11 seats. It will be interesting to see who is anointed the official Opposition in Parliament. The fate of the poll was decided the day the BNP, the arch-rival of the Awami League, announced its decision to boycott the election. In her win, Hasina has defeated not only the Opposition but also democracy. However, it goes to her credit that Bangladesh has emerged as a strong economy and the abject poverty it once had has been considerably reduced. However, her Government has faced criticism for alleged human rights abuses and its crackdown on the Opposition. Hasina's career has been characterised by a mix of economic development initiatives and political dominance, and the Awami League has been in power since 2009.



A robust democratic system relies on a healthy Opposition to ensure checks and balances. The absence of a formidable Opposition can potentially impact the democratic fabric of Bangladesh, leading to concerns about the concentration of power in the hands of one political party. Hasina's supporters argue that her leadership has been pivotal in driving economic growth and social progress, justifying the measures taken to secure her victory. International observers and human rights organisations have, however, raised concerns about the fairness of the electoral proceedings. The Government's control over key institutions and the media has also been criticised for limiting the space for dissent. Back home, the victory of Hasina is good news as she is a known supporter of India and enjoys good rapport with the Indian Prime Minister. Bangladesh holds strategic importance for India due to shared historical, cultural and economic ties. The bilateral relationship has seen positive developments in recent years in areas such as trade, security and connectivity. Hasina's continued leadership is likely to maintain stability and foster cooperative endeavours between India and Bangladesh. For its part, India must convince her to allow space to the Opposition and let the democratic institutions run independently. It would be good for her and Bangladesh in the long run.

PICTALK



Devotees participate in a 'Ram Rath Yatra' ahead of the consecration ceremony of Ayodhya Ram temple, in Ranchi

Policy reforms crucial to make India a manufacturing hub

India requires a comprehensive and coordinated effort from the Government and industry players to become global manufacturing hub

With the swift expansion of India's manufacturing sector, the country is poised to become a leading global manufacturing force. Currently positioned among the top three preferred global manufacturing locations, India has the potential to boost its exports to an impressive \$1 trillion USD by 2030. [1] However, within the spectrum of various supply chains, the challenges and opportunities of Indian manufacturing are evident in the wooden pallet sector. To consolidate its position in the pallet industry, essential policy reforms are necessary for sustainable growth and global leadership. Infrastructure Development



In the era of increasing environmental awareness, sustainable and eco-friendly manufacturing practices are becoming imperative. The government should encourage manufacturers to adopt green technologies and sustainable processes by providing incentives and enforcing regulations that promote environmental responsibility. This not only aligns with global trends but also enhances the reputation of Indian products in international markets.

Simplified Regulations: The regulatory environment in India is complex, and businesses face bureaucratic hurdles. Streamlining regulations and creating a more business-friendly environment will encourage investment and growth in the manufacturing

sector. Implementing a single-window system for approvals, clearances, and licenses can facilitate ease of doing business.

Skilled Labour Development: India's education system needs to adapt to the changing needs of the economy by providing relevant skills training. Addressing the shortage of skilled workers in the manufacturing sector is crucial for its growth. The government should focus on creating appropriate skill sets among the workforce to meet the demands of modern manufacturing.

Government schemes: The government has introduced Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes to promote domestic manufacturing and increase India's share of global exports. These schemes encourage investments in manufacturing and provide incentives for various sectors, contributing to the growth of the manufacturing industry.

Trade Policies and Foreign Investment: India's trade policies and foreign investment regulations play a significant role in attracting global manufacturers. The government should continue to

focus on policies that promote domestic manufacturing, reduce import dependence, and encourage foreign investment in the manufacturing sector.

Tax Reforms
A competitive and stable tax regime is essential for attracting investment. India needs to rationalise its tax structure, ensuring that it is transparent and predictable. Reducing corporate tax rates, providing incentives for research and development, and promoting innovation through tax breaks will encourage manufacturing companies to invest and operate in India.

Conclusion: By implementing the suggested policy reforms, India can create an environment conducive to manufacturing growth, attract investments, and position itself as a key player in the global manufacturing landscape. The success of these reforms will not only boost the economy but also create employment opportunities and enhance India's standing in the world of international trade and commerce.

(The writer is CEO of Jay Wood Industry, views are personal)



JAY SHAH

Will Modi magic work in the south?

Can the enormous popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi help the Bharatiya Janata Party achieve electoral success in the southern states?

The Party is seeking to gain more voters in the challenging southern region. Its presence is limited in states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. Since it has already peaked in the northern states, the BJP needs to secure more seats in the South. Last week, Modi began his election campaign for the 2024 elections in the southern states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Lakshadweep. He also inaugurated several multi-crore projects.

The BJP has access to unlimited funds and has well-organised party workers on the ground. To achieve the Party's objective, 40 central ministers had been fielded in the South. In Telangana, the Bharatiya Rashtriya Samithi (BRS) has been present since its establishment in 2014 but recently lost the State to Congress. Kerala is ruled by Congress or Left-led fronts, while Tamil Nadu alternates between Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in Karnataka, Janata Dal (Secular), Congress, and BJP have all had a turn in power. Several factors influence voters in the region. They include caste, money, power, ideology, cinema, and liquor. In Tamil Nadu, political figures such as CN Annadurai, M Karunanidhi, MGR, and Jayalithaa have significantly influenced voters. In the past, N.T. Rama Rao played a crucial role in united Andhra Pradesh. However, the B.J.P. currently lacks prominent leaders in the southern states. With the passing of influential leaders like M Karunanidhi and Jayalithaa, the BJP is trying to fill the political void.

The BJP won 29 of the 130 regional seats in the 2019 elections, including 25 in Karnataka and four in Telangana. However, the Party lost the state to the Congress in last year's assembly polls.

The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) was a significant ally of the BJP. However, they ended their alliance three months ago, and neither Party has attempted to reconcile since then.



The southern states of India are known for their unique cultures. One noticeable difference is the language divide between the North and South. While Hindi is the preferred language in the North, the South predominantly uses English and local languages. Dravidian Parties in Tamil Nadu oppose the use of Hindi and follow an atheistic ideology. On the other hand, Kerala has a robust communist presence and alternates between Left Front and Congress-led coalitions.

The method of using population as a measure for constituency delimitation has led to the South feeling mistreated. This is because the population control measures implemented by Southern states have resulted in a decline in population compared to the North, leading to a sense of unfairness. As a result, the North, which has yet to enforce any population control measures, will be allocated more parliamentary constituencies than the South.

A possible solution to address the delimitation issue is to consider changing the composition of the Rajya Sabha.

RELIGION IS NOT A MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE IN SOUTH INDIA. THE BJP'S VIEWS ON CHRISTIAN CONVERSIONS OR HOSTILITY TOWARDS ISLAM HAVE YET TO GAIN ANY TRACTION IN THE REGION

This can be inspired by the US Senate's approach of guaranteeing equal representation of all states. However, this proposal could face resistance from bigger states in the US. Prime Minister Modi is attempting to change the perception that the BJP is not aligned with the culture of South India. The BJP must still reach a mutual understanding with Southern states. The opposition coalition, INDIA, controls most of the Southern States. They are determined to unseat Modi in 2024.

The BJP has a strong focus on Hindutva, the construction of the Ayodhya Ram temple, and an anti-Muslim stance. However, these views may be less popular among voters in southern regions of India. The Opposition parties like DMK, AIADMK, TDP, and BRS hold dominant positions in their respective states. Specific communities such as Vanniyars, Thevans, and Gounders have influential roles in Tamil Nadu. In Karnataka, Vokkaligas and Lingayats have influence, while Reddys and Kammas are rivals in Andhra Pradesh. However, Brahmins have lost

power. In Kerala, Communists opposed the rival Congress in the state, which is also a member of the INDIA coalition. In Telangana, K. Chandrababu Naidu, a Velama leader, held sway, but in 2023, Congress snatched the state. Religion is not a major political issue in South India. The BJP's views on Christian conversions or hostility towards Islam have yet to gain any traction in the region. The southern states have not experienced any religious conflicts. This is because the minorities have assimilated themselves with the local population. For the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to gain success in South India, they need to adapt to the local cultural norms and political strategies. They must form alliances and regain the support of former partners. To achieve this, the BJP should revise its election strategy and develop a new narrative. Failing to do so will result in the opposition coalition INDIA becoming stronger and posing a significant threat to the BJP.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GOVERNOR CANNOT DISMISS MINISTER

Sir — A Governor is the Head of the State, and a Chief Minister is the Head of the Government. The governor is bound by the advice of the council of ministers headed by the Chief Minister. The Supreme Court has correctly observed that a Governor is not vested with powers to dismiss a minister. When the law and order of a state break down, making it impossible to run the government by the provisions of the Constitution, the Governor can recommend the President's rule in the state. During President's rule, the Governor rules the state on behalf of the President. All authorities vested in the hands of a Chief Minister are transferred to the Governor during this period. Essentially, during President's rule, the Governor assumes the role of a Chief Minister. While the Governor administers the oath of office to the Chief Minister, they have no authority to dismiss the Chief Minister or their ministers. Governors, the Attorney General the Council of Ministers, and the Prime Minister hold office at the pleasure of the President, and the Chief Minister and their Ministers hold office at the pleasure of the Governor. In practice, the President acts at the pleasure of the Prime Minister, and the Governor acts at the pleasure of the Chief Minister.

The President and the Governors of states cannot withhold assent to a Bill. The Constitution does not grant any powers to the President to act unilaterally, even when the interest of the nation demands. While a Prime Minister cannot sign a Bill into law, the President cannot refuse to sign. The President or Governor can return the Bill with observations for reconsideration. The Supreme Court, in the case of Senthil Balaji, has ruled that a Governor cannot dismiss a minister. This ruling aligns exactly with the provisions of the Constitution. However, prima facie, the term "pleasure" appears perplexing. Both the Prime Minister and Chief Minister function when they enjoy the pleasure of the majority of the MPs and MLAs.

K V Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

WORLD DAY OF WAR ORPHANS 2024



Every year on January 6th, the World Day of War Orphans is commemorated. The purpose of the day is to raise public awareness concerning children who have become orphaned as a result of wars. The World Day of War Orphans spread information about their plight and emphasised the psychological, social, and physical obstacles that children experience as

they grow up it is clear that civilians in several nations around the globe have become victims of the war. Amongst them, the children are the silent victims. Millions of children have grown up in war zones, and ethnic strife with no families. The orphans are forced to not only look after themselves but their younger siblings too. Palestinian children have been killed by Israeli forces in Gaza since October 7, the government's media office says. Thousands more are missing under the rubble amid relentless bombardment and it is sad. Many children lost their parents and lived in relief camps for survival. In conclusion, World Day of War Orphans 2024 is a day of both reflection and action. It's a day to stand in solidarity with those who have lost their families to war and to work towards a future where no child has to bear the scars of conflict.

C K Subramaniam | Chennai

SHORTEST TEST MATCH

Sir — India defeated South Africa by 7 wickets in the second and last Test match, leveling the series 1-1. The bowlers dominated the match, which concluded in just two days. Bumrah and Siraj each took six wickets. With this, a new record has been set in Test cricket history. This is the shortest Test match in cricket history in terms of total balls played. The Cape Town Test concluded in just 642 balls (107 overs in total). India became the first Asian team to win a Test match against South Africa in Cape Town. This is a promising start for Team India in the new year. We hope this momentum continues and India will triumph in the T20 World Cup. Players should continue practicing, as the more they practice, the better they will perform.

Mohammad Taukirk | Champaran

ALASKA EMERGENCY

Sir — The Alaska emergency is a new threat to the airline industry and poses imminent danger in mid-air. An Alaska Airlines flight traveling from Portland, Oregon, to

Ontario, California, had to make an emergency landing after a portion of the aircraft blew out mid-air. The aircraft reached approximately 16,000 feet about six minutes into the flight before beginning its descent. The jet had 174 passengers and six crew members aboard.

In a statement provided to CBS News, Alaska Airlines said that Flight No. 1282 experienced an incident soon after departure and "landed safely back" in Portland, but it was a miraculous escape for the passengers on board. This type of aircraft comes equipped with a rear emergency exit door, mainly used by international airlines, and has a seat configuration that allows for more passengers on the plane. Most US airlines don't use that configuration and design the area to appear as a window from the inside of the aircraft. Somehow, the plane averted disaster, and the pilot deserves all credit.

C K Ramani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A JEALOUS AND POSSESSIVE MIND

Human minds have fallen prey to the traits of jealousy, envy and possessiveness



RAVI VALLURI

There were twenty theatre enthusiasts of a college who participated in the audition for staging the annual college day play. All six roles were up for grabs, which included one female and five male characters.

As a safety valve, the well-feted and cerebral director handpicked one additional female lead and two male characters. The first choice was a female lead who was attractive, vivacious and bubbling with talent. She felt wretched sharing stage space with another plucky woman. Her covetous and jealous mind, instead of concentrating on the character and performance, kept plotting strategies to run down her perceived opponent, much to the consternation of the director. At his wife's end, the director opted for the alternative and assigned her to the lead role. The tempestuous woman burning with envy was clearly responsible for the loss.

Companies, countries and communities have all become wary of the material success of their 'competitors' and in the process compromise with their goals and objectives. Consequently, they resort to shortcuts in order to emerge triumphant and victorious. "You can be the moon and still be jealous of the stars," writes the American musician Garry Allen. The attribute of jealousy arises in an individual when the mind is possessive of certain belongings. Interestingly, envy in many also arises out of shortages. There can be a lack of aptitude, talent, resources, connections, opportunities, or because of unfavourable outcomes. Individuals subsumed by jealousy build walls of possessiveness and false security walls around their personalities. Such minds feel cheery about their possessions.



As per the epic, The Mahabharata, Karna was extremely jealous of Arjuna, which eventually proved to be his nemesis. The jealous and possessive mind is acquisitive by nature, taking both animate and inanimate objects for granted and getting attached to things like an addiction to alcohol or marijuana. For instance, in the case of the college theatre mentioned earlier, the more talented actress became fearful and was gripped with hatred and greed. Jealous and envious minds have become laboratories of antagonism that spew hatred. How do we overcome attributes such as jealousy, envy and possessiveness? At one end of the spectrum are organizations and authorities which need to take up this responsibility. This includes proper parenting, where children are brought up on ideals of inherent goodness, an effective educational system that imparts values as part of their pedagogy, governments that take up the responsibility of providing equal opportunities to the citizens and make an attempt to carve out an egalitarian system, and a society that addresses the core issues of humaneness amongst its citizenry. Vasudeva Kutumbakam is the net result.

This may appear altruistic but is an effort to restore some semblance of sanity in society, which otherwise is plagued by avarice and jealousy. The spiritual touch is an important colour in the rainbow of goodness. One can practice any faith, but we need to be tolerant of other peoples' points of view. Spirituality succeeds where religions draw the fault lines and wave red flags. Globalisation has made the world flat, but has resulted in an exponential increase in crass commercialization and human minds have fallen prey to the traits of jealousy, envy and possessiveness. The vicious tendencies of jealousy and possessiveness can be tackled by following the two-fold approach highlighted so that the chasm between individuals diminishes.

Manifest plainness, Embrace simplicity, Reduce selfishness, Have few desires — Lao Tzu

(Ravi Valluri is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and is a faculty of the Art of Living. Views are personal)

Hiring based on skills is now a standard practice



DINESH SOOD

As India enters this transformative phase in hiring practices, both employers and job seekers need to embrace the opportunities presented by skills-based hiring



The job market in India is constantly changing, and we are now witnessing a significant shift towards skills-based hiring. The old-fashioned approach to hiring, which relied on academic qualifications and work experience, is giving way to a more dynamic method that prioritizes specific skills. The new skills-first approach enables professionals to explore unconventional career pathways and places greater emphasis on their abilities rather than their educational background. This shift reflects a wider recognition that skills, rather than just degrees, are the key to success in today's highly competitive job market.

A skills-first hiring approach gives priority to a candidate's practical abilities over traditional qualifications. This trend is growing rapidly in India as employers realize the value of diverse skill sets. It is relevant today because it provides equal opportunities for all, allowing talent to shine beyond academic labels. The advantages of this approach include a more inclusive job market and the ability to tap into hidden talent.

This approach values merit over formalities, enabling professionals from diverse backgrounds to contribute on a global scale. Every foreign job market has a specific skill shortage that they are looking to fill, and this approach helps to fill that gap. According to a report titled 'The State of Skills-Based Hiring 2023', 86 per cent of employees believe that they are more likely to secure their dream job when the hiring process includes skills-based hiring. The latest data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is alarming: a whopping 86% of individuals aged between 15 and 59 years have not received any form of vocational training. This is unacceptable! It is high time that we focus our efforts on converting this pool of individuals into skilled human capital.

The current trend in hiring prioritizes skills. Therefore, high schools and post-secondary education institutions must design their curriculum to focus on these skills. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 rightly emphasizes the need for standardized vocational training courses in high schools, with a range of experiences aimed at developing a bundle of skill competencies.

To achieve the goal set by the NEP of



THE LATEST DATA FROM THE PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY (PLFS) IS ALARMING: A WHOPPING 86% OF INDIVIDUALS AGED BETWEEN 15 AND 59 YEARS HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY FORM OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING

increasing the gross enrolment ratio in higher education, including vocational education, to 50% by 2035, further action is needed. This requires the addition of 3.5 crore new seats to higher education institutions (HEIs) and focusing on a flexible curriculum with creative combinations of subjects. We must integrate vocational education with mainstream education and allow for multiple entries and exits with appropriate certification. To provide our students with the best possible skills, it is imperative to establish Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) at par with the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

However, accurately assessing these skills may pose challenges. Nevertheless, the future outlook suggests continued growth, fostering innovation and adaptability in a workforce where skills, not just degrees, define success. This reflects a dynamic shift towards meritocracy in the evolving employment landscape. The growing integration of advanced technologies like generative AI, machine learning, cloud computing, and data science across these sectors drives the trend. As these technologies continue to propel business and alter business operations, the demand for upskilling in technology remains robust. Companies are increasingly seeking professionals with specific skills to fill key roles in areas such as valuation analysis, financial research, investor relations management, and risk analysis within this domain.

Skills-first hiring is a new approach that is dismantling traditional barriers to offer global work opportunities irrespective of educational background or regional certifications. For instance, a cyber security expert equipped with practical knowledge and certifications can now find doors opening abroad, as security needs transcend geograph-

ical confines.

IBM India has adopted a 'skill-first' approach where college degrees do not matter. In 2012, IBM implemented this approach in the US by removing the four-year college degree requirement from about 50% of its jobs. Ten years later, 29% of the present IBM US workforce in hardware, software, and consulting does not have a college degree. However, companies like Oracle had 100%, followed by Intel (94%), HP (92%), and Apple (90%). A study conducted between 2017 and 2022 showed that US employers reduced degree requirements for 46% of middle-skill positions and 31% of high-skill positions. Various studies highlight that for the job of software quality-assurance engineer, only 26% of Accenture's postings for the position contained a degree requirement.

The rise of skills-based hiring can be attributed to several factors, each contributing to a more comprehensive and efficient employment ecosystem. One of the key drivers is the fast-paced evolution of technology, which has made some skill sets obsolete while creating an insatiable demand for new ones. As industries digitize and automate, employers are looking for candidates who have the technical expertise required to navigate this new world.

Skills-based hiring is not only about technical prowess but also about fostering inclusivity in the workplace. By focusing on skills, employers can tap into a broader talent pool, breaking down barriers related to age, gender, or educational background. This approach enables individuals with non-traditional career trajectories to showcase their abilities, ultimately leading to a more diverse and innovative workforce. In a country as diverse as India, this inclusive hiring model is crucial for unlocking the full potential of the population. It allows for the recognition and utilisation of a rich tapestry of skills that may be over-

looked in a more rigid, qualification-centric system.

When individuals are hired based on their skills instead of solely on academic qualifications, there is a higher likelihood of job satisfaction and engagement. Employees who feel that their skills are valued are more likely to invest in their professional development, leading to a continuous improvement loop. This paradigm shift challenges the traditional notion that a candidate's potential is solely based on their educational background. It acknowledges that skills are dynamic, and the ability to learn and adapt is highly valued in today's fast-paced work environment.

As India transitions to this transformative phase in hiring practices, both employers and job seekers need to embrace the opportunities presented by skills-based hiring. Job seekers should focus on acquiring and showcasing relevant skills, whether through formal education, online courses, or on-the-job experience. Employers, on the other hand, should refine their recruitment processes to ensure that they identify and nurture the diverse talents that the Indian workforce has to offer.

In conclusion, skills-based hiring in India marks a pivotal moment in the country's employment landscape. It is a departure from traditional norms, a response to technological evolution, and a step toward a more inclusive and dynamic professional future. As India continues to embrace this shift, the workforce will be characterised not just by degrees but by a mosaic of skills that power innovation and drive success in an ever-changing global economy.

(The writer is a Co-Founder and MD of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and a Network Member of India International Skill Centres. Views expressed are personal)

Confronting cancer: Are we winning the war against it?

With the growing incidents of cancer, it is crucial for health authorities to prioritise early detection, cost-effective treatment and preventive measures

Cancer, often referred to as the "emperor of maladies," continues to be a formidable challenge for medical researchers and scientists worldwide. Despite significant advancements in the field of medicine and biomedical science, cancer remains a relentless adversary, and its burden is escalating rapidly in India. India is facing a mounting crisis, with alarming statistics indicating a surge in cancer cases and mortality rates. As we delve into the current scenario, it becomes evident that immediate action is imperative to strengthen cancer care infrastructure, improve early detection and enhance preventive measures. The cancer burden in India is reaching unprecedented levels.



BISHAL KUMAR SAHA

According to a recent report presented in Parliament, there were 14.61 lakh cancer cases detected in 2022, an increase of 35,000 cases from the previous year. Even more concerning is the mortality rate, with 8.08 lakh patients succumbing to cancer in 2022 compared to 7.89 lakh in 2021. The projections estimate a staggering 29.8 million cancer patients in

India by 2025. These figures paint a bleak picture, sounding an alarm for both healthcare authorities and the general public. Despite improvements in cancer treatment, the incidence of cancer and mortality rates persistently rise in India. The country faces multiple challenges in combatting cancer effectively. The most prevalent types of cancer in India include breast, lung, colon, rectum and prostate cancer. Moreover, India has one of the highest mortality-to-incidence ratios for cancer globally, indicating a need for early detection and accessible treatment facilities. The actual incidence of cancer in India could be significantly higher than the official figures, as highlighted by a

2022 study conducted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young (FICCI-EY). This suggests that the situation is more dire than what the statistics portray, making it all the more urgent to address this issue promptly. One of the central issues contributing to the cancer crisis in India is the lack of easy access to specialized hospitals equipped with experienced oncologists and state-of-the-art machinery. Timely detection of the disease and affordable treatment are critical factors that need immediate attention.

The government must prioritize the establishment of cancer institutes and tertiary care centres to cater to the



growing demand for quality cancer care. While the public healthcare system is overburdened, private hospitals often provide treatments that are financially out of reach for many patients. Raising pub-

lic awareness about cancer detection and prevention is a key aspect of tackling this crisis effectively. Beyond the well-known risk factors such as tobacco and alcohol consumption, obesity and seden-

tary lifestyles, environmental factors also play a significant role in the rising disease burden. For instance, the consumption of processed and packaged foods with preservatives has been linked to cancer. Promoting healthy habits, including regular exercise, can be instrumental in reducing cancer risk.

Among women of reproductive age, breast and cervical cancers are the leading causes of cancer-related mortality. These cancers, however, are largely preventable through early screening and timely interventions. Public health campaigns aimed at encouraging regular screenings and educating women about the importance of early detection can save many lives. Cancer continues to cast a

dark shadow over India's healthcare landscape.

As the cancer burden increases, it becomes vital for health authorities to focus on early detection, affordable treatment and preventive measures. The establishment of specialized hospitals coupled with heightened public awareness campaigns, can significantly alleviate the challenges posed by cancer. The time for action is now, as India must stand united in its fight against the dreaded emperor of maladies. Only through collective efforts, we can hope to turn the tide and provide a brighter future for cancer patients in the country.

(The writer studies at Delhi University and is a freelance writer, views are personal)

Muizzu to sign pacts to bolster ties with China

PTI ■ BEIJING

Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu arrived in China on Monday on a five-day state visit during which he is due to hold talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping and sign several agreements to bolster the bilateral ties.

Muizzu, who is regarded as "pro-China", is accompanied by his wife Sajidha Mohamed and a high-level delegation. The President and the First Lady were greeted by senior Chinese officials upon their arrival in the country. They visited the Xiamen Free Trade Zone in China's Fujian province after their arrival. Representatives from the Xiamen Free Trade Zone presented an introductory video. Following the presentation, the President and the First Lady took a tour and inquired about significant areas in the zone.

Muizzu's maiden visit to China, however, has been marred by a huge diplomatic row triggered by the derogatory remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi by some Maldivian ministers after he posted a video of him on a pristine beach during his visit

to Lakshadweep. The Maldivian envoy to India was on Monday summoned to the external affairs ministry and conveyed strong concern over remarks. Muizzu is due to hold talks with Chinese President Xi and sign several agreements to bolster the bilateral ties, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin.

"The relations between China and the Maldives now stand at a new historical starting point. We believe that through this visit, the two heads of state will provide strategic guidance for the bilateral relations to reach a new height," Wang told the media on January 5.

During President Muizzu's visit, the Maldives and China will hold official talks and sign key agreements to enhance trade, professional development, and socioeconomic cooperation, the Maldivian President's Office said in a press release.

The visit will also pave the way for collaborations in technology and other areas between the two countries, it said. Muizzu will also attend the Invest Maldives Forum in the southeastern Chinese city of



Fuzhou, China and meet with senior Chinese business leaders to explore avenues for strengthening socioeconomic relations between the Maldives and China, it said.

Muizzu's predecessors in the recent past visited India first, considering the wide-ranging bilateral ties and the Maldives' proximity to India, followed by China which has expanded its influence in the island nation by investing in major infrastructure projects there.

Surprisingly Muizzu, who was sworn in as President in

November, chose Turkiye as his first destination for a foreign visit soon after his election followed by the UAE where he met Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) on December 1 and discussed the progress of the wide-ranging bilateral ties.

During the meeting, both leaders agreed to set up a core group to discuss the multi-dimensional relations and further deepen ties. The meeting took place after Muizzu requested New Delhi to with-

draw 77 Indian military personnel from the Maldives and decided to review more than 100 bilateral agreements between the two countries.

Earlier, Muizzu's government announced its plans to drop a hydrographic survey agreement with India. In December, the new Maldives Vice President Hussain Mohamed Latheef visited China, his first visit abroad, and took part in the China-sponsored China-Indian Ocean Region Forum on Development Cooperation, (CIORF) in Kunming.

Significantly, while praising Chinese infrastructure projects, Latheef made no mention of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) under which most of the Maldives' infrastructure projects were built.

The BRI is an ambitious plan initiated by President Xi in 2013 to develop new trade routes connecting China with the rest of the world via land and maritime networks to improve regional integration, increase trade and stimulate economic growth.

Observers say Muizzu's foreign policy perhaps is still evolving as the Maldives domestic political situation has

undergone a major change after his election in November last year. Soon after his election Muizzu fell out with former pro-China President Yameen, regarded as his mentor, and opted to pursue his own foreign and domestic policy.

Under Yameen's Presidency, China carried out major infra projects amid allegations of debt traps by some influential politicians of the Maldives. Angry with Muizzu, Yameen, who is currently serving a prison sentence for corruption, quit the ruling Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) and formed his own political party called People's National Front (PNC) from jail to oppose Muizzu.

Also, the island's Parliament is currently dominated by the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) headed by Solih and the island nation is due to go to Parliamentary polls in April.

The Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and occupies a special place in its initiatives like SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the Neighbourhood First Policy' of the Modi government.

SC quashes life-long disqualification of Pak lawmakers

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Monday quashed the lifetime disqualification for lawmakers, ruling that parliamentarians would be barred from holding office for five years, in a major relief to leading politicians, including former prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan, ahead of the February 8 elections.

A 2018 judgment by a five-member bench of the apex court had declared that disqualification under Article 62(1)(f) was for life, but changes made in the Elections Act 2017 on June 26, 2023, by a coalition government led by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) restricted it to a five-year term only.

A seven-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, on Monday ruled that no person can be barred for a lifetime from running in elections if they are disqualified under Article 62 (1)(f).

The bench with a 6 to 1 split judgment abolished the lifetime disqualification and thus went against the judgment of its five-member bench which in 2018 had ruled in favour of lifetime disqualification. The bench comprising Chief Justice Isa and Justices Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Yahya Afridi, Aminuddin Khan, Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Musarrat Hili had reserved judgment on Friday after concluding hearing of multiple petitions.

Justice Afridi differed from the other six judges and wrote a note of dissent in favour of life-long disqualification. The verdict has determined once and for all the controversy around the period of disqualification under Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution and the Elections Act 2017.

Sharif, the 74-year-old former prime minister and also a frontrunner for the fourth term in the February 8 general elections, was disqualified in the Panama Papers case in

2017. His rival 71-year-old Imran Khan, who was disqualified in the Tashkhana corruption case last year, also was hit by the same law. The outcome of the hearing has decided the political future of both Sharif and Khan as well as many other politicians.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader and former law minister Azam Nazir Tarar welcomed the judgment and said that it was long overdue. "The Supreme Court removed a discrepancy as the life-long ban was against the fundamental rights," he said. During the hearing spanning over several days, the court heard many lawyers in order to get various points of views on the duration of disqualification.

The remarks made by the chief justice and some other judges showed that they were not comfortable with the life-long ban on a convicted politician. However, it was not clear if the limit of disqualification should be imposed through a court order and an amendment in the constitution. Most of the arguments were in favour of nullifying the concept of life-long ban and limiting it to a five-year term. However, the chief justice repeatedly said that he also wanted to hear arguments in support of life-long disqualification and asked lawyers to come forward.

The issue came into the focus of the Supreme Court towards the end of 2023 during the hearing of a petition of Badshah Khan Qaisarani, who was disqualified for producing a fake graduation degree. During the hearing, the chief justice had remarked that the SC verdict on lifetime disqualification and the amendments made to the Elections Act, 2017 could not co-exist. He had further stated that discrepancies in the apex court's interpretation and the law could result in "confusion" in the upcoming general elections. On Thursday, Chief Justice Isa said that disqualifying anyone for life from Parliament is "against Islam".

SL Navy ready to despatch ship to Red Sea

Colombo (PTI): The Sri Lanka Navy on Monday said it is ready to send a naval ship to the Red Sea to combat the threat to merchant vessel lines by Houthi rebels, joining countries such as India, in protecting the key waterway for global trade. The announcement comes following last week's orders of President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who had declared the cost as Rs 250 million every fortnight.

The Iran-backed Houthi rebels have launched more than 20 attacks on merchant ships in recent weeks, claiming to take revenge against Israel for its military campaign against Palestinian terror group Hamas in Gaza. These attacks have sharply raised goods' transportation costs between Asia and Europe. Newswire Lanka quoted Navy spokesman Captain Gayan Wickramasuriya as saying that but the exact date of deployment is yet to be confirmed. The vessels would be covering the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and connected sea lanes. Captain Wickramasuriya went on to say that initially one ship would be deployed as part of Operation Prosperity Guardians, the Naval operation underway at the Red Sea, and adjoining trade routes. "Discussions will be held and based on the warship's capability it will be deployed to any one of the sea lanes requiring protection from the Houthi rebels," the Newswire Lanka quoted him as saying.

He also stated that the deployment of more ships or swapping of ships will take place based on the current requirements and economic situation of Sri Lanka, and a discussion on the matter. Wickremesinghe, also the defence minister, has come under criticism for the decision at a time when the island was going through its economic crisis.

4 civilians killed in Ukraine in missile attacks

AP ■ KYIV

Russia launched its latest barrage of hypersonic and cruise missiles against Ukrainian targets early Monday, striking near the front lines of fighting in the east as well as in central and western parts of the country, officials said. At least four civilians were reported killed and at least 30 injured.

Western officials and analysts had previously warned that Russia was stockpiling its cruise missiles in preparation for a strategy of winter bombardment, as bad weather keeps the 1,500-kilometre (930-mile) front line largely static after 22 months of war. Unlike last winter, when the Kremlin's forces targeted Ukraine's power grid, Russia is now aiming at Kyiv's defence industry, they say. But the barrages have repeatedly hit civilian areas.

Monday's attacks struck a string of urban areas, including

housing and a shopping mall, across Ukraine. In the south-eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, a woman died in a missile attack outside the city of Kryvyi Rih and 24 people were injured in a strike on the town of Novomoskovsk.

In Kryvyi Rih itself, which is Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's home town, more than 20 houses and a shopping mall were damaged in the attack, said regional governor Serhii Lysak. At least four missiles hit Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, injuring one person, said mayor Ihor Terekhov. A woman rescued from the rubble of a building later died, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. More people may be trapped, he said.

Authorities in the Khmelnytskyi region said two people died as at least six explosions were heard during the morning missile attack. Meanwhile, Russian troops



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, emergency workers help a wounded man after a residential houses were badly damaged in a Russian missile attack, near Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine, on Monday

conducted 131 artillery attacks on the Kherson region, killing two people and injuring five, according to governor Oleksandr Prokudin.

Kherson and the surrounding region have been consistently targeted since Russian

forces withdrew from the city to the eastern side of the Dnipro in the autumn of 2022. In Zaporizhzhia, a major southern city along the Dnipro River, two people were injured in a missile strike on a residential district, said regional gov-

ernor Yuriy Malashko.

Two people injured in a January 2 attack died on Monday, officials said. The Ukrainian military said on Monday that Russian forces have made unsuccessful efforts to advance during the past day in several areas, including around Lyman in the Kharkiv region and in the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions. In the Russia-occupied Luhansk region in Ukraine's east, a Russian warplane accidentally released a bomb on the town of Rubizhne, said Leonid Pasechnik, head of the region's rebel government.

The bomb, an FAB-250 that carries a high-explosive warhead, did not cause injuries, Pasechnik said. The incident comes six days after Russia accidentally dropped munitions over the village of Petropavlovka in the Belgorod region that has come under repeated Ukrainian attack.

'I look after my people with motherly affection'

PTI ■ DHAKA

Newly-elected fifth-term Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday said she looks after her people with motherly affection but did not think her gender is any impediment to her work.

Refusing to be bracketed as a woman running the top office in Bangladesh, she said, "Actually when you run the country, you should not think about whether you are a man or a woman. "When I took over power, I had heard many things about it. But when I work, when I start working, I never thought I am a woman, I had restrictions, no," the 76-year-old leader told a press conference hours after winning the fourth consecutive victory with a decisive majority.

"I try to work for my people and yes, I can tell you one thing. A woman as a mother (they) look after families, look

after children, (I have) brought up children. With motherly affection, I look after my people. And I try to assist them and help them," she replied to a question about the restrictions she felt as a woman leading the country.

Wearing a pastel green saree, tackling questions with wit and a smile evoking laughter and appreciation, the Awami League leader responded to a question comparing her with other great women prime ministers or presidents from across the world, former prime ministers of India, Indira Gandhi, Sri Lanka's Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Israel's Golda Meir, disagreed.

"You mentioned about Mrs Gandhi, Sirimavo Bandarnayake or Golda Mier. They are very great ladies. I am not. I am very simple, just a common person. I feel I am just a common person," she said.

"I am not saying I have not



got much but one thing, I always feel (is) my responsibility for my people that I have to serve them. So I never felt that this is a position I have to run it no I felt this is an opportunity to serve my country, my

people, and ensure that they get a better life," she asserted.

Without betraying a hint of sadness, but with a pause, she also said: "I am in power... you know... the killer, they eliminated my entire family. My younger brother was only 10 years old. Perhaps they had in their mind that nobody from the family will come again in power. In August 1975, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his wife and their three sons were assassinated in their home by military officers. His daughters Hasina and Rehana survived the purge as they were abroad. "But yes, it is about people. Our people gave me this opportunity. Time and again, people are voting for me and I am here. I have survived many times and I think, Allah gave me this opportunity," Hasina, who won two-thirds of the seats in an election boycotted by the major opposition parties, added.

PTI says candidates to be announced within 24 hrs

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's beleaguered Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party on Monday said it would announce its candidates for the upcoming February 8 election within the next 24 hours.

Senator Ali Zafar from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party told Geo News that the party had issued the confirmation to 98-99 per cent of candidates vying to contest the election on a PTI ticket. He said a decision needed to be taken on merely two per cent of seats. "The approval has been given on who will contest elections on which seat. The candidates will be announced today or tomorrow," said Zafar.

He said the decision will be

announced after the Peshawar High Court (PHC) verdict. The PTI leader also shared that a large number of lawyers have been given tickets to contest the election. However, he clarified that there is no ratio of how many tickets were awarded to lawyers and workers of the party.

The general election in cash-strapped Pakistan is just a month away but political parties, except a few, have yet not finalised their list of candidates. Meanwhile, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is facing a difficult situation as it has been under pressure to accommodate PTI dissidents as well as the Istehkam Pakistan Party (IPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) in Punjab.

On the other hand, the

PTI has been demanding a level playing field, alleging that it is being targeted.

The former ruling party has also been struggling in connection with its election symbol — the cricket bat.

It has also approached the Supreme Court with a petition challenging the January 3 order of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) which stripped the party of its iconic election symbol. On January 3, the PHC revoked the stay order granted by its single-member bench and restored the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to declare PTI intra-party polls null and void. The PHC also stripped the PTI of its election symbol. The PTI, however, challenged the verdict in the top court.

Only 41.8% turnout in Bangladesh, least since 1991

Dhaka (PTI): Bangladesh's opposition-boycotted general election on Sunday that re-elected Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League for the fourth consecutive term registered a voter turnout of only 41.8 per cent, almost half compared to 2018 polls and the lowest since 1991.

"According to the final count, the figure stands at 41.8 per cent," Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal told a news briefing at his office on Monday. "If anyone doubts the number, you are most welcome to challenge it," Awal said. The main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by an ailing former prime minister Khaleda Zia, who is under house arrest on graft charges, had boycotted the polls calling it a "sham." According to data available for previous elections, the 2008

elections, which installed Hasina's Awami League (AL) to power, drew over 87 per cent votes. The subsequent 2014 polls, which were boycotted by BNP, drew over 40 per cent votes though Awami League candidates were elected uncontested in 153 out of the 300 seats. Over 80 per cent of voters turned out in the 2018 elections, the data showed.

The BNP which had boycotted the 2014 election joined the process in 2018, which the party leaders later said was a mistake and alleged the voting was marred with widespread rigging and intimidation. According to the final result, Awami League candidates secured 223 seats, the parliamentary opposition Jatiya Party (JAPA) got 11 and independent candidates including ruling party rebels bagged 61 in the 300-seat parliament.

B'desh main opp rejects 'dummy polls', demands fresh elections

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh's main opposition BNP, which boycotted Sunday's general elections swept by Sheikh Hasina's party, on Monday demanded the cancellation of the "dummy election" and the prime minister's resignation, questioning the accuracy of the voter turnout.

To mobilise public support for their demands, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party announced a two-day mass contact programme on Tuesday and Wednesday. The party also renewed its demand for a fresh election under a non-party polls-time government to establish a legitimate and accountable government.

Hasina's Awami League party won 223 seats in the 300-seat Parliament. Election was held for 299 seats. The election to one seat will be held later due to the death of

a candidate. The main opposition in Parliament, the Jatiya Party, got 11 seats, Bangladesh Kallyan party won in one constituency while independent candidates came out victorious in 62 seats. Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and the Workers Party of Bangladesh won one seat each.

Bangladesh's Election Commission on Monday said 41.8 per cent of the voters turned out to cast their votes. "According to the final count, the figure stands at 41.8 per cent," Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal told a news briefing at his office, adding if anyone doubts the number "you are most welcome to challenge it".

The BNP boycotted the elections and observed a strike on Sunday. Nazrul Islam Khan, another BNP standing committee member, said their party wanted to establish a government elected by peo-

ple's vote and accountable to them.

"A free and fair election is necessary for that, and that didn't happen yesterday. So, people have turned down this election. Everyone is saying the voter turnout which was shown was fake," he said.

"So, BNP and other political parties who are on a movement for the restoration of democracy demand the immediate cancellation of the dummy election of January 7, resignation of Sheikh Hasina and formation of a polls-time non-party neutral government for holding a national election," Nazrul said.

He also said people's ownership of the state must be restored and all enforced disappearance, killing, and ghost cases must be stopped and people will have to be protected from his repressive regime.

"These are now people's demands. We congratulate

and thank people as they made sacrifices in the face of various pressures and allurements and foiled the government's evil efforts to show a huge turnout by taking them to the voting centres.

BNP Standing Committee member Abdul Moyeen Khan said the country's people unilaterally and spontaneously rejected Sunday's election.

On behalf of the parties that called for boycotting the polls, he congratulated the people of the country for turning down the election. He also said the government failed to take voters to the polling stations despite various threats and intimidation.

"There was no voting and election on January 7. What happened was vote robbery and vote rigging," the BNP leader said. The party has been saying no election under the current government would be fair and credible.

US designates China, Pakistan as 'Countries of Particular Concern'

New York (PTI): The US has designated China, North Korea and Pakistan as "Countries of Particular Concern" for engaging in and tolerating "particularly severe violations of religious freedom."

Announcing the Religious Freedom Designations, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that advancing the freedom of religion or belief has been a core objective of US foreign policy ever since Congress passed and enacted the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998. As part of that "enduring commitment", Blinken said last week that he has designated Burma, China, Cuba, North Korea, Eritrea, Iran, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as "Countries of Particular Concern" for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom. "In addition,

he designated Algeria, Azerbaijan, the Central African Republic, Comoros, and Vietnam as Special Watch List countries for engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom. Blinken also designated al-Shabab, Boko Haram, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Houthis, ISIS-Sahel, ISIS-West Africa, al-Qa'ida affiliate Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin, and the Taliban as "Entities of Particular Concern."

The top US diplomat further noted that significant violations of religious freedom also occur in countries that are not designated. "Governments must end abuses such as attacks on members of religious minority communities and their places of worship, communal violence and lengthy imprisonment for peaceful expression, transnational repression, and calls to violence against religious communities," Blinken said.

Blinken brings US push on post-war Gaza planning

AP ■ ABU DHABI

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has opened his third day of meetings on an urgent Mideast diplomatic mission to prevent Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza from exploding into a broader regional conflict.

Blinken was meeting Monday with United Arab Emirates leader Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed before travelling to Saudi Arabia for talks with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman aimed at enlisting the key Arab leaders in a push to not only keep the war contained but also prepare for post-conflict Gaza's future.

With Sheikh Mohammed in Abu Dhabi Blinken "emphasised the importance of preventing further spread of the conflict and stressed continued US commitment to securing lasting regional peace that ensures Israel's security and advances the establishment of an independent Palestinian

state", the State Department said.

Blinken arrived in Abu Dhabi from similar meetings in Qatar, Jordan, Turkey and Greece, where he claimed at least modest success in his mission with pledges from those countries to consider contributing to the effort to plan for Gaza's reconstruction and governance once the fighting has ended.

Gaza has been decimated by three months of Israeli bombardments that have sparked anger around the world for the massive damage and huge number of civilian casualties. Financial and in-kind support from the UAE and Saudi Arabia will be essential to the success of any such plan and US officials said Blinken on his fourth trip to the region since the war began in October hoped to overcome initial Arab resistance to considering "day after" scenarios for Gaza.

Arab countries have been pressing for an immediate

cease-fire and an end to civilian deaths before discussing such plans.

But after his first meetings on his latest tour, Blinken said he had been speaking with officials about contributions they could make to post-war plans and about using their influence to tamp down resurgent fears that the conflict could expand and potentially draw in direct US involvement. "This is a conflict that could easily metastasize, causing even more insecurity and even more suffering," Blinken told reporters during a joint news conference in Doha with Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

"So from day one, among other priorities, we have been intensely focused on working to prevent the conflict from spreading," he said. "We share a commitment to ensure that the conflict does not expand." He said his talks had also included "not necessarily easy discussions" of what each country can do once the con-

flict is over "to provide the assurances and the incentives required to build a more secure and more stable, more peaceful future for the region."

"And my takeaway from the discussions so far, including here with our friends in Qatar, is that our partners are willing to have these difficult conversations and to make hard decisions. All of us feel a stake in forging the way forward," Blinken said.

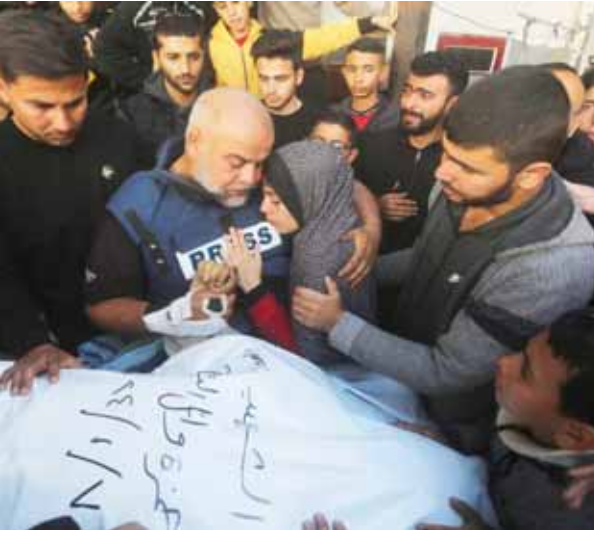
Arab states have been highly critical of Israel's actions and have eschewed public support for long-term planning, arguing that the fighting must end before such discussions can begin. They have been demanding a cease-fire since mid-October as civilian casualties began to skyrocket.

After his talks with Blinken, Sheikh Mohammed called for an immediate cease-fire, saying the constant images of death and destruction in Gaza are de-sensitising people to the horrors of what is happening.

Israeli strike kills elite Hezbollah commander

AP ■ BEIRUT

An Israeli airstrike killed an elite Hezbollah commander in southern Lebanon on Monday, the latest in an escalating exchange of strikes along the border that have raised fears of another Mideast war even as the fighting in Gaza exacts a mounting toll on civilians. The strike on an SUV killed a commander in a secretive Hezbollah force that operates along the border, according to a Lebanese security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity according to regulations. Hezbollah identified the slain fighter as Wissam al-Tawil without providing details. He is the most senior militant in the armed group to have been killed since Hamas' October 7 attack into southern Israel triggered all-out war in Gaza and lower-intensity fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, which has escalated since an Israeli strike killed a senior Hamas leader in Beirut last week.



Al Jazeera journalist Wael Dahdohou holds the hand of his son Hamza, who also worked for Al Jazeera and who was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Rafah, Gaza Strip, Sunday. Dahdohou lost his wife, two other children and a grandson earlier in the war and was nearly killed himself.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is back in the region this week, appears to be trying to head off a wider conflict.

Israel says it has largely wrapped up major operations in northern Gaza and is now focusing on the central region and the southern city of Khan Younis. Israeli officials have said the fighting will continue for many more months as the army seeks to dismantle Hamas and return scores of hostages taken during the militant group's October 7 attack that triggered the war.

in Deir al-Balah in recent days, saying it was too dangerous. That spread panic among people sheltering there, causing many to join the hundreds of thousands who have fled to the south of the besieged territory.

Tens of thousands of people have sought shelter in Gaza's hospitals, which are also struggling to treat dozens of people wounded each day in Israeli strikes. Only 13 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are even partially functioning, according to the UN humanitarian office.

Omar al-Darawi, an employee at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, said the facility has been struck multiple times in recent days. He said thousands of people left after the aid groups pulled out, and that patients have been concentrated on one floor so the remaining doctors can tend to them more easily.

floors and in chaotic corridors," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the head of the UN agency, said in a statement. "The bloodbath in Gaza must end."

DIRE CONDITIONS IN THE ISOLATED NORTH THE situation is even more dire in northern Gaza, which Israeli forces cut off from the rest of the territory in late October. Entire neighbourhoods have been demolished, and hundreds of thousands of people have fled, while those who remain face severe shortages of food and water. The WHO said late on Sunday it has not been able to deliver supplies to northern Gaza in 12 days.

Even there, Israel is still battling what it describes as pockets of militants.

The offensive has already killed over 23,000 Palestinians, devastated vast swaths of the Gaza Strip, displaced nearly 85 per cent of its population of 2.3 million and left a quarter of its residents facing starvation.

'SICKENING SCENES' IN GAZA'S HOSPITALS

Medics, patients and displaced people fled from the main hospital in central Gaza as the fighting drew closer, witnesses said Monday. Losing the facility would be another major blow to a health system shattered by three months of war.

Doctors Without Borders and other aid groups withdrew from Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital

An airstrike early on Sunday flattened a four-story home filled with displaced people in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp, killing at least 70, including women and children, according to Mahmoud Bassal, a spokesman for Gaza's civil defence.

There was no immediate confirmation from the Health Ministry, which has struggled to maintain its operations in the north.

Search efforts were still underway on Monday.

The civil defense circulated a graphic video showing the aftermath of attack, with several bodies scattered among the rubble.

Sunak denies doubting Rwanda migrant scheme as chancellor

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has denied reports that he had doubts in the past over the deterrent effect of the country's Rwanda scheme, which will see illegal migrants deported to the East African nation while their asylum applications are processed.

A BBC report based on papers it has seen from two years ago claimed last week that Sunak was concerned about the cost of sending asylum seekers to Rwanda and wanted to limit the numbers initially in his role as chancellor under Boris Johnson's premiership.

On Sunday, he was questioned by the news channel about these documents when he admitted pushing back to ensure the value of taxpayer money but denied he had doubts over its deterrent effect.



"Just because someone's asking tough questions doesn't mean that they don't believe in the proposal," said Sunak.

"My job is to ask probing questions of every proposal that crosses my desk as chancellor.

Whether you have doubts about it or not, you shouldn't come to it with a preconceived notion that everything is fine when you're spending taxpayers' money... But to infer from

that that I don't believe in the scheme or the principle of deterrence is wrong. I was doing my job to get good value for money for taxpayers," he said.

"I went through that process, funded this scheme with the (then) prime minister and as Prime Minister myself, as you can see, I've made sure that we have a similar deterrence working with Albania," he added, about an illegal migrant returns agreement with the south-east European country. The No. 10 documents referenced by the BBC were prepared in March 2022 as former prime minister Boris Johnson was trying to persuade Sunak - his chancellor - to sign off on more funding for the plan. This was shortly before the agreement with the Rwandan government to process migrants in the African country was signed.

US Defence secy remains hospitalised

Washington (AP):

Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin remained in the hospital Sunday as more details emerged about key decision-makers, even President Joe Biden, being kept in the dark for days that the Pentagon chief had been in the intensive care unit at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The Pentagon's failure to disclose Austin's hospitalisation reflects a stunning lack of transparency about his illness, how serious it was and when he may be released. Such secrecy, at a time when the United States is juggling myriad national security crises, runs counter to normal practice with the president and other senior US officials and Cabinet members. A senior defence official said Deputy Secretary was not notified until Thursday that Austin had been hospitalised since January 1.

Boeing jetliner was restricted over warning light concern

Portland (US) (AP):

The Boeing jetliner that suffered an inflight blowout over Oregon was not being used for flights to Hawaii after a warning light that could have indicated a pressurisation problem lit up on three different flights, a federal official said on Sunday.

Alaska Airlines decided to restrict the aircraft from long flights over water so the plane "could return very quickly to an airport" if the warning light reappeared, said Jennifer Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

Homendy cautioned that the pressurisation light might be unrelated to Friday's incident in which a plug covering an unused exit door blew off the Boeing 737 Max 9 as it cruised about three miles (4.8 kilometres) over Oregon.

The warning light came on during three previous flights: on December 7, January 3 and January 4 - the day before the door plug broke off. Homendy said she didn't have all the details regarding the December 7 incident but specified the light came on during a flight on January 3 and on January 4 after the plane had landed.

The NTSB said the lost door plug was found on Sunday near Portland, Oregon, by a school teacher - for now, known only as Bob - who discovered it in his backyard and sent two photos to the safety board. Investigators will examine the plug, which is 26 by 48 inches (66 by 121 centimetres) and weighs 63 pounds (28.5 kilograms), for signs of how it broke free. Investigators will not have the benefit of hearing what was going on in the cockpit during the flight. The cockpit voice recorder - one of two so-called black boxes - recorded over the flight's sounds after two hours, Homendy said.

Japan quake renders thousands homeless

AP ■ WAJIMA

Thousands of people made homeless overnight are living in weariness and uncertainty on the western coast of Japan a week after a powerful earthquake left at least 168 dead and dozens missing. The rescue effort since the magnitude 7.6 New Year's Day quake has drawn thousands of troops, firefighters and police who picked through collapsed buildings Monday hoping to find survivors.

Authorities warned of the danger of landslides, exacerbated by a heavy snowfall, throughout the quake's epicentre on the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa prefecture. The landscape blanketed in fluffy white revealed burned and crumbled houses, ashen blocks of a city, highways with gaping holes and cracks.

The deaths included 70 people in Wajima, 70 in Suzu, 18 in Anamizu and the rest

were spread among four other towns. At least 323 people were still unaccounted for, a jump from some 100 earlier in the day as rescuers pour over a list of the region's population. Another 565 people were injured, and 1,390 homes were destroyed or seriously damaged.

A tsunami of several metres (feet) followed the initial major quake, adding to the damage. Aftershocks have continued daily. Japanese meteorological officials warned strong quakes could persist for another month. Their frequency, while gradually diminishing, remained high compared to past quakes, totalling more than 1,000. For the residents, recovery work has barely started. Shuji Yoshiura, a fisherman, said his boats were damaged and he could not go out on the sea.

Before the quake, Wajima was a tourist town with a shopping street offering

seafood and traditional crafts. Much of it was destroyed in the fires that broke out after the January 1 disaster.

Kentaro Mitsumori, who runs a corner grocery shop, slept in his car with his wife to guard against looting. Their store still stands but has no lock, electricity or running water. Everything sold out in three days. But he plans to close his business.

"Even if I manage to fix up the place, there just aren't going to be enough customers. I don't know how Wajima can survive," he said.

Nearly 30,000 people staying in schools, auditoriums and other evacuation centres worried about infections as cases of COVID-19 and other illnesses popped up.

In the shelters, people were still sleeping on cold floors. After initial help of a piece of bread and a cup of water for each person a day, more aid is allowing some facilities to begin serving hot

food cooked in huge pots.

People were delighted by the temporary bathing facilities set up by soldiers, sitting in the hot water they had missed for days.

Still, exhaustion and stress are wearing them down. Many are in mourning. The main quake struck on New Year's Day, a time for families to gather in Japan. Some survivors said they were all alone because they lost their loved ones.

Mizue Kaba, 79, was lucky she survived, as did her daughter, son-in-law and grandson, who were visiting on New Year's from Osaka in central Japan.

Kaba is sleeping at a school, and no one is sure what might happen when schools open in a week after the New Year's break.

Three stoves were not enough to heat the school's big hall, and more heaters arrived.

"It's so cold," Kaba said.



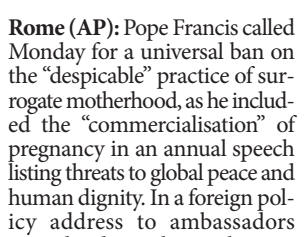
Firefighters search for missing people in the snow in Wajima, Ishikawa prefecture, Sunday. Rescue teams worked through snow to deliver supplies to isolated hamlets Monday, a week after a powerful earthquake hit western Japan.

Pope calls for global ban on surrogacy

Rome (AP):

Pope Francis called Monday for a universal ban on the "despicable" practice of surrogate motherhood, as he included the "commercialisation" of pregnancy in an annual speech listing threats to global peace and human dignity. In a foreign policy address to ambassadors accredited to the Holy See, Francis lamented that 2024 had dawned at a time in history in which peace is "increasingly threatened, weakened and in some part lost."

Citing Russia's war in Ukraine, the Israel-Hamas war, migration, climate crises and the "immoral" production of nuclear and conventional weapons, Francis delivered a lengthy laundry list of the ills afflicting humanity and the increasing violation of international humanitarian law that allows



them. But Francis also listed smaller-scale issues that he said were threats to peace and human dignity, including surrogacy. Francis said the life of the unborn child must be protected and not "suppressed or turned into an object of trafficking." "I consider despicable the practice of so-called surrogate motherhood, which represents a grave violation of the dignity of the woman and the child, based on the exploitation of situations of the mother's material needs," he said.

Since taking power in late 2011, Kim, the third generation of his family to rule North Korea, is believed to have established an absolute leadership similar to his predecessors. But his birthday has yet to be officially celebrated, unlike his late father Kim Jong Il and grandfather Kim Il Sung.

Their birthdays are two of the North's biggest holidays and are marked with great fanfare, loyalty campaigns and sometimes massive military parades.

On Monday, North Korea's state news agency published a lengthy article extolling Kim's

N Korea's Kim turns 40

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un turned 40 on Monday with no announced public celebrations at home, after he entered the new year with artillery barrages into the sea and vows to expand his nuclear arsenal.

Guidance of major construction projects in the past decade. It also reported Kim visited a chicken farm with his daughter the previous day. But it made no mention of his birthday.

Some observers speculate Kim may think he's still relatively young or needs bigger achievements to hold such lavish birthday festivities. Others say the lack of a public birthday bash may be related to his concerns about attention to his late Japan-born mother.



Huge car rally planned in US to celebrate Ram Mandir consecration

New York (PTI): The Indian-American diaspora is gearing up to commemorate the consecration ceremony of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, with plans to hold car rallies in the US to celebrate the occasion.

The group "California Indians" is organising a special car rally on January 20 to celebrate "Bhagwan Shri Ram Ji's homecoming". The organisers said that more than 400 cars will join the rally that is expected to go from South Bay to the iconic Golden Gate Bridge. The organisers said in a press release that "Indians of Northern California are coming together to celebrate the biggest and proudest event in the modern

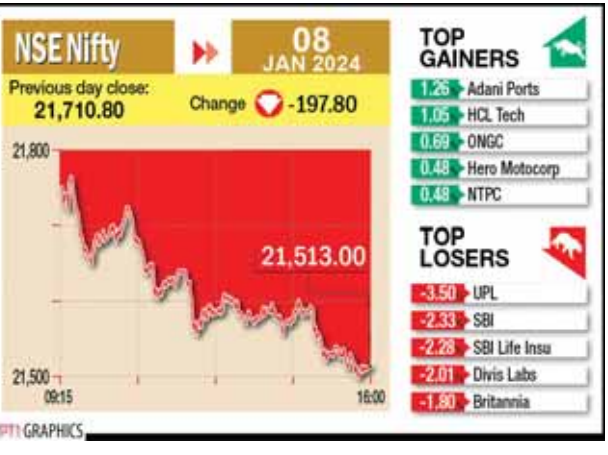
history of India." Local temples and diaspora organisations across the US are planning to hold special celebrations in the days leading up to January 22, when the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya will be inaugurated.

Car rallies have been held in Washington, Chicago and other US cities over the past several weeks.

Community leaders including Rohit Sharma, Mani Keeran, Param Desai, Daipayan Deb, Deepak Bajaj and Bimal Bhagwat are planning the California rally, the organisers said. "We cannot go to Ayodhya but Ram ji is in our hearts and this is our contribution to his homecoming," the organisers said.

Sensex, Nifty tumble nearly 1 per cent on global weakness

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty surrendered early gains to close with deep losses on Monday, snapping their two-day winning streak as investors pared exposure to banking, metal and FMCG stocks amid a weak trend in global markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 670.93 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at 71,355.22. During the day, it fell 725.11 points or 1 per cent to 71,301.04. The Nifty declined 197.80 points or 0.91 per cent to 21,513. "Nifty snapped a two-session rally to end lower after opening with marginal gains. Global stocks slipped on Monday ahead of a busy week of inflation and economic data and



dipped 0.36 per cent. Among the indices, FMCG fell 1.55 per cent, commodities declined 1.44 per cent, bankex (1.42 per cent), metal 1.40 per cent, financial services (1.05 per cent), telecommunication (0.93 per cent), IT (0.90 per cent) and tech (0.77 per cent). Power, realty and services were the gainers. "The market witnessed wide-spread selling as the euphoria over early rate cuts may diminish due to the better-than-expected non-farm payroll data

from the US and the consequent rise in the US 10-year yield. "In the near term, investors' trade positions will be more inclined towards the upcoming result season. While the outset may be tempered by lower expectations in the IT sector, the overall forecast for earnings growth remains optimistic, projecting double-digit figures," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.21 per cent to USD 77.81 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,696.86 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark jumped 178.58 points or 0.25 per cent to settle at 72,026.15 on Friday. The Nifty climbed 52.20 points or 0.24 per cent to 21,710.80.

K-shaped recovery narrative flawed and prejudiced: SBI report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The repeated argument that India witnessed a K-shaped recovery post-pandemic is "flawed, prejudiced, and ill-concocted," said a research report by SBI on Monday. According to the report, post-pandemic, households are reconfiguring their savings towards physical assets, including real estate, it said. "The oft-repeated conundrum debating a K-shaped recovery post-pandemic seems at best flawed, prejudiced, ill-concocted and fanning interests of select quarters to whom India's remarkable ascendance, signalling more the renaissance of the new global south, is quite unpalatable," the report said. K-shaped recovery reflects uneven recovery where certain sectors of the economy thrives while other sectors continue to decline or struggle to recover. It further said post-pandemic, there has been two-way shift between savings channelised into physical assets from financial assets in consonance with the global trend to take advantage of lower interest rates. However, it said, recent data

DGCA revises duty time limitations norms for flight crew, raises weekly rest periods to 48 hrs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Aviation safety regulator DGCA on Monday came out with revised Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) norms for flight crew, entailing increased weekly rest periods to 48 hours, extension of night hours, and limiting the number of night landings to only two as against six earlier. These regulations have been instrumental in managing fatigue-related aviation safety risks for more than a decade now, an official statement said. Airlines are required to comply with the revised norms latest by June 1, it said. With a view to address and mitigate concerns on pilot fatigue through a data-driven approach, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) collected and analysed extensive numbers of pilot rosters, along with pilot fatigue reports submitted by airline operators, it said. Based on the study and analysis, some of the key areas inducing fatigue, such as maximum flight duty period, night duty, weekly rest period, flight duty period extension, among others, were identified, it said. The revised FDTL regulations have been formulated after extensive data analysis and feedback from various stakeholders, including airline operators, pilot associations and individuals, as per the statement. It also said the best practices in the world — FAA in the US, and EASA in the



European Union — have also been taken into consideration in amending the regulations, while keeping in mind the specific operating environment in India. The revised regulations mandate increased weekly rest periods from 36 hours to 48 hours for flight crew, thus ensuring sufficient time for recovery from cumulative fatigue, it said. Moreover, the definition of night has been amended and it now covers the period of 0000-0600 hours in the revised regulations vis-a-vis the period of 0000-0500 hours under the previous regulations. This enhancement of one hour during the early morning will ensure adequate rest and also align the night duty period, which encompasses Window of Circadian Low



ONGC starts oil production from delayed USD 5 billion deep-water project

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
State-controlled Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has started oil production from its much-delayed flagship deep-sea project in Krishna Godavari basin in Bay of Bengal, helping reverse years of decline in output, the company said. ONGC has started producing from the Cluster-2 project in KG-DWN-98/2 block and will slowly ramp up output. Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said "first oil production commences from complex and difficult" block. He did not indicate the current output but said "production is expected to be 45,000 barrels per day and over 10 million standard cubic metres per day of gas". Cluster-2 oil production should have begun by November 2021 but was delayed because of the Covid pandemic. ONGC has hired floating vessel Armada Sterling-V, owned 70 per cent by SPOG (Shapoorji Pallonji Oil & Gas) and 30 per cent by Malaysia's Bumi Armada, for producing oil from below seabed. The FPSO (floating production, storage and offloading vessel), Armada Sterling-V, has been waiting to receive oil since January 2, 2023, after she was hooked up on December 27, 2022. ONGC previously set May 2023 as the first Cluster-2 oil deadline, extended to August 2023, September 2023, October 2023

India's coal import rises 11.7 per cent to 21 MT in Nov

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The country registered an 11.7 per cent rise in coal imports to 20.95 Million Tonnes (MT) in November as compared to the year-ago period. The country's coal imports in November 2022 was 18.75 MT, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company mjunction services. However, coal import in the April-November period of the current financial year dropped to 169.08 MT from 173.47 MT in the year-ago period. There was reduction in coal imports due to ample domestic supply and a slowdown in demand after the festive season in October, mjunction MD and CEO Vinaya Varma said. The demand for imported coal, he said, is likely to remain subdued in the coming months. Of the total import in November 2023, non-coking coal import was at 14.37 MT, against 11.88 MT in the same month the previous year. Coking coal import was at 4.23 MT, against 3.90 MT imported in November 2022. During the April-November period in 2023, non-coking coal import stood at 108.90 MT, lower than 116.28 MT imported during the same period in the previous fiscal. Coking coal import was at 37.97 MT during the April-November period, up against 36.64 MT recorded in the year-ago period.

Agri exports likely to double to USD 100 bn by 2030: Commerce Secretary

PTI ■ GREATER NOIDA
India's agriculture exports, which stood at over USD 50 billion at present, are expected to double by 2030 and reach USD 100 billion, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said on Monday. He said that the country is targeting USD 2 trillion worth of exports of goods and services by 2030. "I am very sure that this USD 50 billion exports of India today will see a doubling of our exports by 2030 to almost USD 100 billion," he said at the IndusFood Show 2024 here. This is the largest food and beverage show in South Asia. The secretary said that areas like the ready-to-eat food segment have huge potential to grow. He also urged the industry to focus on the technical standard requirements of importing countries. Inaugurating the show, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that this fiscal year, the country's agri exports will be more than last year's level of USD 53 billion, despite restrictions imposed on shipments of certain key commodities, including rice, wheat and sugar. Earlier, an official said that the export ban and restrictions on these commodities may hit exports of about USD 4-5 billion this fiscal. The government has prohibited exports of wheat and non-



Ramdas, Grand Hypermarket, Nesto, Mustafa, X5, Lulu, Almaya Group, and Spar, are also participating, he added. Goyal also said there is a need for large-scale food processing, product branding, and export focus to provide better value to farmers, generate employment, and enhance the country's earnings. He added that as many as 158 food and agri products have been granted Geographical Indications (GIs) tags, and 708 food items have been identified under the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative for their promotion. He urged the industry to focus on frozen, packaged, and ready-to-eat foods, encouraging skill development, university exchange programmes, and startups in the sector. The industry should also prioritise quality, nutrition, organic ingredients, and eco-friendly packaging, underscoring the significance of promoting food nutrition and sustainability, the minister said.

MF industry assets surge by ₹11 lakh crore in 2023, crosses ₹50 lakh crore mark

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
After a lackluster performance in 2022, the mutual fund industry saw a substantial rebound in 2023 with its asset base surging by nearly Rs 11 lakh crore, reaching over Rs 50 lakh crore-mark fuelled by an optimistic equity market, steady interest rates, and a robust economic expansion. The year 2023 has seen a substantial increase in overall inflow, data from the Association of Mutual Fund Industry (Amfi) showed on Monday. The inflow has pushed the assets under management (AUM) of the mutual fund industry by 27 per cent, adding Rs 10.9 lakh crore in 2023. This was way higher than the 5.7 per cent growth and Rs 2.65 lakh crore increase in AUM observed throughout 2022, as well as the nearly 22 per cent growth and close to Rs 7 lakh crore addition to the asset base in 2021. The asset base rose from Rs 39.88 lakh crore in 2022 to an all-time high of Rs 50.78 lakh crore in 2023, the data showed. The asset base stood at Rs 37.72 lakh crore at the end of December 2021 and Rs 31 lakh crore in December 2020.

Gold slips ₹250; silver slumps ₹400

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Gold prices slipped Rs 250 to Rs 63,200 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid a decline in precious metal prices internationally, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had settled at Rs 63,450 per 10 grams in the previous close. Silver also slumped Rs 400 to Rs 76,300 per kilogram. In the previous trade, silver closed at Rs 76,700 per kg. In the futures trade on the MCX, the February contract of gold plunged Rs 355 to Rs 62,202 per 10 grams. Also, the March contract of silver tumbled Rs 415 to Rs 72,172 per kg on the bourse. In the overseas markets, both gold and silver were trading lower at USD 2,029 per



ounce and USD 22.95 per ounce, respectively. "Following strong US labour market data which stoked investor anticipation that the Federal Reserve might delay interest rate cuts led to a decline in gold prices," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. Spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,029 per ounce, down by USD 16 from the previous close in the international markets. "Focus this week will be on the US Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Producer Price Index (PPI) data which could provide further clarity on the Fed's monetary policy interest rate path ahead," Navneet Damani, Senior VP of commodity research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

BUSINESS BRIEF

SRM GLOBAL HOSPITAL EXCELS IN SERVICE
CHENNAI: Being the Times Healthcare Achievers of 2023, SRM Global Hospitals, Kattankulathur serves its excellence on a scale of effective critical services and delivering salient features through world-class equipped amenities and patient care. The President of SRM Group of Companies, Dr. P. Sathyanarayan feels that the SRM Global Hospitals indulge in offering seamless compassion towards the art of healing medical ailments. The stupendous brand ambassadors of each speciality provide a legacy of healthcare services over the years. With immense pride, he introduced the miscellaneous crew of 4 cardiologists, 5+ gastroenterologists over a supported 15+ doctors for the emergency and critical care services onboard.



Mercedes-Benz lines up ₹200 cr investment, to launch over 12 products in 2024

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz will invest Rs 200 crore in India this year on new products, manufacturing operations and digitisation, to strengthen its position after posting record sales of 17,408 units in 2023, a top company official said on Monday. Mercedes-Benz India will have more than 12 launches in 2024, including three electric vehicles, out of which half will be in the top end vehicle segment (TEV) and will be priced Rs 1.5 crore onwards. "This year marks a special year as we celebrate 30 years of Mercedes-Benz in India. We are going to invest Rs 200 crore more into our factory in Pune. This takes a total investment of Rs 3,000 crore in India now. So that's a strong statement of intent," Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director & CEO Santosh Iyer told PTI in an interview.



These investments will be towards manufacturing operations, new product startups and digitisation of the manufacturing process, he added. In 2023, Iyer said, the company recorded its best-ever year in its history in India with sales of 17,408 units, a growth of 10 per cent. Mercedes-Benz India had posted its previous best-ever sales in 2022 when it clocked 15,822 units. On the outlook for 2024, Iyer said the company is looking for "double-digit" growth despite volatility in both supply and demand sides. Currently, the company's order bank stands at 3,000 units. On the product launch plan, Iyer said, "We are looking at 12-plus new car lines to be launched in '24 and 50 per cent of them will be in the top end vehicle segment. These will include three new electric vehicles." The TEV segment continues to drive aspiration for the brand, Iyer said, adding that three new EVs to be launched in 2024 will build up the company's EV portfolio. "EVs now comprise 4 per cent of our total sales and the segment witnessed a trebling of growth in 2023," he added.

INDIAN WOMEN HOCKEY TEAM CONFIDENT

PTI ■ RANCHI

Indian women's team is confident of booking a third successive Olympic berth and its knowledge of the conditions here will put it in good stead ahead of the eight-team hockey Olympic Qualifiers, said attacking midfielder Navneet Kaur on Monday. The Indian team, led by Savita Punia, had won the Asian Champions Trophy at the same venue of Marang Gomke Jaypal Singh Mundha AstroTurf Hockey Stadium in November last year. The hosts defeated Japan 4-0 in the final to secure their second consecutive title in the competition. "Arriving in Ranchi early has helped us gain quite a few sessions on the main pitch and it has also helped us acclimatise to this weather," Navneet said in a Hockey India release. "Since we have also played in this venue before, during the Women's Asian Champions Trophy, we know the pitch well." Fuelled by their historic fourth-place finish in the Tokyo Olympic Games, the Indian side spent about a week under-

OF MAKING 3RD SUCCESSIVE OLYMPICS



standing the conditions. The Indian members also visited and trained at some venues in

Kunti district. "We also went and trained in Kunti district which is home to

some of our teammates and it was incredible to see the excitement on the children's faces

who had come to cheer us," Navneet said. Placed in Pool B, India's campaign kicks off with a clash against the United States on Saturday, followed by their match against New Zealand the next day. After a day's rest, India face Italy on January 16. Pool A comprises World No 5 Germany, former Asian Games Champions Japan, Chile, and Czech Republic. "We are upbeat and eager to get on with our campaign. After our Tokyo Olympics performance, the expectations are high and we want to live up to the billing. We are well-prepared for the event and are confident of a good show," Navneet said. The top two teams from each Pool will qualify for the semi-finals and the teams that finish in top-3 will earn a ticket to Paris 2024. The semi-finals are scheduled for January 18, with the grand final and bronze play-off set to take place on January 19. The event was originally slated to be held in China, but Hockey India requested FIH to shift the venue to India after China Women's directly qualified for the Paris Olympics.

SHOOTING

Varun, Esha seal Olympic quota places

With 10m air pistol golds at Asian Qualifiers

PTI ■ JAKARTA

Young Indian shooters Varun Tomar and Esha Singh on Monday secured two Olympic quota places for the country with gold medals in the men's and women's 10m Air Pistol events of the Asian Qualifiers here. The duo's qualification took the total number of Indian shooters bound for Paris to 15, equalling the highest-ever tally that was achieved in the Tokyo Games. India can add more to the group headed for the Games in July-August this year when the remaining qualifiers are held. India secured six medals on Monday, including two team golds, at the continental event. The 20-year-old Tomar shot 239.6 in the final to claim the top position, while Arjun Cheema won the silver medal with a score of 237.3. Mongolia's Davaakhuu Enkhtaivan (217.2) won the bronze medal. Earlier, Tomar (586), Cheema (579) and Ujjawal Malik (575) shot a total of 1740 to win the 10m air pistol team gold, while Iran and Korea claimed the silver and bronze medals respectively. Tomar, a former junior world champion, is the cousin of Tokyo Olympian Saurabh Chaudhary, who won a gold medal in the 2018 Asian Games. "It helped that I had someone



like Saurabh to take guidance from as I don't have anyone in the family who is a shooter," Tomar, who comes from a farming family, told PTI. The 19-year-old Esha then grabbed the gold in the women's event with a score of 243.1. The silver went to Pakistan's Kishmala Talat (236.3), while the bronze was grabbed by Esha's compatriot Rhythm Sangwan (214.5). The 21-year-old Talat also earned a quota for the Paris Games, becoming the third Pakistani shooter to achieve the feat. Esha, Rhythm and Surbhi Rao also won the team gold medal with a combined score of 1736. Esha is a world championship gold-medallist in the 10m air pistol mixed team and 25m pistol team events. "She can also win a medal, pos-

sibly gold, in 25m sports pistol here. But an individual can bag only one quota place for the country. Her bagging the quota in 10m air pistol means she can also compete in 25m sports pistol in Paris," said Esha's father Sachin Singh. A total of 16 quota places for the Paris Olympics are available at the continental showpiece here. The 10m air pistol events for men and women have four quotas on offer with a maximum of three for the Indian shooters. As many as 385 athletes from 26 countries are in action at the Senayan Shooting Range in Jakarta for 256 medals (84 gold, 84 silver and 88 bronze medals), besides the Paris quotas. Ahead of this tournament, India had won 13 Olympic quota places in shooting across rifle, pistol and shotgun disciplines.



BAI to fund 28 shuttlers for international exposure

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Badminton Association of India (BAI) will fund 28 Indian shuttlers, including senior national men's and women's champions Chirag Sen and Anmol Kharb, for international tournaments this year. Indian players ranked between 26 and 75 in BWF world rankings and top performers from the Senior National championships, who are not part of the national camp, will benefit from this opportunity. The funds will come as part of BAI's partnership with Rural Electrification Corporation (REC). Abu Dhabi Masters champion Unnati Hooda and 2023 Badminton Asia U-17 Junior championships silver medallist Tanvi Sharma are among the 28 players across singles and doubles categories who have been chosen based on their performances in multiple tournaments. "BAI is committed to ensure promising talents get much-needed support to showcase their potential as the national campers even if they are not part of the national camp," said BAI Secretary Sanjay Mishra in a release on Monday. "Our partnership with REC will not only help us broad base these opportunities and give shuttlers more and more opportunities to participate in multiple international challenger events as well as Super 300s and thereby better their rankings as well as gain experience of playing against foreign players. "This initiative aligns with our goals to create strong opportunities for more players to show their abilities as well as compete and benefit from the national badminton structure."

The selected players have been given an option to choose three tournaments, including two Super 300 events - the Orleans Masters and Swiss Open - from a total of eight tournaments, for which BAI will extend complete financial support to each of the shuttlers. **FULL LIST OF PLAYERS: MEN'S SINGLES:** 1. Sathish Kumar Karunakaran (World Rank 51) 2. S Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian (WR 71) 3. Sameer Verma (WR 74) 4. Chirag Sen (Senior Nationals champion) 5. Tharun Manneppalli (Senior Nationals runner-up) **WOMEN'S SINGLES:** 1. Aakarshi Kashyap (WR 40) 2. Malvika Bansod (WR 52) 3. Unnati Hooda (WR 56) 4. Tanya Hemanth (WR 69) 5. Tasnim Mir (WR 73) 6. Imad Farooqui Samiya (WR 74) 7. Anmol Kharb (Senior National Champion) 8. Tanvi Sharma (Senior National runner-up) **MEN'S DOUBLES:** 1. Hariharan Amsakarunan/Ruban Kumar Rethinasabapathi (WR 70) 2. PS Ravikrishna/Sankar Prasad Udayakumar (WR 75) 3. Suraj Goala/Pruthvi Krishnamurthy Roy (Senior Nationals champions) **WOMEN'S DOUBLES:** 1. Ashwini Bhat K/Shikha Gautam (WR 49) 2. Rutaparna Panda/Swetaparna Panda (WR 52) 3. Simran Singh/Ritika Thaker (WR 63) 4. Priya Konjengbam/Shruti Mishra (Senior National champions) **MIXED DOUBLES:** 1. Sathish Kumar Karunakaran/Aadya Variyath (WR 64).

Was inspired by Saurabhs: Varun

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Promising shooter Varun Tomar always wanted to be like his cousin, Olympian Saurabh Chaudhary, and on Monday the 20-year-old took a giant step towards achieving his goal by securing a quota for the 2024 Paris Games by winning gold medal at the Asian Olympic Qualifiers in Jakarta. Tomar, who initially trained with multiple-time World Cup gold medallist and 2018 Asian Games champion Chaudhary at his home range in Baghpat district of UP, said the individual gold medal will motivate him to train harder for the 2024 Paris Games. "I took up shooting seven years back watching my senior cousin Saurabh. He has been my motivation, having struck success early in his career. I always wanted to be like him and achieve international success," Tomar told PTI from Jakarta. "I started shooting a year after Saurabh and we both initially had the same coach (Amit Sheoran) in Benoli village of Baghpat," said Tomar, a former junior world championship gold medallist in team event. Tomar, who hails from Garhi Kangran village in Baghpat, secured India's 14th Olympic quota place on the opening day



of the competition, clinching both the individual and team gold. The 20-year-old shot 239.6 in the final of the 10m air pistol event to claim the top position in individual category ahead of compatriot Arjun Cheema (237.3). Earlier, Tomar (586), Cheema (579) and Ujjawal Malik (575) shot a total of 1740 to win the 10m air pistol team gold. "It helped that I had someone like Saurabh to take guidance from as I don't have anyone in the family who is a shooter," said Tomar, who comes from a farming family. After nearly seven years of training, Tomar finally got success last year, winning individual bronze medals at the World Cups in Bhopal and Cairo. Soon he was selected for training at the National Centre of

Excellence (NCOE) at the Karni Singh Ranges here and is now employed with the Indian Army. "I have always appreciated Varun for his calm nature. He is a copy of Saurabh. He hardly interacts with anyone at the range and just keeps to himself, training hard," said national rifle coach Deepak Dubey here. "He is still a junior but is learning fast. The success in the two World Cups last year and the individual gold medal today are an indication that he really has a sound technique and temperament," said Dubey. "I know for a fact that he got inspired by Saurabh. He came into NCOE about 5-6 months back. He made a place in the Indian team last year and won two medals in World Cups. He has shot some really good scores last year. "His selection by the Army Marksmanship Unit has given his career a big boost. The fact that he has come up on his own without having a personal coach is indeed creditworthy," said Dubey. "He only shoots 10m air pistol and not 25m rapid fire, which helps him give undivided attention to just one discipline. He is just like Saurabh, doesn't talk much, very disciplined, hard working and very obedient," added Dubey.

Anahat finishes runner up at 2024 British Junior Open squash

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM (ENGLAND)

Rising Indian star Anahat Singh signed off with a runner-up finish in the girls' under-17 category at the British Junior Open squash tournament here. The Indian top-seed Anahat went down 2-3 to Egyptian second seed Nadien Elhammamy in a tense 68-minute cliffhanger at the University of Birmingham on Sunday. The 15-year-old won the opening game 11-7, before Elhammamy fought back to claim the next two on tiebreak 13-11 & 12-10. The Delhi girl won the fourth game 11-5 to force a decider, and not much separated the pair in the fifth, which the Egyptian clinched 11-9. Late last month, Anahat won the Under-19 crown at the Scottish

Junior Open to cap a spectacular 2023. In 2023, Anahat secured the under-19 and senior National championship double, besides winning bronze medals in the mixed doubles and team event at the Asian Games Huangzhou. She also won another bronze partnering Abhay Singh at the inaugural Asian Mixed Doubles Championships. Meanwhile, Aryaveer Dewan, the reigning US Junior Open boys' under-15 champion, took third place in the boys' under-15 section. He lost to Egyptian top seed Philopater Saleh 3-1 in the semifinals, but bounced back to win the play-off for third place. Promising Aadya Budhia was edged out 3-2 by top seeded American Vivienne Sze in the under-13 girls' quarterfinals.



Meb named brand ambassador of Tata Mumbai Marathon

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Celebrated long distance runner Meb Keflezighi, who won a silver medal in the 2004 Athens Olympics, has been named brand ambassador of the 19th Tata Mumbai Marathon scheduled to be held on Sunday. The race is a World Athletics Gold Label event and Procram International is the promoter of the event. "The Tata Mumbai Marathon has been on my bucket list for the longest time, and finally being able to witness Mumbai's indomitable spirit, is indeed exciting," Keflezighi, an Eritrean-born American, was quoted as saying in a press release. "This event inspired a country to run and changed mindsets, that is the true legacy of a sporting event. Mumbai's incredible energy and enthusiasm, combined with the dedication of its runners, embodies the universal language of endurance. "I will only say this... remember to run with purpose, embrace the journey, and move ahead together. In every stride, find the strength to go the distance and make a difference to what you believe in." Keflezighi has several record-breaking accolades in his career. He scripted history when he became the only runner to win an Olympic medal (2004), the New York City Marathon (2009) and the Boston Marathon (2014). In 2009, Keflezighi became the first American since 1982 to win the New York City Marathon. He has achieved the feat of being in the top 10 in the New York Marathon for a total of eight times in his career. In 2015, he set a TCS New York City Marathon masters event record with a timing of 2:13:32sec. In 2014 he won the Boston Marathon (2:08:37), the first American male to do so since 1983, and the first American since 1985. Since 1930, Keflezighi has held the record for being the oldest winner of the Boston Marathon as he triumphed there when he was 39 years old. He is also a former USA National 10,000m track record holder. The Tata Mumbai Marathon will flag off from the iconic Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus on Sunday.

Theegala misses win by one shot, finishes 2nd

PTI ■ KAPALUA

Indian-American golfer Sahith Theegala missed a 10 foot putt on the 18th hole to finish second in the Sentry, the opening event of the 2024 PGA TOUR season. Theegala fired a sizzling 10-under 63 to finish at 28-under but Chris Kirk, the overnight leader playing in the final group, carded 8-under 65 to finish at 29-under, that included a superb second shot to set up a birdie on the 17th to go one ahead. He parred the 18th and won the title. Akshay Bhatia, the other Indian-American in the field, who was second after 54 holes, had a double bogey start after two bogey-free days and finished with 2-under 71 to drop to Tied-14th place. Bhatia, one shot behind at the start, drove his opening tee shot into the native grass and never contended thereafter. Theegala missed a 10-foot birdie chance at the par-5 closing hole and shot 63, while Jordan Spieth, whose tee shot on

BHATIA 14TH AS KIRK WINS SENTRY



the 16th plugged under the lip of a bunker for a bogey, missed a 15-foot eagle putt on the 18th and shot 65 to finish third at 27-under. Korean Byeong-Hun-An (66) was fourth at 26-under.

Theegala said: "Obviously 18 hurts a little bit but I think Chris (Kirk) hit an incredible shot on 17 there, and then if we were tied or if I was at 29, I think he would probably pull off a birdie there as well (on 18).

"Yeah, I really wish I could have had that second shot on 18 back. It's not how it works." Theegala had a great final day. After four birdies in a row from second to sixth, he added one on ninth to turn in 5-under. Another birdie followed on 11th and four more came in a row from 13th to the 16th. That birdie on the 16th gave him a one-shot lead. Then he parred 17th and missed a 10-footer for the 11th birdie of the day and finished one behind. Sungjae Im got into the PGA TOUR record books with 34 birdies, beating Jon Rahm's mark of 32 set last year. While he was delighted with his record, Im was still somewhat disappointed with his third round of 73 on Saturday which knocked him out of contention in his search for a third PGA TOUR title. This is the second birdie record on TOUR which Im now proudly holds as in 2021, he snared 498 birdies to set a new record for most birdies during a season, breaking the previous mark of 493 by Steve Flesch in 2000.

Malaysia Open: Indian shuttlers hope for bright start in high stake Olympic year

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

With the Paris Olympic qualification at stake, top Indian shuttlers, including HS Prannoy and Lakshya Sen, will hope to begin the new season on a bright note when they start their campaign at the Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here on Tuesday. A lot will be on the line for Indian shuttlers in the next four months as they zoom through a hectic calendar, hoping to get inside the world's top-16 by April end to book their berths for the Paris Games. Frontrunner in the Olympic race, world no. 8 Prannoy, had a sensational season with maiden bronze medals at the World Championships and the Asian Games and a title-run at the Malaysia Masters super 500. He also registered a final finish at the

Australia Open super 500. The 31-year-old, seeded 8th, will hope to continue his rich vein of form when he opens against Denmark's Anders Antonsen, who made a successful comeback from an injury by winning the Korea Open in 2023. All eyes will also be on Lakshya and Kidambi Srikanth as they fight to get inside the top 16 after enduring contrasting fates last season. While world no. 16 Sen claimed the Canada Open super 500 before losing his form in the back end, Srikanth, ranked 24, has looked subdued and had just four quarterfinal finishes to show in 2023. Things are not going to be easy for Sen and Srikanth as they face tough competitors in China's Weng Hong Yang and sixth seed Jonatan Christie of Indonesia respectively in the opening round here.



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have looked in ominous form in the men's doubles arena. They went on a record-breaking spree to emerge as the best-performing Indian shuttlers in 2023. In a span of 12 months, they won an Asian Games gold, a super 1000 crown in Indonesia, the Korea Open super 500 and the Swiss Open super 300 before grabbing a career-best ranking of World No.1, albeit for a brief time. The second-seeded pair, which reached the semifinals in 2023, will look to continue the good run and go deep in the draw when they open against the Indonesian combination of Muhammad Shohibul Fikri and Bagas Maulana. Brimming with confidence after making three finals in December, the women's doubles pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto will

now look to make the right moves this season to crack the global top 16. The duo is currently placed 21st in the Olympic Games Qualification rankings, ahead of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, who are at the 27th spot. Ashwini and Tanisha, who claimed the Guwahati Masters super 100 title, will face USA's Francesca Corbett and Allison Lee in the opening round. With two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu recovering from a knee injury, India will have no representation in women's singles. There are also no Indians competing in mixed doubles. Malaysia Open is one of the four BWF World Tour Super 1000 tournaments, having gained the status last year. All England Championships, China Open and Indonesian Open are the other three in the world circuit.

ROHIT, KOHLI GET FINAL SHOT AT T20 GLORY

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The selectors have clearly gone for the status quo rather than addressing the elephant in the room by picking Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli for their first T20 series in 14 months. Will it have a bearing on India's chances in another T20 World Cup? Only time can tell.

Having endured a heartbreak in the previous two editions of the T20 World Cup, the two greats of the game can't be faulted for wanting a final shot at glory in the format. But the same can't be said about the selectors, who picked a fresh bunch of players to take the team forward since the crushing semifinal loss to England in November 2022. Now that Rohit and Kohli have been picked for the home series against Afghanistan beginning on January 11, it is a given that the famed duo will be a part of India's squad for the ICC showpiece in the US and Caribbean in June.

It also means that India, who have been guilty of playing conservative cricket at the top of the order, are also back to square one as far as their planning for the T20 mega event is

concerned.

The two superstars played a massive role in taking India to the ODI World Cup final but can they step up to the demands of the shorter format where one needs to go after the bowlers from ball one?

Rohit, who did not score tons of runs in the recently held ODI showpiece but yet managed to make a compelling impact with his high risk game, will most likely carry on in the same vein when the Afghanistan series begins in Mohali.

On the other hand, Kohli's game is tailor-made for the 50-over format but he has also managed to maintain more than a decent strike rate of 137.96 over 148 T20s. Rohit strikes at almost 140 in T20s but he too will need to bat at a higher clip to keep up with the fast changing demands of the modern game.

In contrast, their teammate and world's best T20 batter, Suryakumar Yadav, bats at a 170 plus strike rate.

The likes of Yashasvi Jaiswal and Ruturaj Gaikwad showed promise in the opportunities they got in the absence of senior players but there is no substitute to experience at an

BUT WILL SELECTORS' SAFE APPROACH COST INDIA ANOTHER WC?



ICC event. It's a sentiment that has been unanimously voiced by former players including Sunil Gavaskar and Sourav Ganguly, who have backed the inclusion of Rohit and Kohli in the T20 squad.

Former India selector Sarandeep Singh too feels Rohit and Kohli are best suited for the job.

"It is the right call. In ICC events, you need players who can handle pressure well. They both were great in the ODI World Cup and are in top form. However, this development means it would be very difficult to accommodate Jaiswal and Ruturaj," he told PTI.

He also justified the celebrated pair not playing the shortest format since November 2022. "You have to prepare bench strength also. In all probability this will be their last T20 World Cup. If Rohit and Virat were not rested, you could not have tried the likes of Jaiswal, Ruturaj, Jitesh (Sharma) and others."

"Having said that, these two greats don't need to play the shortest format to make a comeback. Eventually, the performance of all the World Cup probables in the IPL will make the picture clearer for the subsequent World Cup," the former India spinner added.

With Rohit and Kohli's inclusion, it is amply clear that selectors did not want to rock the boat. Former India opener Aakash Chopra feels the selectors had to pick both the greats as they could not have left one and included the other.

"It seemed they won't play another T20 World Cup (after 2022) as they had not been playing since the previous edition. Both are in the same boat. Even if the selectors thought about leaving out one of the two, I don't think they would have been able to do that. It was always about picking both or otherwise," Chopra said on his youtube channel.

Hardik Pandya had led the T20 side in Rohit's absence and was expected to lead the team in the US and Caribbean but another injury setback seems to have cost him that chance.

Rohit is back as captain and will have Kohli by his side to rely on when India take on the sprightly bunch of Afghans in the three-match series. But most significantly, will they finally be able to land an elusive ICC title? That question will be answered in five months' time.

India women eye maiden T20I series win over Australia Heinrich announces Test retirement

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

The culmination of a long and mixed home season brings the Indian women's cricket team one last opportunity to register a maiden T20I series triumph over Australia at home when the two sides square off in the series-decider here on Tuesday. With the three-match affair levelled 1-1, Harmanpreet Kaur's India have a chance to beat the reigning world champions Australia in their own den and kick off the 2024 T20I World Cup year in style.

India have only one series win to show against Australia's four in their five-series bilateral T20I history. Their triumph in an away affair in 2015-16 sits atop in the list of achievements for this side.

However, having registered historic wins in one-off Tests earlier this season against both Australia and England, India would want to make this one last opportunity count.

India were on a roll in the first game and thrashed Australia by a record margin of nine wickets but their batters cut a sorry figure in the second. A tricky pitch here at the DY Patil Stadium on Sunday did not allow batters to flourish.

While heavy dew in the first half of the game assisted India's charge with the bat, the absence of it in the second made the job of containing the Australian batters difficult.

But to their credit, the Indian bowlers did well to take the game as deep as possible with some tight lines and sharp fielding. However, the home team's fielding has only been sporadically good.

Kaur's own form with the bat will remain a huge concern for



the hosts, who were humbled by six wickets in the second game. The Indian captain has not made a fifty yet in 10 matches so far across formats in these games. She has seven single-digit scores now in 11 innings, including the first T20I where-in her services were not required.

"Every player cannot have a good day everyday, but suddenly anyone can have a very good day. It is not the case that we are (right away) aiming for big shots but we are trying to play (as per the) merit of the ball," all-rounder Deepti Sharma told the media after the match when asked if Kaur's form was a con-

cern for the team.

Deepti waged a lone battle of sorts with a combative all-round performance in the second game scoring a 27-ball 31 in a faltering Indian innings to give them some late impetus, and also fought hard with the ball to take the first two wickets of the four Australian wickets to fall.

The pitches for the two T20Is so far have not allowed batters to go berserk especially in the first innings, allowing the bowlers to dominate the proceedings.

"It has been a really good contest between bat and ball, there is something in it for both the batters and the bowlers," said

Australia's player of the match on Sunday Kim Garth.

"Especially, coming from the wicket that we played on the Test match, (it) was a lot more challenging for the batters, so it has been really pleasing that there has been a bit in it for the bowlers, particularly with the new ball," she added.

Deepti also found the pitch for the second game a challenging one to bat on.

"...It was not an easy wicket to bat on. The ball was turning as well as getting slow (off the surface). I think we were about 15 runs short..." she replied when asked what went wrong for India.

SQUADS:

INDIA: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Yastika Bhatia (wk), Richa Ghosh (wk), Amanjot Kaur, Shreyanka Patil, Mannat Kashyap, Saika Ishaque, Renuka Singh Thakur, Titus Sadhu, Pooja Vastrakar, Kanika Ahuja, Minnu Mani.

AUSTRALIA: Darcie Brown, Heather Graham, Gardner, Kim Garth, Grace Harris, Alyssa Healy (c&wk), Jess Jonassen, Alana King, Phoebe Litchfield, Tahlia McGrath (vc), Beth Mooney (wk), Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Wareham.

PTI ■ PRETORIA (SOUTH AFRICA)

South African wicketkeeper-batter Heinrich Klaassen has announced his retirement from red-ball cricket, bringing curtains to his brief stint in the format.

Having made his debut against India in Ranchi in 2019, the 32-year-old played four matches in his brief Test career with his final outing against the West Indies in Johannesburg last year.

He has scored 104 runs at an average of 13.00, while his top score was 35 against Australia in Sydney.

Klaassen will continue to be available for the Proteas in white-ball cricket.

"After a few sleepless nights wondering if I am making the right decision, I have decided to retire from red ball cricket," he said in a statement.

"It's a difficult decision that I have made because it is by far my favourite format of the game."

"The battles that I faced on and off the field has made me the cricketer I am today."

"It has been a great journey and I am glad I could have represented my country."

"My baggy Test cap is the most precious cap I have ever been handed."

"Thanks to everyone that has played a part in my red ball career and shaped me into the cricketer I am today."

"But for now, a new challenge awaits and looking forward to it."

It is understood that the explosive batter is keen on the T20 franchise leagues with his commitments in the IPL, Hundred,



and MLC.

He has become the second South African player to retire from red-ball cricket within a week.

Dean Elgar also hung up his boots following the conclusion of the two-Test series against India that ended in a 1-1 draw last week.

Klaassen was dropped for the India series, as head coach Shukri Conrad went ahead with Kyle Verreynne.

Dhull loses captaincy after defeat in Ranji Trophy opener Himmat Singh is new skipper

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Yash Dhull was on Monday removed as Delhi captain, hours after the team suffered a heavy defeat against Puducherry in their Ranji Trophy opening match.

Senior batter Himmat Singh will now lead the side that takes on Jammu and Kashmir in an away game from January 12.

In an attempt to revive Delhi's flagging fortunes, U-19 World Cup-winning captain Dhull was made the skipper of the side in December 2022.

Since making his debut in February 2022, Dhull has made 1185 runs at an average of 43.88. Dhull made two and 23 in the nine-wicket loss to Puducherry at home.

The 21-year-old had also led the side in the white-ball tournaments earlier in the season.

"Yash is a talented player but is out of form. We wanted him to do well as a batter, that is why we have relieved him of captaincy duties. Himmat is our senior player and has done very well for us. He will captain the side," DCCA joint secretary Rajan Manchanda told PTI.

Dhull has struggled against fast bowlers, of late and was reluc-



tant to open the innings.

Himmat had led Delhi to a momentous win over Mumbai in the former's absence last season. The 27-year-old has played 22 first-class games, having made his debut back in 2017.

The team manages to court unwanted attention season after season. Last year, senior players Nitish Rana and Dhruv Shorey left Delhi and moved to UP and Vidarbha respectively.

Senior pacers Navdeep Saini, who was named in the India A squad to face visiting England Lions, and Ishant Sharma won't be travelling with the team to Jammu.

It has been learnt that veteran pacer Ishant will only be available for Delhi's home games.

Delhi, who have won Ranji Trophy seven times, last lifted the coveted trophy back in 2007-08.

O-2144

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, KUCHINDA
"e" Procurement Notice for Building Works
Identification No Online Tender /12 / RWD, Kuchinda / 2023-24.
E-mail :- eerw_kuchinda@yahoo.com

- Name of the work :: Building Works
- Total Number of Works :: 13 No.
- Class of Contractor :: B & C Class of Contractor
- Period of Completion :: 06 calendar months
- Availability of Tender online For bidding :: Dt.12.01.2024 to Dt.22.01.2024
- Last date & time of seeking tender clarification :: Dt.21.01.2024 at 5:00 A.M
- Date & time of opening of tender :: Dt.24.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

OJPR-26161/11/0019/2324

Superintending Engineer
Rural Works Division
Kuchinda

C-2280

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, KHARIAR
"e" - Procurement Notice
Bid Reference No. 2024_ORULB_99092
Tender Call Notice No. 51 / Dt. 02.01.2024 /

Bid documents consisting of specification, the schedule of quantities and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in the Govt. Website i.e. www.tendersorissa.gov.in

- Nature of work :: Civil construction works as mentioned in website.
- Estimated cost :: Rs. 61.61
- Period of completion :: As per DTCN.
- Date and time of availability of the documents in the portal :: 10.00 AM of dt. 03.01.2024 to 5.30 PM of dt. 16.01.2024
- Last date / time for receipt of Bids in the portal :: Upto 5.30 PM of dt. 16.01.2024
- Offline Submission of Bid :: 10AM of dt. 17.01.2024 to 5.30PM of 18.01.2024
- Name and address of the Officer inviting Bid :: Executive Officer, Khariar NAC District- Nuapada

Further, the details can be seen from the 'e'- procurement Portal :- www.tendersorissa.gov.in

OIPR-13136/11/0011/2324

Executive Officer,
NAC Khariar

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Auction Catalogue No.: SBP-CATG-MR-23, Date : 27.12.2023

SI No. 1. Assets Description : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (GMU-UR) AT MAHASAMUND "D" CATEGORY (MSMD) PF01 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. Station: MAHASAMUND/PF01 (MSMD)

SI No. 2. Assets Description : PROVISION OF TEA STALL (SMU-OBC/WOMEN) AT RAIRAKHOL STATION "D" CATEGORY (RAIR)/PF01 RAILWAY STATION FOR 05 YEARS. Station: RAIRAKHOL/PF01 (RAIR)

Auction Start Date & Time
17.01.2024 at 11:00 hrs. (For all SI.Nos.)

Auction Close Date & Time
17.01.2024 at 11:40 hrs. (For all SI.Nos.)

Tender Notice No.: C-NIT-TS-SBP1-GMU-PF01, Dtd.: 27.12.2023

Name of Work: TENDER FOR TEA STALL AT PF NO: 1 (SBPY END) OF SAMBALPUR (SBP) STATION FOR THE PERIOD OF 05 (FIVE) YEARS.

Reserve Price per annum : Rs. 8,00,000/- (Eight lakhs) only.

EMD: Rs. 2,00,000/- (Payment through net banking or payment gateway).

Tender Notice No.: C-NIT-TS2-KBJ-GMU-PF01, Dtd.: 27.12.2023

Name of Work: TENDER FOR TEA STALL AT PF NO: 1 OF KANTABANJI (KBJ) STATION FOR THE PERIOD OF 05 (FIVE) YEARS.

Reserve Price per annum : Rs. 1,68,776/- (One Lakh sixty eight thousand seven hundred seventy six) only.

EMD: Rs. 42,500/- (Payment through net banking or payment gateway).

Cost of Tender Documents (Non refundable): Rs. 2500+ (18% GST)-2950/- (Non refundable) cost of tender shall be accepted only online net banking gateway. (For all tenders)

Last date of issuing amendment/contingendum, if any: Till the bidding start date. (For all tenders)

Last Date and Time of submission of Tender: 22.01.2024 (Up to 11:00 hrs) (For all tenders)

Date and Time of opening of Tender: 22.01.2024 (Up to 11:30 hrs) (For all tenders)

Contract period: 05 (Five years) (For all tenders)

The Tender documents complete details available at www.irps.gov.in

Str. Divisional Commercial Manager, Sambalpur

O-2146

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, DHARMAGARH

BID IDENTIFICATION NO. DMGH/Online-06 OF 2023-23/Date: 03.01.2024
"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Bid documents consisting of Work, Estimate Cost, Cost of tender Paper, Bid Security, Time of Completion, Class of Contractor and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. website i.e. www.tendersorissa.gov.in

- Name of the Work :: Road works in the District of Kalahandi as mentioned in DTCN
- Total No of Works :: 28 Nos.
- Estimated Cost :: Rs.5.04 lakhs to 25.31 lakhs
- Period of Completion :: 01 Calendar Month

5. Other Details:

Availability of Tender online for bidding	Last date & time seeking tender clarification	Date & time of Opening of tender
From: 10.01.2024 At 10.00 AM	To: 20.01.2024 Up to 5.00 PM	22.01.2024 At 11.00 AM

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in

Executive Engineer
Rural Works Division
Dharmagarh

OIPR-25100/11/0007/2324

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
Office of the Engineer-in-Chief, Water Resources, Secha Sadan, Bhubaneswar
A-1161
Email Address: cemeh.eicwr.od@gmail.com
e-Procurement Notice: Bid Identification No.-CEM/MDA-01/2023-24

- Name of the Work :: Mechanical Gate Works
- No. of Works :: 01 (One)
- Category of executors :: SSI Units registered under DIC/ NSIC/ MSME for Irrigation Shutters / Hydro mechanical gates.
- Bid Identification No. :: CEM/MDA - 01/2023-24
- Tender Value :: Rs. 41,63,907.00
- Period of Completion :: 03(Three) calendar months.
- Date & time of availability of bid documents in the Portal :: From dt.11.01.2024 (10.00 AM) to dt.20.01.2024(5.30 PM)
- Last date/time for receipt of bid in the Portal :: dt.20.01.2024 (up to 5.30 PM)
- Date and Place of opening of bid :: dt.22.01.2024 (12.00 Noon onwards in the O/O the undersigned)
- Date and Place of opening of Technical Bid :: To be intimated to the qualified Bidders after evaluation of Financial Bid. Technical Bid.
- Name of the Officer inviting bid :: Chief Engineer, Mechanical, O/O the E.I.C, Water Resources, Odisha, Bhubaneswar

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

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, Mechanical
O/o-Engineer-in-Chief,
Secha Sadan, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-32820/11/0005/2324