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Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL
BHUBANESWAR RANCHI
RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN

City Vol. 20 Issue 25
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

www.dailypioneer.com

DADLS-96

JAI MAA SAMALEI

With The Divine Blessings of Maa Samalei
'Samalei Prakalpa' will be Inaugurated Tomorrow
27th January | 12:50pm onwards



Sand Art

Carnival Street

Water Projection

Temple Projection

Art Showcase

Cultural Programme

Exhibition

Witness the auspicious Maha Yajna &
get immersed in the celebration of Maa Samalei.



The Inauguration Ceremony will be broadcast
live on all Odia TV channels & live streamed on the
"IPR Odisha" YouTube Channel 8 AM onwards.



Govt announces

Holiday for schools, colleges for SAMALEI inauguration

CM to unveil project on Jan 27

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has declared holiday for all schools and colleges across the State on the occasion of Samaleswari Temple Area Management and Local Economy Initiatives (SAMALEI) project inauguration in Sambalpur which is scheduled on January 27.

The project, estimated at

around Rs 200 crore for the development and beautification of Goddess Samaleswari shrine in Sambalpur, will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

Government offices will also remain closed as the event coincides with a fourth Saturday. The holiday announcement was made keeping in mind the significance of Maa Samaleswari in Western Odisha and the shrine being a major Shakti Peeth in the

State. The declaration is a bid to ensure devotees can participate and celebrate the occasion, a release from the CMO stated.

As per reports, the rituals for the inauguration began earlier this week. A day before the inauguration, women in Sambalpur will take part in a Kalash Yatra and the water brought will be used for the holy bath of the goddess.

Announced by the Chief Minister in 2021, the

SAMALEI project entails re-development of the pilgrimage site. It includes construction of four heritage gates on the four sides of the temple and other amenities like parking slots, toilets and vending zones for public convenience.

Besides, a 30-meter-wide road will connect the temple with the Mahanadi bank and is believed to aid seamless conduct of Mahanadi Alati rituals for the presiding goddess.

Webinar

‘Our food grains not only less nutritious but harmful’

BIJAY MISHRA

■ BHUBANESWAR

The rice and wheat that the Indians eat are actually of low nutritional value as per a recent study led by scientists from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

The study assesses the health impact of the "historical shift" in nutrient profiles of rice and wheat, and warns that the impoverished staple grains could worsen the country's growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

In a webinar organised by magazine Down To Earth and

the CSE, various scientists including Soil Scientist, ICAR-Central Agroforestry Research Institute, Jhansi and the lead author of the study Sovan Debnath; former Professor, Directorate of Research, Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya, Kalyani and the study's co-author Biswapati Mandal; clinical nutritionist, consultant and writer Ishi Khosla and senior correspondent, Down To Earth Shagun discussed in detail on health impacts the impoverished grains.

"After the 1980s, the focus of breeders shifted to develop-

ing varieties that were resistant to pests and diseases and tolerant to stresses such as salinity, moisture and drought. Hence, over a period of time, what we are seeing is widespread that plants have lost their capacity to take up nutrients from the soil," told Dr Mandal.

Debnath said, "Our experiments showed that modern-bred cultivars of rice and wheat are less efficient in sequestering nutrients like zinc and iron, despite their availability in soil."

The Down To Earth report says that in the past 50 years,

the concentration of essential nutrients like zinc and iron has decreased by 33 per cent and 27 per cent in rice, and by 30 per cent and 19 per cent in wheat, respectively. What's worse, the concentration of arsenic, a toxic element, in rice has increased by 1,493 per cent. "In other words, our staple food grains are not only less nutritious, but also harmful to health. Amid continuous genetic tampering under the modern breeding programme, the plants have also lost their natural evolutionary defence mechanisms against toxins," it adds.

Temperature to dip in State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

After cold conditions accompanied with winds and moderate rainfall, the weather improved in several parts of the State on Thursday.

The Regional Centre of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here predicted that dry weather is expected from tomorrow onwards for the subsequent six days.

The minimum temperature (night temperature) is very likely to fall by 2 to 3 degree Celsius during the next 48

hours and there would be no large change thereafter.

However, several parts of the State are likely to experience dense fog and rainfall in the next 24 hours.

As per IMD, the trough now runs from the above cyclonic circulation over South Interior Karnataka to south Odisha coast across Telangana at 0.9 km above mean sea level.

On Friday, light rain is likely to occur in the districts of Gajapati, Ganjam, Koraput, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Nayagarh, Kalahandi.

Santosh Bala gets President's Medal

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

State Home Department Special Secretary Santosh Bala has been selected for the prestigious President's Medal for Distinguished Service (PSM) on the occasion of the 2024 Republic Day.

Bala, an IPS officer of 1995 batch, is among the 33 police personnel from Odisha chosen for the prestigious Gallantry/Service medals on the occasion.

Besides her, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Satyabrata Bhoi has been decorated for Meritorious Services (MSM).

Among the Odisha Police personnel receiving the President's Medal for Meritorious Service are Sarada Prasanna Pradhan (DSP), Pradip Kumar Samal (DSP), Prasanta Kumar Sahoo (DSP), Rashmi Ranjan

Mohapatra (Inspector), Rajat Kerketta (Deputy Commandant), Dilip Kumar Naik (Driver Havildar), Bijay Kumar Pradhan (Assistant Sub-Inspector), Banamali Ray (Sepoy), Nam Bahadur Chhetry (Sepoy), and Arati



Sahu (Constable).

The list of awardees also includes individuals recognised for their exemplary Gallantry:

Arun Kumar Bhue (Sub-Inspector), Motiram Sahoo (Havildar), Prakash Majhi (Commando), Jadumani Bhue (Commando), Umesh Seth (Commando), Bubun Kumbhar (Commando), Sanjaya Kumar Guru (Commando), Biswajit Das (Commando), Laxman Nayak (Commando), Satya Odi (Constable), Ramakanta Sahu (Sub-Inspector), Satyabadi Bhui (CT) and Suraj Kumar Sahu (CT).

Folk art, folk culture talk at Shailabala College

Research papers presented; Danda Nrutya, Daskathia, Khanjani performed

PNS ■ CUTTACK

A two-day national seminar on folk art and folk culture was organised by the PG Department of Odia, Shailabala Women's Autonomous College, Cuttack under the supervision of Principal Prof Gayatri Biswal, convenor Dr Chita Ranjan Panda, co-ordinator Dr Anirudha Khilar and nodal officer Dr Bikas Kumar Das. The seminar was inaugurated by Director, Odia Language, Literature and Culture Dillip Routray on January 21.

Former Dean, Central Uni-



versity of Hyderabad and former VC, Utkal University of Culture Prof Kamalkanta Mishra, State coordinator, SAMHATI cell, SCSTRTI Dr Paramananda Patel, Deputy Director, Distance Education,

National University of Tirupati Dr Bharat Bhusan Rath, former HOD, Hindi, Viswabharati Prof Rabindranath Mishra, HOD, Odia, Utkal University Dr Ramesh Chandra Mallick, Dr

Sishir Kumar Behera from Srirama Chandra Bhanja Deo University and eminent literary person Sarat Chandra Acharya joined as guests in the first day of the seminar. Danda Nrutya, Daskathia and

Khanjani were performed.

On the 2nd day, former HOD of MIL, Delhi University Prof Prakash Chandra Pattanaik, former HOD Odia, Viswa Bharati University Prof Baishnab Charan Samal, emi-

nent music director Bijay Malla, Odia cine critic Dr Surjo Deo graced as guests and highlighted various aspects of Odia folk culture. Dr Prasant Sethy from GM University, Gyan Ranjan Tripathy from Srirama Chandra Bhanja Deo University, Diptimayee Swain from SVM Autonomous College, Jagatsinghpur, Avas Kumar Baral from PN Autonomous College, Khurda, Manini Jena from Chief Election Commission Office, Bhubaneswar, Dr Narmada Parida, HOD, Philosophy, Dr Bidulata Sahoo, HOD Education of Shailabala presented research papers on the topic.

At last, various Odia folk elements and instruments prepared by Mishra-Shala of Dr Ajay Mishra were exhibited to create awareness about traditional Odia art and culture.

AIIMS launches drone service



Covers 60 km in 35 minutes

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country to integrate technology into the healthcare system, the AIIMS Bhubaneswar commissioned a drone health service on Thursday.

Two days after a successful trial run, the institute initiated the use of drones to transport

critical medical items. The inaugural drone flight transported a vital unit of blood for a needy patient from the AIIMS to the Tangi CHC covering a distance of 60 km in a remarkable 35 minutes. It also collected blood samples from the CHC before returning to AIIMS.

AIIMS Bhubaneswar Executive Director Dr Ashutosh Biswas expressed his satisfaction over the achievement.

GST Super caught taking bribe

Now under CBI scanner

PNS ■ ROURKELA

A team of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) sleuths caught a Goods and Services Tax (GST) Superintendent red-handed while he was accepting a bribe in the Civil Township locality under the Raghunathpali police limits of Rourkela on Thursday.

The senior GST official has been identified as Amarkant.

According to a source, Amarkant was nabbed by the CBI sleuths for demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 30,000 from a government contractor. He was accepting the bribe in his office at Civil Township.

Following the trap, the GST official was taken to an unknown place and was being thoroughly quizzed to gather more information.

CBI officials remained tightlipped and did not divulge any information when contacted.

Caste, religion, ethnicity bias

ST children's education mostly neglected

Education is one of the important means of social transformation, but access to quality education has been an issue of concern for the marginalized section, especially the ST of Odisha. Odisha with 62 ST communities comprising about one-fourth of the State's population, ranks as the 3rd largest tribal-populated State after MP and Maharashtra. Also, half of the geographical area of the State is identified as the 5th schedule area or tribal area. The education programme of the State must be inclusive of its ST population who have been denied a dignified share in educational resources for a long time.

The literacy rate of ST in Odisha is still lowest in comparison to other social groups and also below the national and States average. The women's literacy is far lower and the literacy of PVTGs such as Bonda is one of the lowest. The Constitution of India, Article 15(4)



MANAS JENA

says the State will make special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the SCs and STs. But the literacy gap between STs and other social groups has marginally decreased over the years despite policy interventions. The literacy rate of ST was 7 percent in 1961 and in 2011 it was 52 percent, as for other social groups, it was 21 percent and 72 percent respectively, with a gap of 20 percent. The dropout rates

for ST students are consistently high as nearly half of the total children enrolled in schools in tribal areas leave the school before they complete Class 8th. Barely 40 percent of ST children who are enrolled in class 1 actually reach class 10.

A study by BRIF-NIEPA- 2013 revealed such facts, but even in current years the position has not changed much as reported by the Annual Unified District Information on School Education (UDISE, 2019-2020) for dropouts and promotion rates both in Government and private schools. In the whole country, Odisha has the worst record of dropout rates, followed by Bihar with a high rate for ST students. It has been reported that out-of-school children mostly belong to marginalised sections and a higher chunk is from ST, who are engaged in domestic work and other forms of activities. The overall primary education scenario is much more

discouraging in Odisha in any of the evaluation indicators as revealed by various recent studies by both the Government and private institutions, such as UNESCO-2021, MoTA, SCSTRTI, PRATHAM and ASER.

It is said that the education policies of the Government from

residential schools has not improved much. In the tribal areas and tribal schools, the tribal teachers and non-teaching staff have an insignificant presence. There is always a complaint of social distance between ST/SC students and non-ST/SC teachers because of social-cultural and religious

SOCIAL CANVAS

the Kothari Commission -1968 to NEP- 2020 have neglected primary education and there has been a lack of focus on education of the marginalised sections such as ST who deserve special care and attention. There has not been an adequate budget for education and the representation of the ST in the education sector has been grossly neglected. Even today, in spite of many schemes and special funds with sub plans, the condition of

orientation. The teachers have many prejudices about the students of marginalised sections and their capability to study. A study by SCSTRTI on Evaluation of Ashram Schools in Odisha revealed that only 18 percent of teachers belong to ST and about 70 of the teachers are from non-ST/SC category. These residential schools are primarily inhabited by SC/ST students. Among the teachers, 64 percent are regular and 36 percent are

contractual and among non-teaching staff, 95 percent are contractual staff. There are vacancies of 20 percent in teaching staff positions. The concept of the Ashram school came into operation in 1920 as a private initiative of Gandhian social workers such as Thakkar Bapa and Adimajati Sevak Sangh and later, after 1950, these schools were taken over by the Government SCST Development Department. But the quality of teaching and standard of living of inmates has not changed to the desired extent.

There are 1,737 residential educational institutions and 5,488 hostels run by SCST Development Department covering more than 5 lakh inmates. Apart from the Government, there are residential schools run by NGOs and Odisha is the only State that has factory schools for ST children that are privately run in support of the Government. The Centre and State of Odisha have been running

schemes such as ANWESHA to support a minuscule section of ST/SC for quality education in private English medium schools. The attempt of the Government has been a selective intervention such as opening Ekalavya school where only a few students can get a better education, leaving a vast majority of students in vulnerable condition. It is unfortunate that the concept of universal quality education for all has been ignored and an unhealthy competition among marginalised sections has been encouraged to avoid the responsibility of education for all. While encouraging privatisation, the school rationalisation programme of the Government has led to the closing of 8,000 primary schools, mostly in tribal areas, without considering its wider impact on primary education of marginalised sections who largely depend on Government schools and residential schools for education.

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BHUBANESWAR, FRIDAY JANUARY 26, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

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26
January
HAPPY REPUBLIC DAY

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Modi Fulcrum of BJP Manifesto

INSPIRES FIRST TIME VOTERS

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

At the head of the Lok Sabha elections in April-May this year, BJP president JP Nadda officially launched the party's 2024 election campaign, releasing a video featuring a theme song dedicated to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The theme song in Hindi, "Sapne Nahi Haqeeqat Bunte Hai, Tabhi Toh Sab Modi Ko Chunte Hai" (Not dreams, but (we) weave reality, that's why everyone chooses Modi), highlights how Modi delivered on his promises and fulfilled people's dreams after they elected him at a time when the country was in a "bad shape". The campaign song was released by Nadda at an event where Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed young voters virtually. In a virtual interaction with millions of first-time voters from across 5,800 locations in the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited the nation's youth on Thursday to contribute to the Bharatiya Janata Party's manifesto for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. He urged them to share their thoughts on the NaMo app. The Prime Minister expressed his anticipation of meeting some of the contributors soon. Additionally, he provided a link to the website narendramodi.in, where individuals can share their inputs for the BJP's manifesto. He



also called upon the connected youth through social media not only to vote but also to assist people whose names were not on the voters' list in getting them included. "I invite the youth of India to contribute to the BJP manifesto for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Share your thoughts on the NaMo App. I look forward to meeting some of the contributors myself in the future," said PM Modi. His social media post about the BJP manifesto came on the occasion of National Voters' Day, during which he also urged those who have not yet registered themselves as voters to do so. The song, presented as a 2-minute and 13-second video, expresses the

ruling party's confidence and emphasises that Modi is all set to become the Prime Minister for the third consecutive term. It features a photo of Modi performing dandavat pranam in front of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. The video highlights the government's achievements in various sectors and the launch of schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Har Ghar Nal Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, and the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) that were introduced in the last 10 years of the Modi regime.

Continued on Page 2



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and others during the inauguration and foundation stone laying ceremony of various developmental projects in Bulandshahr on Thursday

PTI

Gifts Bulandshahr with dream projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
BULANDSHAHR/NEW DELHI

After inaugurating and laying the foundation stone for development projects worth over Rs 19,100 crore in Bulandshahr ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Thursday that he merely heralds the call for development, while it is the people who sound the poll bugle for him. Touching upon the completion of the praan pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya, the Prime Minister emphasised the priority of 'Rashtra Pratishtha', urging its elevation to new heights. "We must strengthen the path

from Dev to Desh and Ram to Rashtra," PM Modi declared during a massive rally in Bulandshahr, western Uttar Pradesh. He said that the time had come to elevate "Rashtra Pratishtha" to greater heights, aiming to transform India into a developed nation by 2047. Modi also mentioned the late BJP leader and former UP CM, Kalyan Singh, saying that he would have been pleased to witness the development in Ayodhya. "This region gave us Kalyan Singh, who devoted his life to 'Ram Kaaj' and 'Rashtra Kaaj'," Modi remarked in Bulandshahr.

Highways on a high under Gadkari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) is poised to transition to a Quality-Cum-Cost-based selection system for bidding on various road construction and related projects, replacing the age-old L-1 least-cost selection process. This shift aims to enhance the quality of the undertaken works. Nitin Gadkari, the Union Minister of Road Transport and



Highways (MoRTH), said, "The Ministry of Roads will soon adopt a qualitative tendering

process instead of the least-cost bidding process to promote quality and road safety in various projects. Qualitative tendering will facilitate the incorporation of safer road features in designs, considering the behaviour of road users." Gadkari lamented the fact that there have been several instances where officers in the ministry have omitted safety features in highway projects to reduce costs, ostensibly in the pursuit of financial viability.



French President Emmanuel Macron during his visit to the Amber Fort in Jaipur

PTI

Kerala Governor delivers knockout punch in Assembly

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI(M)-led Kerala Government found itself in an embarrassing situation as Governor Mohammed Arif Khan concluded his address to the Legislative Assembly on Thursday, the opening day of this year's session. The Governor, after his customary salutations to the House, read out the concluding line of the policy statement and promptly left the House, all within a span of one minute. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan (also known as Karana Bhoothan) stood bewildered and perplexed as the Governor exited the House, leaving both the shocked treasury and Opposition benches aghast. This is the first incident of its kind reported from anywhere in the country. There is nothing surprising in this development. The policy statement given to the Governor by the Government for reading out in the House is complete nonsense. The State



Government has blamed the Centre for all its omissions and commissions, leading the Governor to skip the entire speech. However, according to PC George, a seven-time legislator and former chief whip of the Kerala Government, the Governor has done nothing wrong, as this incident was waiting to happen. He said what is interesting is the speeches to be delivered by the Congress during the discussion on thanking the policy statement.

"The Congress and the CPI(M) are constituents of the INDI Alliance, and Kerala is the only State where they are not together. If the Congress is sincere, its legislators should expose the failures of the government. We saw a woman assistant public prosecutor committing suicide in Kollam earlier this week due to the harassment meted out to her by the CPI(M) leaders. A physically challenged person committed suicide in Wayanad because the State government failed to provide

the monthly pension due to him, while the octogenarian Mariyamma, another pensioner, has been going around the state with a begging bowl soliciting financial help from good Samaritans, as the CPI(M) government has failed to reimburse her dues for more than a year," said George. The 63-page-long speech, intended to be read out by the Governor, was full of eloquence on Pinarayi Vijayan and a scathing attack on the Centre. While highlighting NITI-Ayog's praise for the 'unprecedented' progress made by the State in the Human Development Index, the Keralaaceyam Global Show, and the Nava Kerala Sadass, which ended in a fiasco, the speech blamed the Centre for every setback suffered by Kerala, pointed out the veteran lawmaker. VD Satheshan, leader of the Opposition, blamed the CPI(M) and the BJP for the Governor's actions.

PM Modi to visit Sambalpur on Feb 3

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi would come to Odisha on February 3 on an official visit. This was informed by BJP State unit president Manmohan Samal on Thursday. However, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is yet to announce the details of the PM's tour.

The PM is to inaugurate a permanent campus of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM)-Sambalpur at Basantpur on the outskirts of Sambalpur. He was supposed to visit the IIM in December 2023.

Worth mentioning, the PM previously laid the foundation stone of the campus on Janu-

ary 2, 2021. The permanent campus has been built over an area of around 200 acres at a cost of over Rs 400 crore.

The PM will likely hold a public meeting in Sambalpur in view of the upcoming general elections. His proposed visit to Sambalpur district assumes significance as western Odisha is considered as the bastion of the BJP. Five of the present eight Lok Sabha members of the party are from western Odisha. Speculations are rife that Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan would be fielded by the BJP from the Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat presently represented by Nitesh Gang Deb, a political analyst said.

In State Japan firm to promote green hydrogen

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A delegation from IHI Corporation, Japan led by its president and CEO Hiroshi Ide along with their partners ACME Clean Energy Ltd led by its chairman Manoj Upadhyay visited Odisha on Tuesday.

It was a return visit by the IHI Japan delegation post the visit to Japan by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and meeting them in April 2023. IHI Corporation is a Japanese engineering company specialising in the manufacturing of heavy machinery, aero-

space equipments, shipbuilding and green hydrogen.

The IHI Corporation has signed an MoU with the ACME Group for collaboration opportunities across the green hydrogen and ammonia value chain. The ACME Group is setting up a large-scale production facility of green hydrogen and green ammonia at Odisha's Gopalpur Industrial Park with an investment of Rs 58,905 crore and employment of 3,700. The Chief Minister reiterated the commitment of his government towards making Odisha the "Green Hydrogen Hub" in the country.

Congress organises 'marriage' of BJD and BJP

Derides at the two parties' help to each other

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a symbolic and satirical gesture to justify that the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have a tacit understanding and are two sides of a coin, the Congress organised a 'marriage ceremony' between the two parties here on Thursday.

Not only were wedding cards designed and distributed, even a mandap was set up for exchange of vows between the BJP and the BJD at Master Canteen Square.

The bridegroom was from the BJP and the bride from the BJD.

Members of the National Students' Union of India (NSUI), the student wing of the Congress, distributed invitation cards and put up posters. The Congress even released a song "BJP sange BJD ra bahaghara", to which party members including Odisha in-charge Ajoy Kumar and Jatni MLA Suresh Routray were



seen shaking a leg.

"Both BJD and BJP are in a live-in relationship for 23 years. We are now finally making it official by getting the parties married," the Congress said.

Members of both parties, according to the Congress, are implicitly supporting each other on major issues. The BJD supported candidature of Droupadi Murmu and even the BJP's demonetisation move. Both of them supported election of Ashwini Vaishnaw to the Rajya Sabha. The BJD supported the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and even

helped the BJP to weaken the RTI. From Mamita Meher death to Mahanga double murder to Minister Naba Das' killing, both the BJP and the BJD supported each other in shielding the accused, the Congress claimed, further alleging that even the Enforcement Directorate and the CBI have softened their stance towards Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and 5T Chairman VK Pandian due to the BJD-BJP nexus.

"We are now officiating their relationship with seven vows of marriage," Congress members added.

Reacting to this, BJP spokesperson Anil Biswal said this is a narrative jointly conceived and propagated by the Congress and the ruling BJD. "The central leadership of Congress is now aware that the BJP is gaining stronghold in the State and is, therefore, resorting to such desperate tactics. The BJD is building the narrative and the Congress spreading it. Many Congress leaders have shared that the PCC president is chosen by Naveen Patnaik. The BJP took the Congress' share of votes in the by-elections," he added.

SIM card racket busted; 4 held in Keonjhar

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

The Keonjhar Cyber police have busted a racket involving fake SIM cards with the arrest of four members of a gang.

The accused had allegedly activated over 4,000 SIM cards in Odisha and sold them to cybercriminals in other States across the country.

The arrested were identified as Rajkishore Jena, Tapan Kumar Jena, Subrat Jena and Pradip Mishra. As many as 538 SIM cards, 18 mobile phones, five biometric scanners, bank passbooks and ATM cards have been seized from the possession of the accused.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the miscreants, posing as POS (Point of Sale) agents of several telecom service providers were activating



multiple SIM cards in the names of people of Keonjhar district.

Senior police officials informed that after activation, the miscreants were selling the SIM cards to cybercriminals in Jharkhand, Bihar and Rajasthan. The criminals subsequently used the pre-activated SIM cards to dupe

people across the country.

Keonjhar SP Nitin Kulaskar informed that the gang was busted after carrying out an investigation based on information shared by Maharashtra Police regarding a case there.

During the investigation, it was found that the accused were activating SIM cards and

selling them to cyber criminals at a price ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 1000 per SIM.

The pre-activated SIM cards were subsequently used by cybercriminals for fraud. So far, the Keonjhar police have found that 300 FIRs regarding the SIM cards used in cyber crimes have been reported in different parts of the country.

Doctor donates her house to women's college

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

Narayani Panda, a well-known doctor and social activist in Sambalpur, has donated her two-storied house at Bhutapada in the city to the Sambalpur Government Women's College.

"I had planned to set up a school at our residential building. However, I could not do that due to certain difficulties. I have donated the building to Government Women's College, Sambalpur for setting up of a hostel for students," said Panda, a noted gynaecologist.

According to her, the women's college does not have adequate hostel facilities for students. As a result, the students of the college are staying in rented accommodations at various localities of Sambalpur city.



"My house has enough facility for establishment of a women's hostel. The girls of the college can stay here without any difficulty. The college authorities can now set up the hostel at the first floor of the building. They will take over



the entire building after my death," Panda said.

Notably, Panda had donated Rs 30 lakh to her alma mater Gangadhar Meher University (GMU) in Sambalpur under the 'Mo College Abhiyan' of the State Gov-

ernment in 2021. Subsequently, the government released a matching grant of Rs 60 lakh to the GMU under the scheme. The funds were utilised for setting up of a Centre for IT Skills at the varsity.

OSBC polls Ganjam lawyer Panda elected member to 3 committees

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

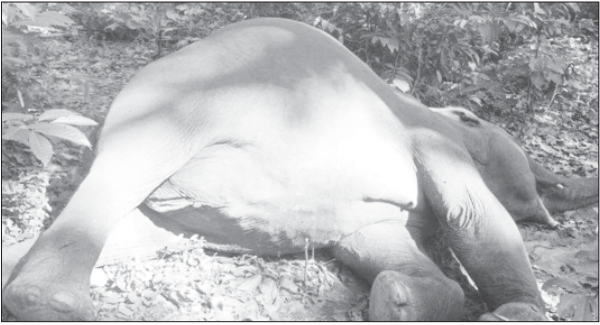
The 3rd meeting of the Odisha State Bar Council which was convened on January 21 under chairmanship of Justice Pramath Pattnaik, former Judge Odisha HC as Returning Officer for OSBC Election-2023 to elect members for different committees of OSBC.

All the 25 members of the Council participated in the election and cast their ballots. Sanjit Kumar Panigrahi, lawyer of Ganjam Bar Association, secured 17 ballots and was elected as one of the five

members elected to the OSBC Execute Council.

Similarly, senior lawyer of Ganjam Bar Association and spokesperson of PCC Pitabash Panda who secured highest vote in the last State Bar Council election and secured 1st position in the State won uncontested to three of the crucial committees, namely, finance, legal reform, and library of the State Bar Council, sources said. Notably, Panda who contested as member to the Executive Committee/Council of OSBC recently lost the election only by one vote.

In Nayagarh 3 held for electrocuting elephant



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Forest officials in Nayagarh district have nabbed three persons involved in the electrocution of a wild elephant in the district.

The elephant had been electrocuted by some wildlife criminals in the forest area near Daspalla, following which the forest officials launched an operation and nabbed the culprits.

Informing about the incident on X, Principal Chief

Conservator of Forests (PCCF), Wildlife, Susant Nanda thanked the Nayagarh forest officials for their effort to crack the case.

"Tusk recovered and three accused detained in Nayagarh. The culprits responsible for electrocution of the elephant have been apprehended. Team Nayagarh did some scientific and proper investigation without rest for last 48 hrs leading to the accused being caught. My sincere thanks," Nanda wrote on X.

Netaji Jayanti held in Brahmapur



PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was celebrated in Brahmapur by various organisations as well as political parties in Brahmapur.

The guests offered floral

tributes on the statue of Netaji, near PVN Petrol Pump. They recalled his dedication and sacrifices.

Brahmapur MP Chandra Sekhar Sahu, MLA Bikram Kumar Panda, Dr Ramesh Chandra Chaupatnaik, BeMC Mayer Sanghamitra Dalai, Deputy

Mayer E Vivek Reddy, BeMC Corporators, Odisha Cashew Development Corporation Chairman Subash Chandra Maharana, BJP leader Kanhu Charan Pati, Pravat Kiran Sadangi, Ram Kumar Patro, Sunil Social Sahu, apart from Abani Gaya from Manav

Adhikar Surakhya Manch, Rajendra Panda from Ganjam Zilla Bikash Manch, Dr Siba Prasad Mishra, Susanta Sabat, Shyam Sunder Khadanga, scribe Rabi Rath and Pragatishila Utkal Samaj State secretary Saroj Ranjan Panda among others were present.

‘AI of Things for Sustainability’ talk held at NIST

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

The School of Computer Science and Engineering at NIST Institute of Science and Technology organised the SERB sponsored International Conference on Artificial Intelligence of Things for Sustainability (AIoT4S-2024) here on Saturday adopting a hybrid mode format. The conference attracted substantial interest, receiving over 220 abstracts, of which 106 were accepted for publication across

various journals.

The event commenced with a warm welcome address by Principal Dr P Rajesh Kumar. Dr Ashutosh Dutta, Senior Scientist and 5G Chief Strategist at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, graced as chief guest. Dr Manju Khari, Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University and Arvind Kumar Sharma, Scientist at SAMEER (R&D of DIT, Government of India), New Delhi respectively, joined as guests of honour.

Dr Manas Ranjan Patra, Professor, School of Computer Science and Engineering, assumed the role of Programme Chair, while Dr Brojo Kishore Mishra, Professor and Head and Dr Sandipan Mallik, Head of Research and Innovation, were the convenor and co-convenor of the event respectively. Vice Principal Dr Bishnukar Nayak offered vote of thanks.

The highlight of the conference was the captivating session featuring keynote

speakers like Dr Utpal Roy and Dr Chitaranjan Mahapatra. Dr Roy illuminated the revolutionary potential of AI in healthcare, specifically addressing Parkinson's Disease screening through innovative methods like keystroke dynamics in at-home settings. Dr Mahapatra, on the other hand, emphasized the critical need for responsible and sustainable AI practices, sparking important discussions about the ethical dimensions of AI development.

In Rayagada 2 die after being hit by train engine

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

Two persons were killed when a test train engine hit them between the Rayagada and Singhpur railway stations late on Wednesday night.

The deceased were identified as Amisirao Pulaka and Sibana Kadraka of Debadalguda village in Rayagada district.

The victims were sitting on the third railway track which is being laid between Rayagada and Koraput when the test train engine hit them near Singhpur killing them on the spot.

Tension prevailed in the area

following their deaths as hundreds of villagers demonstrated at the spot demanding compensation for the families of the deceased.

The villagers alleged that there was neither any announcement nor signboard warning the villagers that it was a no-movement zone.

The local railway authorities said they have informed their superiors at Waltair for further action

Notably, the Railway Safety Commissioner recently visited the newly-built railway track on the day to inspect the work.

In Baleswar Industrial expo, trade fair from Jan 30



PNS ■ BALESWAR

The Expo Odisha-2024, a national-level industrial exhibition cum trade fair, will be held here at the ITI Ground between January 30 and February 4.

The event is jointly hosted by the Balasore Chamber of Industries and Commerce (BCIC) in association with District Small Scale Industry Association (DSSIA) and this is the 20th year of such an expo event, informed BCIC president Sanjay Das.

There would be 300-350

stalls and entrepreneurs from different sectors, including education, hotel, automobile, export and import would be participating in it. Besides, there would be 15 kiosks of Mission Shakti, 12 of cottage industries and 20 of DIC would be participating in it, he informed. There would be colourful cultural programmes on each evening and reputed artists would showcase their talents. DIC Manager Pranab Nayak and BCIC secretary Sunil Modi were among others present in a Press meet, while divulging this.

Indian republic @ 74: In quest of economic democracy

Granville Austin, the renowned constitutional expert in his seminal book 'Working a Democratic Constitution' considered the Indian Constitution as a seamless web, with three strands that are mutually dependent and intertwined. Those three strands are: Protecting national unity and integrity; establishing institutions and the spirit of democracy; and fostering socio-economic reforms.

There was complete unanimity amongst the founding fathers that the fundamental rights in Chapter III would be the conscience of the Constitution. Influenced by the Bill of Rights of the USA (1791), four concepts viz freedom of speech, the right to life, and liberty and right to property were unequivocally boxed into the original Constitution. Equality before the law, a British Concept, and equal protec-



SATYA NARAYAN MISRA

tion of the law, an American concept, were part of equality jurisprudence (Article 14) of Part III. Art. 14 (Equality), Art. 19 (Right to Freedom), and Art. 21 (Protection of Life and Liberty) became the golden triangle of fundamental rights, as India was coming out of the cusp of asphyxiating colonial repressive legal architecture. In the words of CJI YV Chandrachud: "Three articles, Art. 14, Art. 19, and Art. 21

stand between the heaven of freedom conjured by Nobel Laureate Tagore and the abyss of unrestrained power, as in the Rowlatt Act under the British.

While Part III inked the architecture of individual political and cultural rights, Part IV of the Constitution delineated the goals of socio-economic justice before the State in the quest of a free country to move towards a more egalitarian society. Modelled after the Irish Constitution of 1937, the principles laid down in this Part were 'fundamental in the governance of the country.' But unlike the fundamental rights, which are justiciable in nature, the directive principles were not enforceable by any court. Part IV is an amalgam of socialist principles like promotion of the welfare of people (Art. 38), distribution of material resources to serve the common good (39(b)), raising the level of nutrition (47),

Gandhian principles like organizing village Panchayats, prohibiting cow slaughter, and liberal principles like Uniform Civil Code throughout the country and provision of education from the age 6-14. While Ambedkar felt that the directives are a novel feature to usher in socio-economic democracy, T T Krishnamachari felt it was a 'veritable dustbin of sentiments.' It was BN Rau whose proposal for distinguishing Part III and Part IV as justiciable and nonjusticiable was finally accepted. This dichotomy between individual rights and the goals of socio-economic justice has witnessed some acrimonious debates in the Supreme Court, which was mandated to be the final interpreter of the Constitution and custodian of fundamental rights.

The opening salvo was fired when the reservation of seats

in Government medical and engineering colleges by the Madras Government was struck down by the Supreme Court in Champakam Dorairajan case (1951) as violating the equal right of admission in publicly funded institutions under Art. 29(2). The promotion of education of weaker sections of society under Art. 46, being a nonjusticiable directive, the Supreme Court ruled, it cannot override a fundamental right. However, when the Government added 31C to the Constitution to promote distributive justice, Art. 39(b), by trumping the right to equality under Art. 14 was upheld by the court in Keshavananda Bharati Case (1973). This was a paradigm shift in the Supreme Court's perception of socio-economic justice as fundamental in governance. The Minerva Mills Case (1980) restored a balance between Part III and

IV, 'calling them two wheels of a chariot,' which should move harmoniously. However, this idyllic construct of harmony between rights and goals masks a few glaring development deficits. Art. 38(2) encourages the State to reduce income inequality and glaring gaps in status and opportunity, Art. 47 enjoins upon the State to improve the level of nutrition. The ground reality in India brings out a serious mismatch between Constitutional goals and reality on the ground.

As per the latest NFHS-V report, stunting among children is as high as 35.5%. This is due to persistent malnutrition and unhygienic ambience. Anemia amongst children and pregnant women has increased from 58.6% and 50.4% in 2015 respectively to 67.1% and 52.2% in 2021. The World Inequality Report (2022) brings out how the top 10% have become richer with a 57% share

of total income as against 40% in 1951. On the other hand, the bottom 50% accounted for only 13.1% of total income as against 20% in 1951.

After economic liberalization in 1991, we have an ironic situation where the Constitution swears by socialism but the economic system is propelled by capitalism and free markets, without sharing prosperity with bottom 50% of our citizens. Besides, early childhood education and care included in Art. 45 have a sorry tale to recount as per National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Prof T Khaitan in a stirring analysis believes that the directive principles serve as an important device for constitutional consensus building by achieving accommodation of ideological dissenters like the socialists, Gandhians, and cultural nationalists at the time of the drafting of our Consti-

tion. While socialists wanted a full-blown socialist constitution, the Gandhians rooted for autonomous village republics and the cultural nationalists, a Hindi-speaking Hindu Rashttra. The ideas of cultural ideologies, unlike John Rawls' idea of justice like the right to livelihood, right to work, unemployment benefits, living wage, and free and compulsory education, have extremely polarizing impacts. In contrast, the South African Constitution (1997) rejected directives as inadequate for its transformative agenda. The thrust is to transform the country in an egalitarian direction. The right to housing, food, water, and healthcare are part of fundamental rights. Unlike India, economic rights and economic justice move hand in hand with political rights in South Africa.

(Dr Misra is a Professor Emeritus)

New era of peace has begun in Jammu and Kashmir: Shah

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Dedicating a fleet of e-buses to the people of Jammu, Union Home Minister Amit Shah claimed on Thursday that a new era of peace has begun in Jammu and Kashmir. This is marked by a sharp decline in incidents of terrorist violence and civilian killings after the abrogation of Article 370. Shah mentioned that the Narendra Modi government is also rigorously cracking down on terror financing, sealing and freezing the assets of terrorists. Additionally, several terrorist organizations have been outlawed to intensify the crackdown on them. During the event conducted via video conferencing, Shah handed over appointment letters to Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service (JKAS) officers and compassionate appointees. In his address, the Union Home Minister credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership for transforming Jammu and Kashmir, once "known for terrorism," into a burgeoning tourism hub. "I want to inform you that



there has been a 66 percent reduction in terrorism-related incidents. There has been an 81 percent decline in civilian killings and a 48 percent decrease in security forces' casualties after the scrapping of Article 370," he announced to the gathering. "This indicates that a new era of happiness, peace, and normalcy has begun in Jammu and Kashmir," he

added. Sharing related statistics, Shah mentioned that 2,654 organised stone-pelting incidents occurred in Jammu and Kashmir in 2000, but no such incidents took place in 2023. "As many as 132 organised shutdowns occurred in 2010, but there were none in 2023. A total of 112 civilians lost their lives in stone pelting in 2010, but no civilian lives were lost in stone

pelting in 2023. Additionally, a total of 6,235 civilians were injured during that period (2010)," he added. The minister highlighted that terror financing has also been curbed in Jammu and Kashmir. "Properties are being sealed and attached, and many terrorist organisations have been banned to curb their activities," he said. Emphasising the investment

potential, Amit Shah mentioned that Jammu and Kashmir received investments worth Rs 297 crore in 2019-20, which increased to Rs 2,153 crore in 2022-23. "Nearly 6,000 crore of investments are in the pipeline. This demonstrates progress," he added. Jammu and Kashmir's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) has increased from Rs 1 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 2,27,927 crore in 2022-23. Shah further appealed to the youth of Jammu and Kashmir to enroll themselves as voters and become part of the democratic setup of the country. "The youth of Jammu and Kashmir, who carry computers in their hands instead of stones, are connected and contributing to the progress of Jammu and Kashmir. Over 7 lakh youths have taken part in sports, and this is significant," he said. Shah mentioned that 173 projects have been completed under the Smart City Mission, and homes for 1,45,000 people have been allocated within a very short period from 2019 to 2024.

TMC: Adhir hurdle in Opp alliance

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has said that Adhir Chowdhury, the president of the Bengal Pradesh Congress, has diminished the chances of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance in Bengal. A day after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ruled out any electoral alliance with the Congress, accusing it of not only ignoring her at the instance of the CPI(M), senior TMC leader Derek O'Brien said on Thursday that, apart from the BJP, against which the INDIA alliance had been formed, Adhir Chowdhury was the person who undermined the anti-saffron coalition in the state.

In an apparent reference to Chowdhury's previous remarks that the Congress was not dependent on the TMC, O'Brien said the AICC member was "speaking the language of the BJP," reiterating, "The three reasons for the alliance not working in Bengal are Adhir Chowdhury, Adhir Chowdhury, and Adhir Chowdhury. Not only did O'Brien, the TMC spokesperson, express this sentiment, but Kunal Ghosh, another TMC spokesperson, also stated, "The main dis-



rupter of the INDIA Alliance in Bengal is Adhir Chowdhury, who has been dancing to the tunes of the Left, which itself has zero seats in Bengal. We are relieved and happy because now we will be able to tell the secular voters to choose either between TMC and the Congress-Left, who are zero in Bengal. Zero and zero make for zero only. Adhir Chowdhury is batting for the BJP. Tomorrow, the people of Bengal will not spare him." While Chowdhury had previously called Banerjee an "opportunistic personality who herself cannot remember when she spoke the truth last time," one of his close confidants and former Bengal Minister Manoj Chakrabarty added an appellation for the Chief Minister, calling her a "dala" or agent of the BJP in INDIA who

was "leaking messages to the BJP" to save her and her family's skin. Another senior PCC leader, Soumya Aich, also attacked Banerjee for "literally decimating" the Congress "not through elections but by engineering defections in our party using the police and her goons." Another PCC leader, Kaustav Bagchi, said, "Joining hands with the TMC will be hara-kiri in Bengal, as the revival will be lost. The Congress votes will then go to the Left and even the BJP." Against this backdrop, a majority of the PCC leadership, with a few exceptions like Malda South MP AH Khan Chowdhury, were inclined towards an alliance with the Left, which had recently experienced a significant revival by winning about 21 per cent of the votes, just behind the BJP, in the rural elections last year. However, the State Congress demanded at least 6-8 seats if an alliance were to be imposed on the State party. They sought Darjeeling, Raiganj, Malda North, Malda South, Murshidabad, Jangipur, Behrampur, Basirhat, and Purulia. The TMC, on the other hand, was not willing to concede Malda South and Behrampur, presently held by Khan Chowdhury and Adhir.

Gyanvapi case: 11 applications for copies of ASI survey report

PTI ■ VARANASI

Eleven people, including from both the Hindu and Muslim side, applied for copies of the ASI survey report on the Gyanvapi mosque complex adjoining the Kashi Vishwanath temple here on Thursday, counsel for the Hindu litigants said. The applicants are likely to get the report either on Thursday or Monday after a scrutiny of the applications, Hindu side counsel Madan Mohan Yadav said. Following an order of the district court passed on July 21 last year, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) carried out a scientific survey of the Gyanvapi premises to determine whether the mosque was constructed over a pre-existing structure of a Hindu temple. "Till afternoon, 11 persons have applied from both sides



for copies of ASI survey report," Yadav said. Yadav said advocates representing the five petitioners from the Hindu side, Anjuman Intezamia Masjid committee, Kashi Vishwanath Trust, the state government, the chief secretary, the home secretary and the Varanasi district magistrate have applied for the copy of the survey report. On Wednesday, District Judge A K Vishvesh ruled that the

ASI survey report on the Gyanvapi mosque complex will be given to both the Hindu and Muslim sides. After hearing the matter, Judge Vishvesh said both the parties to the suit must be provided copies of the survey report filed by the ASI in the court so that they can file objections against it. The court also allowed the Kashi Vishwanath temple trust, Varanasi DM and the state's home secretary to get a copy of the ASI survey report. The court passed the order on a petition filed by Rakhi Singh and others. The survey was ordered by the court after the Hindu petitioners claimed the 17th-century mosque was constructed over a pre-existing temple. The ASI had submitted its survey report to the district court in a sealed cover on December 18.

High alert in JK for Republic Day

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The entire security grid in Jammu and Kashmir has been kept on a state of high alert in the run up to the Republic Day celebrations in the wake of the prevailing security situation in the region. The security forces are relying on drone cameras to conduct aerial reconnaissance of all the main venues of the Republic Day functions and other vital installations. Special security checkpoints have been activated along the border areas to maintain a tight vigil on the movement of suspected persons in the area. The joint teams of security forces have been kept on high alert and frequently conduct area domination patrols in their areas of jurisdiction. The security in and around the vital security installations has been beefed up as per the standard protocol to prevent entry of any miscreant and anti-national element. Referring to the security arrangements, Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police, R R Swain on Thursday asserted that all security measures are in place. Meetings have been conducted at various levels, including discussions with the army, CAPF led by CRPF, and other intelligence agencies to ensure peaceful conduct of the Republic day functions across the Union territory. "We have ensured the security of the venue and considered all potential threat scenarios. We assure you that the celebration will be peaceful, and we



encourage citizens to celebrate it with full fervour", he added. Paying tributes to the martyred police officers, DGP said that in 33 years, J&K Police have lost more than 1600 personnel in Pakistan Sponsored Proxy war which is the largest among security forces in J&K. He said that losing 1600 personnel is the benchmark and watermark in terms of demonstrating the commitment to the national security effort.

an effort to chronicle these stories, individual stories as well as the collective effort of the Jammu and Kashmir Police and members in the fight against terror. DGP said that J&K Police has been honored with 72 gallantry medals by the President of India and the Government of India. "This recognition, as I learned from the Ministry of Home Affairs website, makes us the highest gallantry medal winners among state police forces," he added.

BJP demands apology from Lalu daughter for insulting Bihar CM

PTI ■ PATNA

The Bihar BJP on Thursday accused RJD supremo Lalu Pasad's Singapore-based daughter Rohini Acharya of insulting Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and demanded a public apology from her. Acharya had used derogatory language against Kumar, also the ruling JD(U) president, in several posts on X, which were deleted later,

Bihar BJP leader Nikhil Anand claimed. Sharing a screenshot of the purported deleted posts, Anand said, "These are like an arrow released from the bow." The BJP leader said if Acharya regrets having used words like 'badtameez' (ill-mannered) against the chief minister in the post, she should publicly express regret and apologise.



A section of the media claimed that Acharya had reacted to Kumar's statement against dynastic politics at a JD(U) rally commemorating former state chief minister and socialist icon Karpoori Thakur's birth anniversary on Wednesday. Thakur was conferred with the Bharat Ratna posthumously earlier this week. While addressing the rally here, Kumar criticised

dynastic politics, stating that JD(U) followed the path shown by the late leader by not promoting anyone from the family in the party ranks. A section of the media claimed that his statement was indirectly aimed at the RJD, an ally of the JD(U) in Bihar's Mahagathbandhan government in which sons of Prasad are ministers. Prasad's younger son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav

is the Deputy chief minister of the Bihar government, while his elder son Tej Pratap Yadav is a minister in the state cabinet. The RJD president's eldest daughter Misa Bharti is a Rajya Sabha member. Responding to Kumar's comments on dynastic politics, Acharya attacked the chief minister in posts on X but she deleted them later, according to BJP leader Anand.

BRO to fence major portion of India, Myanmar border, says top official

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) will fence a major portion of the strategic India-Myanmar border, and a 10-km stretch in Manipur has already been covered, a senior official said. The Ministry of Home Affairs has identified around 1,700 km of fencing that needs to be done, BRO's Additional Director General (East) PKH Singh said. The organisation has already finished fencing 10 km along the border in Manipur's Moreh, which was handed over to the Assam Rifles, Singh told PTI in an interview. Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently said the Centre has decided that the India-Myanmar border will be protected by barbed fencing like the India-Bangladesh border, and the government was rethinking the free movement agreement with Myanmar.

Four Indian states - Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram - share a 1,643-km border with Myanmar. Singh said the next 80-km stretch in Manipur has also been identified and the detailed project report (DPR) submitted to the ministry. Fencing the remaining 250 km, along with its approach roads, is in the planning stage with the DPR under preparation. "The fencing of the India-Myanmar border is an important project for the

BRO, which is now coming up in Moreh. The area around this border has been unfenced since long, and there was a need to check the activities around it," the ADG said. Singh said the BRO has a long-term roll-out plan of nearly Rs 30,000 crore in the northeast over the next five years, and out of this, almost two-thirds is focused in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. The organisation was earlier involved in fencing the India-Bangladesh border along with the BSF, he said. "We are currently executing projects covering a wide canvas of disparate infrastructure development, ranging from connecting far-flung remote areas to building strategic roads for the armed forces, encompassing bridges, tunnels, protection works for landslide zones, airfields, helipads and jetties," he said. Besides the northeastern states, the BRO East is also involved in developing infrastructural facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. "In the archipelago, we are at present focusing on the Campbell Bay area where a 40-km stretch at Indira Point was washed away during a tsunami. We are in an advanced planning stage for a runway extension and construction of jetties along with accommodation facilities in the area," Singh said. The BRO has received a lot of requests from CAPFs, the navy and coast guard in the area for various works stretching around 1,600 km, he said.

12 injured in clash between MCC activists and CISF in Dhanbad

PTI ■ DHANBAD

More than 12 people were allegedly injured in a clash between activists of Marxists Coordination Committee (MCC) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel on Thursday in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district, police said. The clash occurred around 9.30 am during gherao of the DVC's Maithon administrative building by MCC workers led by former Nirsra MLA Arup Chatterjee in protest against the eviction notice to the Maithon Dam-based shopowners. Chatterjee alleged that CISF personnel resorted to lathicharge on the activists who were demonstrating peacefully. "More than a dozen MCC activists and shopowners were injured in the lathicharge by the CISF personnel," Chatterjee claimed. The injured persons, mostly MCC workers, were admitted to BP Neogi Hospital in Maithon. CISF DIG Vijay Kajla told reporters that the agitators who were gheraoing the DVC administrative building turned violent all of a sudden and started brickbating



security personnel. "CISF had to resort to mild force to disperse the agitating crowd," he said. Maithon police station officer-in-charge Rajnish Kumar and Gyarahkund block development officer (BDO) Binod Kumar Karmkar also reached the spot and controlled the situation. Asked about lathicharge, Kumar said that they were probing the incident. "We will be able to say whether lathicharge took place or

not only after the investigation gets completed," he said. Earlier, the agitators blocked all entrances to the administrative building, stopping the entry of staff and officials. Chatterjee said, "We were trying to negotiate with DVC officials over eviction notices to Maithon Dam-based shopkeepers. But they did not call us to talk. Today we reached there for a peaceful demonstration when CISF resorted to lathicharge."

Tripura Police strengthened bond between tribals, non tribals: CM Manik Saha

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Holding eaceful assembly elections in February last year and strengthening the bond between tribals and non-tribals were the greatest achievements of Tripura Police in its 150-year-old journey, Chief Minister Manik Saha said here on Thursday. Tripura Police was established by Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Bahadur in 1873 to maintain law and order in the erstwhile princely state. "Holding incident-free assembly elections in February last was the greatest achievement of Tripura Police. It also facilitated people to cast their votes without any disturbance," he said, after inaugurating the main programme of the force at Prajna Bhavan here. Saha said the state police force has also achieved success by strengthening the bond between tribals and non-tribals by adopting a people-friendly policy. "I had a meeting with senior police officers in the backdrop of the



programme. We vowed to fight against the drug menace in the state," he said. Heaping praise on the role of police, the CM said peace is the precondition of development, growth and prosperity. "If law and order is not conducive, investments for development will not serve any purpose. Therefore, law enforcement agencies must act against those who violate the law of the land. Police should also adopt a pro-people policy to win the hearts of people," he said. DGP Amitabh Rajan and additional DGP Anurag Dhankar also attended the function.

To each their own

Two major players in INDIA bloc plan to go it alone in LS polls. Where does it leave the Oppn grouping?

Despite the constituents' best efforts to paper over their differences and present a united facade, the worst apprehensions about the INDIA bloc are coming true. Its seat-sharing formula is just not taking shape. The much-hyped bloc, an alliance of 28 Opposition parties aiming to counter the BJP's dominance, seems to be unravelling. Recent announcements by key constituents indicate a shift in strategy, with prominent leaders opting for independent paths in the Lok Sabha elections. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's rejection of sharing seats with the Congress and AAP's decision to go it alone in Punjab are enough to upset the bloc's apple cart even before it could start its electoral journey. Mamata, the TMC chief and a key architect of the INDIA bloc, has signalled a fracture in the purported unity. She has emphasised the need for regional parties to assert themselves and prioritise State-centric issues over national alliances. This stance has added an element of unpredictability



to the bloc's future, as it challenges the idea of a united front against the BJP. As if Mamata's stance were not enough, AAP has also decided to go it solo. In Punjab, the party has declared its intent to contest the elections independently. It comes as a major blow to the INDIA bloc: In retaliation, the Congress could go it alone in Delhi and Haryana, effectively making it a three-cornered contest in Delhi, Punjab and Haryana.

The challenge for the INDIA bloc now lies in reconciling the divergent aspirations of its constituent parties and finding common ground to build a cohesive narrative on. It is, however, essential to acknowledge that the dynamics of Indian politics are fluid and alliances can evolve swiftly. The INDIA bloc could potentially reassess its strategy and work towards a more unified front as the general elections approach. The posturing by the TMC and AAP should make the INDIA bloc leaders go back to the basics and rework their strategy. It may find renewed purpose in addressing shared concerns while respecting the autonomy of individual parties. The success of the INDIA bloc at the hustings hinges on its ability to navigate internal differences. The bloc's initial promise lay in consolidating regional strength; for this, it must overcome fissures and present a coherent vision for governance at the national level. It needs to convince voters that a coalition of regional parties can provide stable and effective leadership, addressing both local and national concerns. Its success will depend on its capability to forge a common agenda, communicate it effectively to the electorate and demonstrate a united front against the ruling party. While the bloc's future appears uncertain at the moment, political landscapes are known for rapid transformations. The road to general elections will test the resilience and adaptability of the INDIA bloc, determining whether it can emerge as a potent force capable of shaping the national narrative and challenging the status quo.

PICTALK



Devotees take part in a religious procession to celebrate Thaipusam festival, in Chennai

PTI

Managing diversity in small and remote teams

Small companies managing multi-location teams thrive through clear communication, inclusivity and technological leverage

In the modern era of remote work and globalisation, small companies are increasingly embracing multi-location teams to tap into diverse talent pools and expand their reach. Effectively managing teams spread across different locations presents unique challenges and opportunities. Small companies can mitigate these challenges by exploring strategies that help to successfully navigate the complexities of managing multi-location teams. First and foremost, since technology has made remote working possible, it should be further leveraged for seamless communication. It is the cornerstone of managing multi-location teams. Small companies should invest in reliable communication tools that facilitate seamless collaboration. Platforms like video conferencing, project management software, and instant messaging can bridge the geographical gap. Having established a connection with the team, it is vital to ascertain clear communication protocols that are essential to avoid misunderstandings and ensure everyone stays informed. Establish guide-



lines for virtual meetings, project updates, and team communication channels. Consistency in communication practices helps maintain a sense of unity among team members, regardless of their physical locations. While written communication is valuable, face-to-face interactions build stronger connections. It is beyond doubt that distance can create a sense of isolation, making team building crucial for multi-location teams. It is therefore important to include virtual team-building activities, such as online games, virtual happy hours, or collaborative projects. These initiatives promote camaraderie and create a positive team culture. In a long-distance, multi-location work environment, clarity is the king. Clearly defining roles and responsibilities for each team member to avoid confusion and ensure accountability is a must. Small

companies should establish a transparent framework that outlines expectations and deliverables. This clarity minimizes the risk of duplication of efforts and promotes efficiency within the multi-location team. Utilizing the requisite project management tools play a pivotal role in coordinating tasks and projects across different locations. Small companies can benefit from using tools that enable real-time collaboration, document sharing, and task tracking. These tools enhance productivity and streamline workflows within the multi-location team. In addition, inclusivity is vital for the success of multi-location teams. Small companies should actively cultivate a culture that values diverse perspectives and contributions. Provide opportunities for skill-building, training, and career advancement for all team members, regardless of their location. This investment enhances individual capabilities. Another important aspect that helps to manage a small multi-location team is regular check-ins and feedback sessions to assess the well-being and

progress of each team member. Small companies should create an open and supportive environment where team members feel comfortable sharing concerns or ideas. Constructive feedback sessions help in addressing challenges and fostering continuous improvement. To enhance transparency in the multi-location teams, a centralized knowledge repository accessible to all team members is a vital requirement. This repository can contain important documents, project updates, and resources, ensuring that everyone has access to the information they need. This type of centralised hub enhances transparency and minimises the risk of information silos within the multi-location team. Last but not least, being a multi-location team, embrace and celebrate the diversity within the multi-location team. Small Companies should promote cultural awareness, acknowledging the unique backgrounds, customs, and perspectives of team members. (The writer is assistant professor at Amity University; views are personal)



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Taiwanese conundrum for mainland China

The best bet for the Chinese is to seek organic support for 'reunification' with the main land from the Taiwanese themselves. A coercive posture and rough language would not help

Contrary to Chinese assertions, insistences, and sensitivities to what it unilaterally calls 'Chinese Taiwan' or 'Taiwan, China', the Republic of China (ROC) or Taiwan has its own functional democracy, constitution and approximately 3,00,000 combatants protecting its territorial sovereignty. With mainland China claiming to represent One-China as the legitimate power, the battle of wits tilted in favour of mainland China in 1971, when the United Nations switched diplomatic recognition onto mainland China. Since then, mainland China has flexed its patent admixture of financial, military, industrial and diplomatic power to bludgeon support in its favour. Today, the fast-receding number of countries that recognize Taiwan has fallen to a meagre 12 countries. Even this list includes relatively 'lightweight' nations like St Vincent and the Grenadines, Eswatini and Tuvalu, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, Palau, Nauru, Holy See, Marshall Islands etc. Chinese President Xi Jinping has repeatedly warned against "Taiwanese independence separatism" and promised that Taiwan would "surely be unified". Xi's rhetoric is deeply suggestive and intimidatory. However, audiovisuals of choreographed brinkmanship aside, such a beligerent move would be anything but a cakewalk in terms of consequences for the Chinese. Practically, Chinese sabre-rattling is part of deliberately postured nationalism that is vital to buttress the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime, as the main lever of legitimacy i.e., socio-economic upliftment of the Chinese, is now under extreme stress. In the absence of economic prosperity, muscle-flexing against Taiwan distracts and galvanises the Chinese masses. The disproportionate Chinese military strength to Taiwan's militaristic preparedness on paper notwithstanding, the near-certain international reactions of sanctions and embargoes onto the Chinese if they were to attack Taiwan, would break the proverbial camel's back, in terms of fur-



ther economic sufferings for the Chinese masses. It could lead to unsustainable economic regression and societal discontent. It is a price that Xi Jinping simply cannot afford, especially as the economic upside of a forcible integration, would pale in comparison to the downsides of a plausible invasion. Besides, Taiwan is extremely well-fortified with missiles, early warning systems, precision-strike weapons, underwater mines, and other counter-attack capabilities that could inflict significant damage on any invasion attempt, irrespective of the ultimate result. In any case, the Chinese would have to mount a significant fleet and accompanying wherewithal which could easily alert of an impending invasion – a discreet and sudden Chinese attack, is next to impossible. Even the fact that a potential Chinese invasion would involve breaking through large urban squalors and cities, it would entail deadly urban warfare that has tested the skills of even hardened Israelis and Russians in recent times, let alone the untested Chinese PLA soldier. Urban warfare and associated 'costs' could lead to the undoing of any residual support the Chinese may have amongst the Taiwanese. The famed 'Taiwanese porcupine'

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XI JINPING HAS REPEATEDLY WARNED AGAINST 'TAIWANESE INDEPENDENCE SEPARATISM' AND PROMISED THAT TAIWAN WOULD 'SURELY BE UNIFIED'. XI'S RHETORIC IS DEEPLY SUGGESTIVE AND INTIMIDATORY

strategy is predicated on making a heavily laden Chinese invasion fleet face a prickly proposition and based on defensive survivability. The fact that such an invasion could draw the committed US forces would have its own resultant algorithms. So realistically the best bet for the Chinese is for organic support for 'reunification' with the mainland Chinese, by the Taiwanese themselves. This is not an unfathomable situation, given the existence of 'pro' China and 'anti' China sentiment amongst Taiwanese political parties. While the recent Taiwanese Presidential elections have brought back the decidedly 'anti-China' forces of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) with 40.05% of the popular vote (third successive victory), the fact that the other two parties have varied shades of 'pro-China' anchorage i.e., Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan's People Party (TPP), garnered 33.49% and 26.46% respectively, shows faultlines. It could be credibly argued that while the Taiwanese were aligned with DPP's nationalistic stand, there must have been anti-incumbency on local issues like low wages, unaffordable housing etc., that led to significant support for KMT and TPP. However, the competitive race

of identities in Taiwan has led to a steady assertion of locals identifying themselves as just 'Taiwanese' as opposed to 'Both Taiwanese and Chinese' or plain 'Chinese'. Yet, post the electoral results the Chinese foreign ministry reiterated, "Whatever changes take place in Taiwan, the basic fact that there is only one China", clearly signalling the continuation of stalemate and tensions. If the Chinese were to overdo the further sanctioning against provisions of an existing free trade agreement with Taiwan (or even suspend it altogether), it would lead to painful hardships for the Taiwanese, but also to further anti-Chinese sentiment that clearly cannot be countered by military superiority or plausible invasions. The best bet for the Chinese is to have the local Taiwanese perceive more socio-economic merit in 'unification' as opposed to 'independence', a battle that puts Beijing on the backfoot given stories coming out of Hong Kong or Tibet. So, the Chinese battle-rattle-tattle for crossing the straits in a purported invasion will continue, however, the costs to walk the talk will remain prohibitive. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FIR AGAINST RAHUL GANDHI

Sir — The under-pressure Assam police on Tuesday registered an FIR against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other leaders for "wanton acts of violence" on Tuesday, Frustrated Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. The Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is currently in Assam and the alleged acts of violence took place while the party supporters and leaders allegedly clashed with police personnel in their bid to enter Guwahati. Four police personnel were injured in the scuffle, Guwahati Police Commissioner Diganta Bora said. Under fear, Sarma had earlier in the day instructed the Director General of Police G P Singh to register a case against Rahul Gandhi for provoking the crowd to break the barricades. Gandhi said the chief minister directing the DGP to file a case against him shows "that they have fear in their hearts... They are afraid as the people of Assam are standing up as 'Tufan' and 'Andhi' (storm) against them". The barricades were erected along a highway to prevent Congress leaders and supporters taking part in the Yatra from entering the main thoroughfares of Guwahati, the largest city of the north-eastern state. As Congress supporters removed the barricades, a scuffle with the police personnel ensued leading to injuries suffered by state Congress president Bhupen Borah and leader of the opposition in the state assembly Debabrata Saikia. Gandhi alleged that while BJP president J P Nadda was allowed to take the same route earlier, Congress was not permitted.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

CONTRIBUTION OF NETAJI

Sir — The country can always remember the contribution of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to the freedom movement. His slogan 'Give me blood, I will give you freedom' sparked a new revolution in the country. The army 'Azad Hind Fauj' formed by him forced the British to leave India. The British had first handed over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Azad

Yemen crisis



The US and Britain are carrying out joint air strikes on the positions of Iran-backed Houthi separatists active in Yemen, in retaliation for blocking and attacking fleets in the Red Sea. Not only this, America has once again declared Houthis as a terrorist group. But instead of solving the area's problems, they are becoming more complicated day by day. First of all, poor countries like Yemen, where today every area has fallen into the hands of fighters. The group of Arab countries, which includes Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, tried to control all the forces

opposing each other by entering that country but failed. Now an in-depth investigation has revealed that the UAE, while fighting there, has carried out many targeted killings with the help of money. American mercenaries were given a contract by the Emirati government to kill members of a specific group. Most of those killed by these mercenaries were members of 'Islah', the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is a popular international Sunni Islamist movement that no one has ever classified as a terrorist organization but is banned in many Arab countries. They are included in the United Arab Emirates where its political activism and support for elections is seen by the country's royal family as a threat to their rule. Had gone to Yemen to restore peace but started killing Islah members. This should be investigated by the United Nations. The dark deeds of the UAE should be exposed.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Hind Fauj and Netaji hoisted the tricolour there on 30 December 1943. Netaji had become synonymous with courage, bravery and patriotism. Netaji's death remains a mystery. The present Central Government has expressed gratitude to Netaji by celebrating his birthday as Parakram Diwas (23 January), making public all the files related to him and installing the statue of Netaji at India Gate. Netaji's life will always continue to inspire patriotism among the youth.

N Mateeni | Pune

BHARAT RATNA FOR THE JAN NAYAK

Sir — The centre has posthumously fulfilled a long-standing demand by announcing the Bharat Ratna award for the Former Chief Minister of Bihar, Karpooori Thakur, a dedicated leader committed to uplifting the poor and marginalized. As a notable figure in Bihar politics, Thakur's lasting impact on India's socio-political landscape is evident, offering hope and positivity to Dalits and backward classes. Hailing from

a backward class and affectionately known as the "Jannayak" or people's hero, Thakur embodied the ideals of Subhas Chandra Bose and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. His commitment to breaking caste boundaries was represented during his 28-day fast unto death in support of Telco labourers, showcasing his dedication to social justice and workers' rights. As Bihar's Education Minister, Thakur promoted Hindi, removed English as a compulsory subject, and became the first Chief Minister to enforce total alcohol prohibition, addressing crucial social issues and challenging established norms. His legacy is evident in the transformed India where individuals from backward classes now hold prominent positions. Karpooori Thakur's Bharat Ratna is not merely an award; it's a recognition of his unwavering pursuit of justice and equality, shaping a more inclusive and equitable India.

Preetiyukta | Bhubaneswar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S COMPLEX GLOBAL CHALLENGES IN 2024

India navigates global complexities amid elections and geopolitical uncertainties



Even as the world gathered to witness once in a lifetime event in the historic dusty small temple town of Ayodhya EAM Jaishankar was speaking about the changing concepts of multilateralism and international relations in the realigning world order in Kampala and Lagos, Nigeria. India's strategic focus on being the leading voice of the global south, at a time when major democracies including India, are going to face the elections and two wars are showing little signs of ebbing, have made the path a tad more difficult. During its G20 presidency last year, India achieved a horizontal consensus, successfully obtaining a joint communique despite stark differences between Russia and the US. Impressively, India also brought the African Union, a pivotal constituent of the Global South, into the dialogue. However, the conflict in West Asia, teetering on the brink of genocide, is now extending from the Gaza Strip to the Red Sea. Pakistan and Iran, two major Islamic nations, engaged in reciprocal surgical strikes, each claiming to eliminate terrorist bases. Iran's influence on certain terror groups obstructs crucial maritime routes in the Red Sea, resulting in increased shipping costs. Recently, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar visited Iran to discuss the imperative of secure maritime routes. Nevertheless, the broader Gaza Strip conflict and its potential impact on the upcoming US elections seem unlikely to subside. India has adeptly cultivated a strong bilateral and bipartisan relationship with the US over the past decade, despite occasional disputes on trade and human rights. It is evident that India views the US as a crucial ally in countering the military expansion of China, safeguarding security, and promoting fair practices in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. During the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) conference, the External Affairs



Minister (EAM) reiterated India's call for a multipolar world and the reform of global institutions, including the UN. India's longstanding demand for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council has faced opposition from China. Notably, tech billionaire Elon Musk has backed India's bid for a permanent seat. In the past decade, India has advocated for a multipolar world order, emphasizing each powerful nation's distinct sphere of influence. The Ukraine conflict has reignited tensions between Russia and Western powers, while bipartisan support in the US for containing China persists under President Biden. The upcoming 2024 election, where Republican Trump may challenge Biden, could elevate immigration issues and super nationalism, potentially shifting American international influence away from multilateralism. The current Indian government, led by Prime Minister Modi, is perceived to have a positive rapport with Trump, should he return to power. However, potential challenges may arise regarding India's key concerns, as emphasized by the External Affairs Minister during the NAM summit. These concerns include establishing regional economic hubs, resilient supply chains, predictable mobility, and trusted data flows. People-centric policies, sustainable lifestyles, digital public infrastructure, food, energy, and health security, women-led development, prioritized connectivity with respect for sovereignty, and adequate resourcing for climate action and SDG realization are highlighted as crucial aspects. If Trump returns to the White House in 2024, India's global climate change initiatives may lose US support. Immigration challenges, exemplified by a large influx of Indian citizens at US borders, could escalate. India's upcoming elections face the daunting task of convincing voters, particularly in border states, that China has not encroached on Indian territories. The year 2024 poses significant challenges for international relations. *(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)*

Is the Government's debt sustainable?



The Government should take recourse to borrowings only for the creation of long-term assets. This will help generate income streams that can help in servicing the loans



Recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has forecast that India's general government debt - it comprises the debts of the Centre and states - will overshoot 100 per cent of the GDP (gross domestic product) by the financial year (FY) 2027-28. Responding to this, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) clarified that this wasn't under a 'baseline scenario' - a jargon to describe normal economic conditions. It added the IMF was referring to a 'worst-case scenario' wherein a global shock would equally affect all countries. Is the government's debt sustainable? The government's debt is linked with how it manages its total expenditure vis-à-vis its total receipts or fiscal deficit (FD) which is excess of the former over the latter. The expenditure and receipts are broadly of two types viz. revenue and capital. Revenue expenditure (RE) is essentially consumption expenditure which does not result in the creation of assets. It includes expenses for the normal running of government departments and various services, interest charges on debt incurred by the government, subsidies and so on. Capital expenditure (CE) includes the money that the government spends on long-term assets such as property, plant, and equipment. Revenue Receipts (RR) are receipts that neither create any liability nor lead to any reduction in the assets of the government. These comprise tax and non-tax receipts, duties and fines, and interest and dividends receipts on government investments and assets. Capital receipts (CR) are those receipts that either create liabilities or reduce the asset value of the government. These are loans raised by the government to fund long-term developmental needs. Ideally, RR should fully pay for the RE implying that revenue deficit (RD) - the difference between RR and RE - should be zero. The government should take recourse to borrowings only for the creation of long-term assets. Spending in this manner will help generate income streams that can help in servicing the loans thereby making such debt sustainable. In reality, RR have consistently fallen



THE FINANCE MINISTRY EXUDES CONFIDENCE THAT THE CENTRE IS 'ON TRACK TO ACHIEVE ITS STATED FISCAL CONSOLIDATION TARGET' OF REDUCING FD TO 4.5 PER CENT BY 2025-26

short of RE leading to a revenue deficit which meant that the government was borrowing merely to finance consumption expenditure. Besides, even the loans taken for financing CE were not productively used. The result was an increase in debt to an unsustainable level. As a result, even in 2003-04 when the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act (2003) was passed by the then Vajpayee-led NDA - government, interest payments accounted for one-third of the RE. Under the FRBM Act (2003), the Vajpayee government promised the elimination of RD by the year 2008. It also committed to reducing FD to 3 per cent of the GDP. Against these pledges, during 2008-09, RD was 4.7 per cent whereas, FD was 6.2 per cent. In his budget speech for 2016-17, the then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced the intent of the Modi government to review the FRBM) Act (2003) with a view to making the FD target more flexible. For this, he had set up a committee under Dr N K Singh. The committee recommended a "glide path" for the next six years, i.e., from 2017-18 to 2022-23. It recommended an FD target of 2.5 per cent, RD of 0.8 per cent, a combined Centre-state debt ceiling of 60 per cent, and a central debt ceiling of 40 per cent for the terminal year, i.e., 2022-23. Further, it fixed 3 per cent FD to be achieved during 2018-19. The committee also allowed the Union Government to breach the target - by up to 0.5 per cent - in the case of "far-reaching structural reforms with unanticipated fiscal implications." In the amendment to the FRBM Act in the Finance Bill 2018-19, even while retaining the "escape clause" to cover unanticipated events, the government adopted the glide path of achieving a 3 per cent

FD by 2020-21 instead of 2018-19, which was mooted by the committee. Further, it set the debt limit at 40 per cent for the Centre to be reached by 2024-25 instead of the mandated 2022-23. The relaxation in the glide path may be seen in the backdrop of the government missing the FD target for 2017-18 by 0.3 per cent and seeing no hope of achieving 3 per cent during 2018-19, as recommended by the committee. In the Budget for 2020-21, the finance minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman had already invoked the escape clause of the FRBM (Amendment) Act to alter the FD targets for 2019-20 from 3.3 percent as provided in the Budget to 3.8 percent in the revised estimate and for 2020-21, from 3 percent - as per the glide path required under the Act - to 3.5 percent. Seen in relation to the target set by the N K Singh Committee or even to the FRBM (Amendment) Act, the performance of the government had been off the mark. For instance, during 2018-19, the FD was 3.7 per cent against the 3 per cent required as per the Singh Committee. If deferred subsidy payments (DSPs) are also included (in those years, substantial amounts of major subsidy bills, viz., food, fertilizers, and fuel, were kept pending), the FD would be 5.7%. Likewise, for 2019-20, including DSPs, the FD would be 5.1 per cent. Due to Corona pandemic, the year 2020-21 saw plunging revenue and ballooning expenditure. As a result, the FD zoomed to 9.1 per cent against BE of 3.5 per cent. Being an exceptional year, a comparison with the glide path may not be apt. In the following year, even as the pandemic waned and the economy rebounded, in her budget speech for 2021-22, Sitharaman fixed the FD target at 6.9 per cent saying her

goal was to achieve 4.5 per cent by the year 2025-26. The actual FD for 2021-22 was lower at 6.7 percent. For 2022-23, she set the target at 6.4 per cent describing this as 'advancing on the road to fiscal consolidation'. The actual was precisely at 6.4 per cent. For 2023-24, she kept the target at 5.9 per cent. It is likely that even this would be achieved. From the above, the finance ministry exudes confidence that the Centre is "on track to achieve its stated fiscal consolidation target" of reducing FD to 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. This is misleading. To reset the fiscal trajectory making it substantially relaxed and then claim that fiscal numbers are well on track looks amusing. Let us not forget that even as per the FRBM (Amendment) Act, the Centre should have achieved 3 per cent in 2020-21. Against this, the actual FD during 2021-22 and 2022-23 was more than two times whereas during the current year, it is expected to be nearly twice this level. The RD at 4.1 per cent during 2022-23 and 3 per cent during 2023-24 (expected) is 4 to 5 times the 0.8 per cent level as recommended by the NK Singh Committee. The debt to GDP ratio of the Centre is around 60 per cent against the 40 per cent mandated as per the amended Act. As per the FRBM Act (2003), the FD was to have come down to 3 per cent by 2008. Against this, we are talking of 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. As per the Act, RD was to become 'Zero' by 2008. During 2023-24, it is stuck with 3 per cent. It shows how much the Centre has lagged behind in managing its fiscal situation. True, but for Modi's efforts in boosting tax revenue, the situation would have been much worse. Nonetheless, a lot more needs to be done especially by slashing RE. *(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)*

NEP: Multidisciplinary approach in higher education

NEP is fostering inclusivity and merit-based research to address security challenges and encouraging multidisciplinary practices

Nelson Mandela once commented, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Over the past few years, there has been a notable shift in the landscape of education, emphasizing its pivotal role in shaping individuals physically, intellectually, and morally. Education is seen as a liberating force, breaking the chains of darkness and bigotry. Recently, there has been a concerted effort to integrate real-life experiments of democracy, environmental awareness, globalization, and governance into the framework of the new education system. The intellectual establishment plays a crucial role in providing theoretical rationale and



strategies for educational advancements. It is imperative to explore how innovations in higher education can drive positive changes, instil confidence among the masses, and disseminate the latest global research and developments in education. This discourse aims to delve into the multifaceted aspects of the evolving higher education system, emphasizing the need for inclusivity and growth.

The strength of any higher education system lies in creating internal dynamism to ensure inclusive growth. Even a well-designed system is influenced by the individuals who make a difference. Human and financial relations are intricate matters that require constant monitoring by competent authorities. In India, universities are encouraged to improve their performance by transitioning towards a more merit-based, peer-reviewed research approach, aligning with the goal of establishing a highly efficient and inclusive educational apparatus. The New Education Policy (NEP) has provided a framework to analyze and address multidimensional issues in the education sector, offering

opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds. These guidelines aim to meet the key demands of higher education while maintaining a synergy between various stakeholders. The constant monitoring of the education sector by authorities is crucial for growth, especially in changing circumstances. Acknowledging the gravity of challenges faced by higher education, it is essential to address concerns related to competition, comparison, and personal greed, which may lead to manipulation and shortcuts. The right to freedom of expression in democratic societies has been debated extensively, and recent developments in the academic world present new challenges and competition.

The efforts by the University Grants Commission (UGC) have introduced fair practices and policies consistent with present circumstances. Reforms in the examination system are aimed at ensuring that only talent prevails, fostering an environment that supports academic excellence. The NEP's emphasis on exploring domestic underpinnings, gender sensitization, and addressing the concerns of marginalized communities through Special Education Zones is commendable. Provisions such as Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), the National Research Foundation, the National Educational Technology Forum, and the Indian Institutes of

Translation and Interpretation create an environment for students to excel globally. These initiatives also highlight the importance of social responsibility. The NEP encourages a new approach that provides a clear path for students interested in Security Studies, offering opportunities to learn new techniques. The provisions under NEP ensure the collaborative creation of ideas, providing insights into even the most complex issues. At various educational levels, the NEP's approach involves mentors fully engaging in new techniques and developing challenging strategies to meet the needs of all students. To enhance students' standards, there is an imperative need for self-academic orien-

tation and excellence, fostering problem-solving and inquiry-based learning activities. Introducing a new syllabus can provide a deeper insight into strategic and security-related affairs, offering a roadmap for foolproof encountering strategies. This approach addresses issues such as the rise of terrorism, its causes, and the funding nexus between organised crime and terrorism. The NEP's vision is to make India competitive in the field of Strategic education, attracting aspiring academicians and students. By providing multidisciplinary fervour, students will have wider exposure and opportunities for comparative studies, enriching analytical and theoretical rationale for crisis manage-

ment in India. As India faces myriad security challenges, there is an urgent need to address these issues on the international stage. The NEP's input will undoubtedly make each discipline richer in content and varied in ideas, providing a holistic educational experience. Even science students will be exposed to the nuances of international, national, socio-political, and economic issues through multidisciplinary practices. The ingenious display of this government's approach demonstrates a pure genius that promises to reshape the educational landscape. *(The writer is a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav award and is a professor and expert on strategic affairs)*

Washington and Baghdad plan to hold talks soon

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The United States and Iraq expect to begin formal talks soon to wind down the mission of a US-led military coalition formed to fight the Islamic State group in Iraq, both governments said on Thursday.

The US has had a continuous presence in Iraq since its 2003 invasion. Although all US combat forces left in 2011, thousands of troops returned in 2014 to help the government of Iraq defeat IS. In the years since, the presence of US forces, who have remained there to conduct counter-IS missions and training, has been a lightning rod for an increasingly influential faction of Iran-aligned militias and politicians in the country.

In a statement, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said the discussions will take place as part of a higher military commission that was agreed upon last summer — before the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7 rocked the region — and will discuss the “transition to an enduring bilateral security partnership between Iraq and the United States.”

Iraq’s foreign ministry in a statement said Baghdad aims to “formulate a specific and clear timetable that specifies the duration of the presence of international coalition advisors in Iraq” and to “initiate the gradual and deliberate reduction of its advisors on Iraqi soil,” eventually leading to the end of the coalition mission and a “move to comprehensive bilateral political and economic relations with the coalition countries.”

It added that Iraq is committed to ensuring the “safety of the international coalition’s advisors during the negotiation period in all parts of the country” and to “maintaining stability and preventing escalation.”

Iraqi officials have periodically called for a withdrawal of coalition forces for years, particularly in the wake of a US airstrike in January 2020 that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia

leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis outside the Baghdad airport.

The issue has surfaced again since Israel launched its major counteroffensive in Gaza following the October 7 Hamas-led attack in southern Israel.

Since mid-October, a group of Iran-backed militias calling itself the Islamic Resistance in Iraq have launched regular attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria, which the group said are in retaliation for Washington’s support for Israel in the war in Gaza.

Those estimated 2,500 US troops and the bases they serve on have drawn more than 150 missile and drone attacks fired by the militias. Scores of US personnel have received minor injuries including traumatic brain injuries during the attacks.

The US has struck militia targets in return, including some linked to the Popular Mobilization Forces, a coalition of mainly Shiite, Iran-backed paramilitary groups that is officially under the control of the Iraqi military although in practice it largely operates on its own. Iraqi officials have complained that the US strikes are a violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos earlier this month, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said that there is no longer justification for the coalition’s presence in Iraq and that the Iraqi army is capable of tracking and fighting the remaining IS cells in the country. “We are a sovereign country, and therefore it is only natural that we moved towards this position,” he said. “This is a request from the people, and this is a democratic country.”

An Iraqi government official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to journalists about the matter said that Iraq had sent a written request for the withdrawal of the coalition forces to the White House in November 2023.

Czech lawmakers reject int’l women’s rights treaty

Prague (AP): Czech lawmakers have voted against ratifying an international treaty on women’s rights. Only 34 of the 71 Senators present in the upper house of the Czech Parliament late Wednesday voted in favour of the treaty known as the Istanbul Convention. The result was two votes short of the majority needed to pass. After the vote, the lower house of Parliament will likely not deal with the treaty and the Czech Republic will be among those countries that have signed the document but not ratified it.

The Council of Europe adopted the document in 2011 in a bid to deter violence against women throughout Europe. The Czech Republic, also known as Czechia, signed it in 2016. The vote reflected a split between conservative and liberal lawmakers. Conservatives have argued the document challenges traditional roles for men and women in society and that its ratification in other countries didn’t help reduce violence against women there.

Despite 2 losses, Haley tries to claim victory in Republican presidential race

AP ■ NORTH CHARLESTON

Despite losing both Iowa and New Hampshire to Donald Trump, Nikki Haley is nevertheless trying to frame those losses as a victory and vowing to head off a “coronation” of Trump as the 2024 Republican nominee. The path through the next states to vote, however, may not be any easier.

“We were thrilled,” Haley said during a rally before hundreds of sign-waving fans on Wednesday night in North Charleston, South Carolina, casting her second-place New Hampshire finish as a win given how little support her campaign had in its early days.

“We got out there, and we did our thing and we said what we had to say, and then Donald Trump got out there and just threw a temper tantrum,” Haley added, referencing Trump’s primary night remarks in which the former president repeatedly insulted her in a speech far angrier than his remarks after his Iowa victory. Haley did

perform better in Tuesday’s New Hampshire primary than she had in the Iowa caucuses a week earlier, where she finished third, well behind Trump and only slightly down from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has since shuttered his campaign.

But Haley had been banking on a stalwart showing in New Hampshire, a state where her attempt to appeal to independents and more moderate-leaning Republicans appeared to take root. Trump still won by double-digits on Tuesday night, leaving some to wonder whether she would keep going.

Haley has affirmed that she will do just that, speaking virtually to Republican voters in the U.S. Virgin Islands — which hold their caucuses Feb. 8 — before flying from New Hampshire to South Carolina.

The Wednesday night event served two purposes for Haley. It was a welcome-home gathering for the South Carolina resident and an opener for her campaign in the first-in-the-South GOP voting state, which has historically been influential

in determining the party’s nominee. Since 1980, only one winner of South Carolina’s Republican balloting has lost the nomination.

Since his 2016 primary win there helped cement Trump’s dominance in that year’s race, South Carolina has stayed loyal to him. For the 2024 campaign, he boasts endorsements from all but one of the state’s U.S. House Republicans, as well as the governor, lieutenant governor and both US senators.

“Trump is in a commanding position in South Carolina,” one of those senators, Lindsey Graham, said Wednesday at the U.S. Capitol, commending Haley’s effort but forecasting her loss in their home state. “I think for all practical purposes, the primary is over.”

Outside Haley’s rally, several dozen Trump supporters waved flags and made their presence known, albeit from a marked-off zone away from the ballroom entrance. Ahead of New Hampshire’s vote, the super PAC supporting Haley’s candidacy was quick to point

out that President Joe Biden, the Democrat she hopes to face in the general election, hadn’t been successful in the first several contests of his 2020 bid, but ultimately won the nomination. That comparison, however, doesn’t take into account the fact that Black voters propelled Biden’s ultimate victory once he reached the South, a factor not expected to weigh heavily in the GOP primary.

Nonetheless, during a call with reporters on Wednesday, Mark Harris, chief strategist for that super PAC, SFA Inc., insisted that Haley “has a path” to the GOP nomination, regardless of Trump’s two early wins. Casting South Carolina as the campaign’s next “battleground” of the Trump-Haley direct matchup — Nevada’s GOP caucuses are Feb. 8, but Trump has already claimed victory there since Haley isn’t participating — Harris noted that its open primary means that any Democrats who opt not to participate in their party’s Feb. 3 contest can choose to support Haley in the Feb. 24 vote.

‘Shooting of US-Palestinian teenager was unprovoked’

Ash-Sharqia (West Bank) (AP): The fatal shooting of an American-Palestinian teen driving a pickup truck in the West Bank was unprovoked, the sole passenger told The Associated Press, describing apparent Israeli fire hitting the back of the vehicle before it overturned several times on a dirt road.

At least 10 bullets struck the truck, which was seen by The Associated Press after Israeli investigators examined it. Most hit the back windshield and truck bed, supporting 16-year-old Mohammed Salameh’s account of the incident that killed his friend, Tawfic Abdel Jabbar, 17, a Louisiana native. In an initial statement, Israeli police said Friday’s shooting targeted people “purportedly engaged in rock-throwing activities along Highway 60,” a main West Bank thoroughfare. Police didn’t identify who fired the shots.

4 Indians die in mass drowning

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Four Indians, including three women, on a family day out were killed when they drowned at an unpatrolled beach in Australia in the worst tragedy in the state of Victoria in almost 20 years, officials said on Thursday.

The incident took place on Wednesday at Phillip Island, Victoria and a close relative, who was devastated on Thursday, confirmed the names of the victims to the Australian media.

The four were identified as Jagjeet Singh Anand, a 23-year-old man; students Suhani Anand and Kirti Bedi, both 20-year-old women; and Reema Sondhi, a 43-year-old Indian national who was visiting her family in Australia.

The three younger victims lived in Clyde.

Anand, a Melbourne-based nurse, was a permanent resident in Australia. Bedi and Suhani were on student visas.



Sondhi, who was from Punjab, arrived in Australia two weeks ago for a holiday. All four are believed to be related, news.com.au website reported.

The victims were part of a group of about 10 people who had been enjoying a day out at the beach, the report added.

Victoria Police Eastern Region Assistant Commissioner Karen Nyholm said the victims entered the water near Forrest Caves — close to Cape Woolamai on the Bass Strait side of the Phillip Island’s south-eastern peninsula — on Wednesday afternoon.

Off-duty lifeguards surfing nearby rushed to their aid after the group got into difficulty, pulling three people from the water unresponsive.

Life Saving Victoria commander Kane Treloar said lifeguards from Cape Woolamai were called at about 3.40 pm on Wednesday and a rescue boat retrieved the fourth person. All required CPR. Three of the victims were pronounced dead at the scene while one of the 20-year-old women was resuscitated and flown to The Alfred. She died in hospital, police said on Thursday morning.

The Indian High Commission in Canberra on Thursday posted on X, the tragic drowning.

“Heartbreaking tragedy in Australia: 4 Indians lost their lives in a drowning incident at Phillip Island, Victoria. Deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

@cgimelbourne team is in touch with friends of the

deceased for all necessary assistance @MEAIndia @DrSjaishankar,” the High Commission posted.

On Thursday, Treloar said it was the worst drowning incident the state had seen in decades.

“We all worked tirelessly to help those people,” Ambulance Victoria manager Paul James said. “It’s tragic... only a week ago we had three other separate drownings here in Gippsland.”

Life-Saving Victoria operations general manager Liam Krige said 19 people had drowned in Victoria since December 1 — two more than during the same period last summer.

“Behind each one of these drownings there is a family; there’s a brother, there’s a sister, there’s a mother, there’s a daughter,” he said at a press conference at Forrest Caves car park on Thursday.

“It is extremely tragic and our heartfelt condolences do go out to those victims.”

China accuses US of ‘abusing’ int’l law by sailing in SCS

AP ■ BEIJING

China accused the US of abusing international law with its military maneuvers in the western Pacific, one day after an American naval destroyer sailed through the politically sensitive Taiwan Strait. While China welcomes military-to-military communication with the United States, Defence Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian said Thursday that US warplane and warship activity “on China’s doorstep” is the root cause of the problems between the two military powers.

“The United States side should stop abusing international law, cease all dangerous and provocative behaviour, and strictly restrain the activities of front-line troops, which is the fundamental way to avoid accidents at sea and in the air,” he said at a monthly briefing. The

USS John Finn sailed Wednesday though the 160-km (100-mile)-wide waterway that separates China from Taiwan, a self-governing island that China claims as its own territory. China agreed to resume military contacts with the US at a meeting last November between Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping in California. In part, the argument for doing so was to be able to manage an unintentional collision or other incident that could happen as both sides hold drills and patrol the waters in regional hotspots including the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

The US defends its actions as in line with international laws that guarantee freedom of navigation. “No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms,” the US Navy’s 7th Fleet said in a news

release on the John Finn’s transit of the Strait. “The United States military flies, sails and operates anywhere international law allows.”

China’s rise has given it the ability to project military power into the western Pacific, which brings it into conflict with the United States, long the dominant military power in the region. The American military activity is aimed in part at deterring China from launching any attack on Taiwan or using its strength to enforce its territorial claims in disputes with smaller neighbours such as the Philippines.

Chinese and Philippine ships clashed last year as disputes over shoals and other outcroppings in the South China Sea flared. China has blamed US support, such as recent joint patrols with the Philippines, for emboldening the latter.

Poland’s pro-EU govt, oppn disagree on whether pardoned lawmakers can stay on

AP ■ WARSAW

The fate of two Polish opposition politicians became the focus on Thursday of a running feud between the country’s new pro-European Union government and conservative opposition as the sides disagreed whether they can remain lawmakers. The weeks-old government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk has moved to reverse policies of his predecessors that were deemed harmful and led to clashes with the EU, especially in the judiciary.

However, the previously ruling right-wing Law and Justice party, frustrated over its loss in the October parliamentary elections, has been protesting the moves.

As the lower house of parliament, or Sejm, convened on Thursday, officials and experts were divided on whether two



Poland’s President Andrzej Duda, center, poses with former deputy interior minister Maciej Wasik, left, and former interior minister Mariusz Kaminski, right, in Warsaw, Poland on Tuesday. AP

senior Law and Justice lawmakers, who served in the previous government, can attend the proceedings. Parliament Speaker Szymon Holownia had stripped them of their mandates after they were convicted in December of abuse of power.

They were released from prison on Tuesday, after President Andrzej Duda pardoned them and after spending two weeks behind bars.

Law and Justice and their ally Duda insist the two — former Interior Minister Mariusz

Kaminski and his former deputy, Maciej Wasik — may continue to sit in the Sejm. The two were not present at the session start on Thursday.

Experts say the dispute exposes the extent to which Law and Justice had bent Poland’s legal system to serve its own political interests during its eight years in power that ended in December.

Tusk recently criticized Law and Justice, saying it puts its political goals above the law.

“We are facing the need to reconstruct the legal order in a way that will put an end to the constant and glaring conflicts of interpretation,” Tusk told a new conference this week. Kaminski and Wasik were convicted of abuse of power and forging documents for actions taken in 2007, when they served in an earlier Law and Justice-led government.

S Korean lawmaker attacked

Seoul (AP): South Korean police say a governing party lawmaker is being treated at a Seoul hospital after being attacked by an unidentified man who struck her head with a rock-like object. A police official in Seoul’s Appujeong district said a suspect was arrested at the scene after the attack on Thursday on lawmaker Bae Hyunjin in southern Seoul.

The severity of Bae’s injury wasn’t immediately clear. The police official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorised to talk to the media, said Bae was conscious as she was being taken to the hospital. South Korean media reported that her condition wasn’t life threatening, citing her aides. Calls to Bae’s office weren’t immediately answered. The attack comes weeks after a man stabbed South Korean opposition lawmaker Lee Jae-myung.

Greece students protest plans to introduce private universities

AP ■ ATHENS

Several thousand university students and supporters took part in a protest in central Athens Thursday to oppose plans by Greece’s conservative government to allow privately run universities. The protesters, chanting “Students, United, Will Win,” filed past the main Athens University building and statues of the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Socrates as they marched through central Athens and riot police took up positions in nearby side streets. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis’ centre-right government is pushing through several key pieces of legislation early in the new year, taking advantage of a landslide reelection in 2023, and a huge lead in



opinion polls. It argues the measure would stop thousands of Greeks going abroad each year to study, and would keep vital skills in the country.

But opponents say it would undermine public universities, which are already facing funding difficulties.

The government has faced a series of protests by various professional groups in recent weeks, triggered by the legislative reforms and the cost of living crisis. In central Greece Thursday, farmers used tractors to block sections of a highway, demanding additional financial support from the government to reduce production costs. Farmers’ groups told The Associated Press that they were holding meetings Thursday to consider further action

Alabama set to execute inmate with nitrogen gas

Montgomery (US) (AP): Alabama, unless blocked by the US Supreme Court, will attempt to put an inmate to death with nitrogen gas on Thursday night, a never before used execution method that the state claims will be humane but critics call cruel and experimental. Kenneth Eugene Smith, a 58-year-old convicted killer whose 2022 lethal injection was called off at the last minute because authorities couldn’t connect an IV line, is scheduled to be executed at a south Alabama prison.

Alabama plans to put an industrial-type respirator mask over Smith’s face and replace his breathing air with pure nitrogen gas, causing him to die from lack of oxygen. The execution will be the first attempt to use a new execution method since the 1982 introduction of lethal injection, now the most common execution method in the

United States. “It’s an experiment,” said the Rev Jeff Hood, Smith’s spiritual advisor and a death penalty opponent. Smith’s attorneys on Thursday asked the US Supreme Court to halt the execution to review claims that the new method violates the constitutional ban on cruel and unusual punishment and deserves more legal scrutiny before it is used on a person.

“There is little research regarding death by nitrogen hypoxia. When the State is considering using a novel form of execution that has never been attempted anywhere, the public has an interest in ensuring the State has researched the method adequately and established procedures to minimize the pain and suffering of the condemned person,” Smith’s attorneys wrote.

Justices on Wednesday rejected Smith’s argument that it would be unconstitutional to

make another attempt to execute him after the failed lethal injection. Smith is one of two men convicted in the 1988 murder-for-hire slaying of Elizabeth Sennett. Prosecutors said he and the other man were each paid \$1,000 to kill Sennett on behalf of her pastor husband, who was deeply in debt and wanted to collect on insurance.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said Wednesday night that he believes the courts will allow the execution to proceed. My office stands ready to carry on the fight for Liz Sennett. Two courts have now rejected Smith’s claims. I remain confident that the Supreme Court will come down on the side of justice, and that Smith’s execution will be carried out,” Marshall said. Alabama plans to strap Smith to a gurney in the execution chamber — the same chamber where he was strapped down for several hours during

the lethal injection attempt — and place a “full facepiece supplied air respirator” over his face.

After he is given a chance to make a final statement, the warden, from another room, will activate the nitrogen gas. The nitrogen will be administered through the mask for at least 15 minutes or “five minutes following a flatline indication on the EKG, whichever is longer,” according to the state protocol.

The execution is scheduled to begin at 6 pm local time but could be delayed until because of legal action or preparation. The state has until 6 am Friday to carry out the execution. Some states are looking for new ways to execute inmates because the drugs used in lethal injections, the most common execution method in the United States, are increasingly difficult to find.

Pakistan Army chief takes a dig at Iran

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Taking a dig at Iran, Pakistan Army chief Gen Asim Munir has said that those who “backstab” the country will get a “befitting reply”, days after the two neighbours conducted tit-for-tat military strikes at alleged terrorist bases in both countries. During an interaction with students from public and private sector universities nationwide here on Wednesday, Munir mentioned about the recent missile attacks by Tehran within Balochistan and said that no one would be allowed to breach Pakistan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Express Tribune newspaper reported on Thursday.

“You cannot backstab us, and if you do, you will get a befitting reply,” he said. Earlier this month, Pakistan conducted “precision military strikes” against what it called “terrorist hideouts” in Iran’s Sistan-Baluchistan province that killed 9 people. The attack was seen as retaliation to Iranian missile and drone attacks which targeted two bases of the Sunni Baloch militant group Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan’s unruly Balochistan province.

Munir claimed that the insurgency in Balochistan has long been supported by Afghanistan, and the western neighbour has never shown friendship towards Pakistan. Afghanistan was the only country that opposed Pakistan’s admission to the United



Nations after independence, he said. Referring to the Taliban-led administration of Afghanistan, the army chief warned, “Do not look towards Pakistan. We are ready to sacrifice anything and everything.” “When it comes to the safety and security of every single Pakistani, the whole of Afghanistan can be damned,” he said. The army chief said Pakistan provided food for five million Afghan nationals for 50 years, but “when it comes to our children, we will pursue those who attack them”.

Pakistan has refused to negotiate with the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), whose terrorist activities in Pakistan have increased manifold since the return of the Afghan Taliban to power in August 2021. Islamabad has also applied its economic leverage to force Kabul to take action against terrorists attack-

ing on its soil from Afghanistan. There has been an increase in militant attacks in Pakistan since November 2022, when the TTP, a close ally of the Afghan Taliban which seized power in Afghanistan, ended a months-long cease-fire with the government. During the interaction, Munir also ruled out reconciliation with India. “India has not reconciled with the concept of Pakistan, then how can we reconcile with it?,” he was quoted as saying by The Express Tribune.

The army chief briefly mentioned his recent visit to the US and stated that during the visit, he conveyed to Americans that Pakistan is a country with consequences. “There are 80 million middle-income people in Pakistan; with 65 per cent of its population being young, the country is ready to reap benefits from these resources,” he said.

Had told Imran to remain engaged with US: Pak ex-foreign secretary

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan’s former foreign secretary Sohail Mahmood has said that he had told the Cabinet of former prime minister Imran Khan how declassification of a diplomatic communication from the country’s embassy in Washington can affect relations with the US.

Recording his statement in the cipher case involving Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who also is a senior leader from his party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Mahmood said he also advised Khan’s government “to remain engaged with the US.” The cipher case pertains to a piece of paper, purported to be a diplomatic cable — the cipher — that Khan had waved at a public rally on March 27, 2022, and naming the US, had claimed that it was ‘evidence’ of an “international conspiracy” to topple his government.

Khan and Qureshi, accused of mishandling it for political purposes, were indicted in December 2023 and both have pleaded not guilty. This is the first time that the details of the case are being brought out in the public domain even as Khan and Qureshi continue to face the case along with others bringing no relief to them ahead of the February 8 general elections.

“Purpose of this advice was to protect the relations of Pakistan with an important

country and to avoid public and politicised discussion on a secret and privileged communication,” Mahmood told the trial court on Monday, according to The News International, which said it had accessed a copy of his testimony. The former foreign secretary also shared the details of a cabinet meeting, which was called to discuss “Declassification of cipher telegram” and another meeting held in Banigala residence of the then prime minister. In the cabinet meeting, held on April 8, Mahmood said he had underlined that “declassification of cipher telegram was neither possible nor advisable in view of the cipher security guidelines, the legal position and the foreign policy implications.”

He also told the cabinet that neither there was any past precedent of declassification of cipher nor there was any legal provision in this regard for the primary reason that disclosure of text could compromise the cipher communication system, The News said. “I also added that it could affect the working of the missions and the ministry as the trust underlying confidential exchanges with foreign interlocutors could be undermined. It could also affect relations with the US and some other countries and strained relations with the US could also complicate matters with multilateral financial institutions.”



Giant Kavadi offering cages are carried by Hindu devotees in a procession during the Thaipusam festival at Batu Caves, outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Thursday. Thaipusam, which is celebrated in honour of Hindu god Lord Murugan, is an annual procession by Hindu devotees seeking blessings, fulfilling vows and offering thanks

AP/PTI

China expands loan access for property developers

AP ■ BANGKOK

China has rolled out new rules meant to expand access to commercial bank loans for property developers as Beijing doubles down on its effort to end a prolonged crisis in the real estate industry. The policies will allow real estate companies to use bank loans pledged against commercial properties such as offices and shopping malls to repay their other loans and bonds and to cover operating expenses.

They were announced late Wednesday by the People’s Bank of China, the National Financial Regulatory Administration and the Finance Ministry. Beijing has moved this week to stabilise ailing financial markets and boost the economy by freeing up more money for lending in various ways. That includes cutting required bank reserves.

The flurry of new measures and pronouncements from senior Communist Party officials about the need to stabilise financial markets and build confidence in the economy, the world’s second largest, appears

to reflect a renewed determination to get growth back on track. Dozens of developers have defaulted on their debts after the government cracked down on excessive borrowing in the industry several years ago. The largest, China Evergrande, is still trying to resolve more than USD 300 billion in debts and a Hong Kong court is due to hold a hearing on its restructuring plans next week. The latest policies are not a full reversal of the effort to rein in debt and control risks in the property industry.

The new rules say the bank loans cannot be used to buy commercial housing or rental housing or to start new construction or buy land. Loans cannot exceed 70 per cent of the appraised value of the property being used as collateral and should generally last a maximum of 10 years, with an absolute limit of 15 years. They also order banks to fully conduct due diligence before and after loans are issued to mitigate and minimise risks.

It’s unclear what impact the new rules might have on the overall crisis gripping the

property market. Land sales have long been a major revenue source for local governments that now are grappling with mounting debts. At the same time, stalled construction of new homes has hit contractors and suppliers of construction materials and home furnishings. In a research note, UBS economists said “the pace and potential size of such loans remain uncertain as banks will likely watch the commerciality and risks of such loans”. But they added that the move was a “significant step” to increase support for developers.

Sales of new homes and home prices have been falling, discouraging consumers from spending since Chinese families tend to have much of their wealth tied up in property. The industry as a whole accounts for about a quarter of business activity in China. “For developer financing to fundamentally and sustainably improve, property sales need to stop falling and start to recover, which could require more policy efforts to stabilize the property market,” the UBS report said.

‘China ready to work with Pak to upgrade CPEC project’

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/BEIJING

China has said that it stands ready to work with Pakistan to upgrade the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project to deepen the political mutual trust between the two “all-weather” allies, a media report said on Thursday.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar said after having achieved the first phase of the CPEC, Pakistan is benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin while answering a ques-

tion during a briefing on Wednesday said, “China stands ready to work with Pakistan to deliver on the important common understandings between the leaders of the two countries, deepen political mutual trust, and expand practical cooperation.” China has said it is ready to work with Pakistan to upgrade the CPEC and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan’s Balochistan with China’s Xinjiang province, is opposed by India as it is being laid through

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). About the recent visit of Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong to Pakistan, Wang said, he called on President Arif Alvi, Prime Minister Kakar, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir and Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani to have an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest.

The spokesperson added that the Chinese minister also co-chaired the fourth meeting of the CPEC Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Co-ordination with

Foreign Secretary Syrus Sajjad Qazi. “China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners,” he said. China appreciates Pakistan’s firm commitment to the One-China principle and supports Pakistan in defending its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, stability, development and prosperity.

In Islamabad, Prime Minister Kakar said that after having achieved the first phase of CPEC, Pakistan is benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase. “We have already achieved the CPEC’s first phase and we are benefiting from its early harvest

projects. We are entering the second phase. We do need more deliberations when it comes to the second phase,” he said in an interview recorded by CGTN during his recent visit to Davos to attend the World Economic Forum.

The Chinese state-run news outlet ran the interview on Wednesday. Prime Minister Kakar said the CPEC’s second phase required road and air connectivity around industrialisation projects. “Both sides are engaged and we have developed a lot of connectivity — road, air and the rest of the connectivity corridor. We are benefiting from the ecosystem of doing trade with one another,” he said.

Flight recorders found from plane that crashed with Ukrainian POWs aboard

AP ■ MOSCOW

Investigators have found the flight recorders of a Russian military transport plane that crashed in a border region near Ukraine, Russian media reported Thursday, a day after Moscow accused Kyiv of shooting down the aircraft, which it said was carrying 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war.

The Il-76 crashed in a huge ball of fire in a rural area of Russia on Wednesday, and authorities said all 74 people on board, including the POWs, six crew and three Russian servicemen, were killed. Ukraine’s president has demanded an international investigation into the episode, which has triggered a spate of claims and counterclaims. Russian officials accused Kyiv of shooting down the plane with two missiles and said the prisoners of war were headed for an exchange. They offered no evidence for their allegation.

The Associated Press could not independently confirm who was aboard or how the plane was downed. The commander of Ukraine’s air force accused Russia of “rampant...propaganda” — though he did not specifically address the allegations. Ukrainian authorities confirmed a prisoner exchange was due to happen Wednesday, and that it was called off, but said they had no information about who was on the plane.

“We haven’t seen any indication that such a large number of people was on that plane, Ukrainian citizens or not,” Dmytro Lubinets, Ukraine’s human rights ombudsman, said on national television Thursday. Ukrainian officials noted that Moscow didn’t ask for any spe-



Women lay flowers in memory of those who were killed in the plane on Wednesday, at the memorial to soldiers who died in the Great Patriotic War “Eternal Flame” in Belgorod, Russia.

tional audience, attempting to discredit Ukraine in the eyes of the global community”. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who turned 46 on Thursday, didn’t directly address Moscow’s allegation but said Ukraine would push for an international investigation. “It is necessary to establish all the facts, as much as possible, considering that the plane crash occurred on Russian territory — beyond our control,” he said in his nightly video address late Wednesday. “It’s obvious Russians are playing with lives of Ukrainian POWs, with the feelings of their relatives and the emotions of our society.”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, which was expected to take place on Thursday afternoon in New York. Andrei Kartapolov, head of the defense affairs committee in the lower house of the Russian parliament, said Russia would continue exchanging prisoners despite the crash. “We can’t abandon our boys and so we will speak to the devil himself to get them out,” he told reporters. Meanwhile, Ukraine’s largest oil and gas company, Naftogaz, said Thursday that one of its data centres had come under a large-scale cyberattack that shut down the company’s web sites and call centres.

Ukraine’s national postal service, Ukrposhta, also reported a major technical failure of its IT systems. It didn’t specify whether the issue was caused by a cyberattack. Ukraine’s State Service for Transport Safety also reported a technical failure of its data center that shut down its website and other services.

information to troops on the ground. The discovery of the transport plane’s flight recorders was reported Thursday by the state-owned RIA Novosti news agency, citing emergency services. However, there is slim hope that the circumstances of the crash and the Russian allegations will be clarified. The war has often featured conflicting accusations, used as ammunition in the bid to sway opinion at home and abroad.

On Thursday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov repeated the allegation that Ukraine had downed the plane, describing it as “a totally monstrous act”.

Mykola Oleshchuk, Ukraine’s Air Force Commander, alleged that “rampant Russian propaganda is directing a fake stream of information to the interna-

Nepal asks Russia to send back its citizens recruited to fight against Ukraine

AP ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal has asked Russia to send back hundreds of Nepali nationals who were recruited to fight against Ukraine and repatriate the bodies of those who died in the conflict, Nepal’s top diplomat said on Thursday.

The Russian army is estimated to have recruited more than 200 Nepali nationals to fight in Ukraine and at least 14 of them have died there, Nepal’s Foreign Minister Narayan Prakash Saud said in an interview with The Associated Press. “We have asked Russia to immediately stop the recruitment of Nepali nationals in their army, immediately return those who are already serving in the army, repatriate the bodies of those killed, and treat and return those who were wounded in the fighting,” Saud said.

Nepal is also seeking monetary compensation from Russia for the families of those Nepali nationals who were killed in the fight-

ing, Saud said. Among the 14 confirmed killed Nepali nationals, Russia has said it is in possession of 12 bodies. Most Nepali people want the bodies of their deceased relatives to be cremated following religious rituals. “We have information that five of our citizens who fought on behalf of the Russians are being held captive by the Ukraine side. We are asking the Russian side to take initiatives to get them freed,” Saud said. Russian officials have not commented on the recruitment of foreign nationals for military service in Ukraine, but media reports have said that along with Nepal the Russian military has recruited some people from Cuba. Russian law allows foreign nationals to enlist in its army after they sign a contract with the Defence Ministry. In September, Cuban authorities arrested 17 people in connection with what they said was a network to recruit Cuban nationals to fight for Russia in Ukraine.

Separatist leader who called Putin cowardly sentenced to prison

Tallinn (Estonia): The Moscow City Court on Thursday convicted a former Ukraine rebel leader who called President Vladimir Putin cowardly of extremism and sentenced him to four years in prison. Igor Girkin, who used the surname alias of Strelkov (shooter), was the most prominent leader of Russian-backed separatist fighters in Ukraine’s Donetsk region in 2014, when rebellion arose after the ouster of Ukraine’s Russia-allied president.

He briefly became the self-declared separatist government’s defence minister, but left the post in August 2014 after rebel forces shot down a Malaysian passenger airliner over Donetsk, killing all 298 people aboard. He was convicted in absentia of murder in the Netherlands, where the flight had originated, for his role. He returned to Russia and became a nationalist commentator and activist. He supported launching Russia’s war in Ukraine, but sharply criticised authorities for being inept and indecisive in carrying out the fight. Girkin called Putin a “nonentity” and a person of “cowardly mediocrity”. He was arrested in July on extremism charges and remained in custody since then.

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
Tender Notice Reference No. GNDU/Gen/01/2024
The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:
Sr.No.1
Item: Allotment of Canteens/shops
Quantity: 23
Closing date & time : 15/02/2024 at 5:00 p.m.
For details log onto **www.eproc.Punjab.gov.in**
Note: Any corrigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only.
Superintendent (General) Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar
NA/12/21562/2023/31762
Dated CHD :- 1/25/2024

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
No.CE/PRO/ACCTS-44/73/26 dtd.19.01.2024
e-TENDER CALL NOTICE
Name of the work: **Construction of Compound Wall, Drain adjacent to PMR and along RRS-I & II tracks at MCHP area.**
Estimated Cost: **Rs.3,05,60,262.83.** Last Date & time of submission : **08/02/2024 up to 17.00 Hrs.**
Refer our website for details: **eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app.**
SD/- Executive Engineer, PRD, PPA
PPA/PR/80/2023-24 dtd.24.01.2024

United Textiles Limited
Regd. Office 7th K.M. Stone, Barwala Road,Hisar - 125001 (Haryana)
CIN: L17115HR1993PLC032092
Notice
Pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations & Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, Notice is hereby given that the Meeting of Board of Directors of the Company is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 13th February, 2024 at 11.00 AM at the Regd. Office of the Company to consider the Unaudited Quarterly Results for the Period Ended 31st December, 2023.
Further as per the Company’s Code of Conduct for Prevention of Insider Trading, the trading window for dealing with securities of the Company will remain close from 31.12.2023 to 48 hours after the declaration of the Financial Results. The said information is also available on Company’s Website **www.unitedtextileslimited.com** and also on the website of stock exchanges at **www.bseindia.com**.
For United Textiles Limited (Vivek Aggarwal)
Whole Time Director
Dated 24.01.2024 (DIN 07079208)

NAGAR NIGAM DEHRADUN
Telephone: 0135-2714074, Fax : 0135-2651060
Website: **www.nagarnigamdehradun.com** Email : **nagarnigam.ddn@gmail.com**

Nagar Nigam Dehradun invites Request for Proposal (RFP) Supply, Delivery and Commissioning of two (02) Nos. of New Mechanical Road Sweeper Machines with 5 years comprehensive Operation and Maintenance (further extendable for 2 year) under SBM-U/NCAP in Dehradun form eligible bidders having experience as indicated in the RFP document. Interested bidders are requested to procure the RFP document up to 25.01.2024 from e-tenders portal of government of Uttarakhand. Pre-bid meeting is scheduled at 12:00 noon on 01.02.2024. Any Addendum/Corrigendum including date of extension will be uploaded only on **www.uktenders.gov.in**. The Municipal Commissioner have right to cancel tender at any stage without giving any reason. The last date for online submission of bids is 14.02.2024 at 3:00PM.

No 28/SBM-U/NCAP-MRS/2023&24 Date: 25.01.2024

Municipal Commissioner
Nagar Nigam Dehradun

We have emerged stronger, says Adani on anniversary of Hindenburg report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A year after a damning report by a US short seller ripped through his apples-to-airport conglomerate, billionaire Gautam Adani on Thursday said the “trials and tribulations” of the past year have made the Adani group stronger as it continued on growth path, improving asset base and launching key projects, including the Dharavi redevelopment.

In a column in a leading newspaper, he said the Adani group raised Rs 40,000 crore of equity — equal to debt repayment for the next two years — through stake sales in some firms, repaid Rs 17,500 crore of margin-linked financing, and trimmed debt.

Sustained focus on operations yielded the highest-ever quarterly profit in the second quarter of current fiscal, he said. Most of the listed group com-

panies have recouped losses induced by the Hindenburg report.

“We remained committed to maintaining our growth momentum. The Group continued its investments, evidenced by our asset base growth to Rs 4.5 lakh crore,” he said.

“This period (of last one year) marked the launch of several key projects, including the world’s largest renewable energy generation site in Khavda (in Gujarat), a new copper smelter, a green hydrogen ecosystem, and the long-awaited redevelopment of Dharavi (slums in Mumbai).”

Adani termed Hindenburg Research’s charge of fraud and stock market manipulation as “lies” and a “compilation” of “old and dead allegations” that his “detractors had been trying to resurrect”.

“Fatuously self-styled as a research report”, Hindenburg

report “was a cunningly crafted set of selective half-truths sourced from disclosed and publicly available information,” he said.

He expected the point-by-point rebuttal of the allegations put by his group to quickly put an end to it but the skinned as much as USD 150 billion in market value of his conglomerates listed companies at the lowest point.

Adani was ranked world’s second richest at the start of 2023 but slipped out of top 20.

“The lies against us were corrosive enough to substantially erode the market cap of our portfolio as, typically, capital markets are more emotional than rational,” he said.

“What pained me even more is that thousands of small investors lost their savings,” he said.

Had detractors’ plan fully succeeded, the domino effect could have crippled many crit-



ical infrastructure assets, ranging from seaports and airports to the power supply chain — a catastrophic situation for any country, he said.

“However, thanks to our solid assets, the robustness of our operations and the high quality of our disclosures, the more informed financial communi-

ty, including lenders and rating agencies, refused to be swayed by the swirling lies and stood solidly with us,” he said.

Though Adani had to scrap a Rs 20,000 crore public issue at his flagship firm, Adani Enterprises.

“We had no precedent path to handle this situation,” he said,

adding that the group focused on transparently outlining the facts and narrating its side of the story to expose the motives of those who attacked it.

This led to a declining influence of negative campaigns against the Group, he said.

“A testament to the change in public perception is the significant growth in our shareholder base, a primary target of the follow-on public offering (in Adani Enterprises Ltd). Over this challenging year, our shareholder base expanded by 43 per cent, reaching nearly 70 lakh.”

On the lessons learnt, Adani, who is now ranked No 14 on the world billionaire list, said in hindsight, the crisis uncovered a fundamental weakness — the group did not pay enough attention to its outreach mechanisms.

“Few outside the infrastructure finance community knew of the size, scale and quality of what the Adani Group had

done or was doing. We had all along naively believed that all our non-financial stakeholders too knew us and the truth about us — that our financials were robust, that our governance was impeccable, that our roadmap to growth was measured, and that we play an important role in building India’s critical infrastructure,” he said.

This experience underscored the necessity of engaging effectively with non-financial stakeholders.

“We had failed to proactively counter the twisted narratives of our debt levels and unfounded accusations of political partisanship, resulting in the spread of distorted perceptions.

“The fact is that, for our class of transport and utility companies, we have one of the lowest debt-EBITDA ratios. (For the half year ending September 2023, this was 2.5x). Further,

with an infrastructure business footprint in 23 Indian states governed by political parties across the spectrum, we are truly politically agnostic,” he said.

He concluded the piece by saying “the trials and tribulations of the past year have taught us valuable lessons, made us stronger and reaffirmed our faith in Indian institutions.”

This “devious attack” on the group and its strong countermeasures will no doubt become a case study, he said, adding that he was sharing his thoughts as similar attacks could happen on other Indian groups as well in future.

“I am under no illusions that this is the end of such attacks. I believe we have emerged even stronger from this experience and even more unwavering in our resolve to continue our humble contribution to the India growth story,” he said.



Industry seeks tax incentives in Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian industry, including exporters on Thursday, asked the government to provide tax incentives for research and more funds for marketing activities in the Budget to boost manufacturing and the country’s outbound shipments.

They also urged the government to consider developing a global shipping line in partnership with the private sector.

India’s outward remittance on transport services is increasing with rising exports.

“We remitted over USD 80 billion as transport service charge in 2021. As the country moves towards the goal of USD 1 trillion, this will touch USD 200 billion by 2030,” Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said, adding that the private sector may be engaged to develop the shipping lines.

This will also reduce arm-twisting by foreign shipping lines, particularly of our MSMEs, the organisation said.

For promoting Research and Development (R&D) in the country, weighted tax deduction can be increased to 200 per cent, it said.

“Unfortunately, India’s spending on R&D (less than 1 per cent of GDP) is well below that in major nations such as China (2.43 per cent of GDP), US (3.46 per cent), Korea (4.93 per cent) and Israel (5.56 per cent),” Israr Ahmed President (Officiate) and Vice President FIEO said.

He said aggressive export marketing is required to showcase Indian products and services to

the global customers, and for that more funds are required under the Market Access Initiative (MAI) scheme.

“For aggressive marketing, there is a need for the creation of a corpus... For the scheme,” Ahmed said, adding that the government can consider announcing a scheme on a pilot basis in 50 districts with a corpus of Rs 5,000 crore.

Further, startup firm World of Circular Economy (WOCE) said the sustainability and climate solutions industry is urging the government for crucial support.

There is a need of funds and incentives for the industry.

“Companies in the sustainability sector, especially SMEs, are facing multiple challenges, including immediate financial burdens and securing necessary resources. Urgent government intervention is needed to overcome these challenges and facilitate the seamless integration of sustainable practices,” WOCE Founder and Director Anup Garg said.

Garg also urged the government to consider providing input tax credit for using green fuel in manufacturing processes; and subsidised loans for investment in green technologies.

Besides, he asked to incentivise carbon-intensive factories for traceability initiatives in the raw material supply chain; allocation of funds for R&D in greener technologies; and direct tax incentives for companies promoting the use of decarbonisation tools and digital technologies for reliable carbon data.

Markets fall dragged by IT stocks, foreign fund outflows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

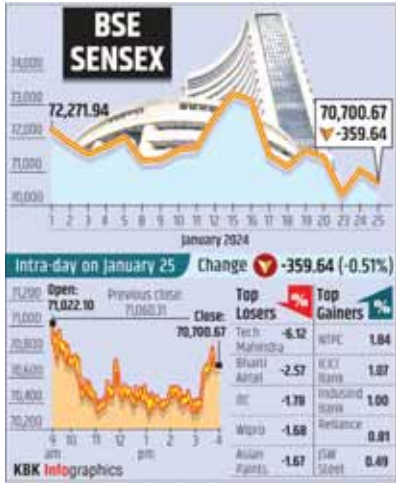
Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty declined on Thursday due to selling in IT stocks and continuous foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 359.64 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 70,700.67. During the day, it plunged 741.27 points or 1.04 per cent to 70,319.04.

The Nifty fell by 101.35 points or 0.47 per cent to 21,352.60.

Among Sensex shares, Tech Mahindra fell by over 6 per cent after the company reported a 60 per cent decline in net profit to Rs 510.4 crore in the December quarter.

Bharti Airtel, ITC, HCL Technologies, Asian Paints, Wipro, HDFC Bank, Nestle, Tata Steel, Tata Consultancy Services and Maruti were among the other major lag-



gards.

NTPC, ICICI Bank, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries, JSW Steel, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory.

European markets were trading mostly lower. The US markets ended on a mixed note on Wednesday.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 6,934.93 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.02 per cent to USD 80.96 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark jumped 689.76 points, or 0.98 per cent, to settle at 71,060.31 on Wednesday. The NSE Nifty ended 215.15 points, or 1.01 per cent, higher at 21,453.95.

Thermal plants utilisation to rise to 69 pc in FY 25: ICRA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The capacity utilisation of thermal power plants will increase by a percentage point to 69 per cent in 2024-25, led by the growth in electricity demand and limited thermal capacity addition, says rating agency ICRA.

ICRA’s outlook for the thermal power segment is ‘Stable’, supported by the healthy improvement in the thermal plant load factor (PLF), coupled with the reduction in dues from state distribution utilities (discoms) following the implementation of the Late Payment Surcharge (LPS) scheme since August 2022, a statement said.

“The current under-construction thermal capacity is about 30 GW, which is predominantly in the Central and the state-owned generation segment and is expected to be commissioned over the next two to four-year period,”

Grishikumar Kadam, Senior Vice President & Group Head - Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said in the statement.

In our view, there is a clear need for incremental capacity beyond this pipeline if the



annual electricity demand growth continues to exceed 6.0 per cent till 2030, after factoring in the renewable capacity addition, he added.

He stated that if annual demand growth is stronger at 7.5 per cent till 2030, to meet the same, the incremental thermal capacity requirement will need to be as large as 70 GW.

Coal has remained a dominant fuel source to meet the base load power demand in the country, and its share in the overall energy generation mix is estimated to decline from 73 per cent in FY2023 to about 58-60 per cent in FY2030, assuming the renewable capacity addition scenario of 200 GW

between FY2024 and FY2030, as per ICRA estimates.

Nonetheless, the share of coal in the generation mix is expected to remain significant till 2030, it stated.

The average spot power tariffs in the day-ahead market (DAM) of the Indian Energy Exchange remained high at Rs 5.4 per unit in YTD FY2024, owing to the sharp demand growth.

The spot tariffs are likely to remain elevated at around Rs 4.5-5.0/unit in the near-term against a long-term average of Rs 3.0-3.5/unit. Further, the coal stock level for the domestic power plants remained modest at around 12 days as of

December 2023, lower than the normative requirement.

Nonetheless, this remains similar to the corresponding period of the previous year, it stated.

For the renewable energy segment, ICRA’s outlook remains ‘Stable’, led by strong policy support, healthy demand prospects, and superior tariff competitiveness.

Further, the realisation of past dues and regular payment of ongoing bills by discoms following the LPS scheme remain positives for the sector.

Kadam said in the statement, “the sharp decline in solar PV cell and module prices, abeyance of the order on Approved List of Models and Module Manufacturers (ALMM) till March 2024, and the timeline extension approved for solar and hybrid projects, are expected to lead to an improvement in RE capacity addition to 18-20 GW in FY2024 from 15 GW in FY2023.”

This, he said, along with the growing project pipeline, is likely to support the scale-up in capacity addition to about 25 GW in FY2025, mainly driven by the solar power segment.



CBIC notifications need simplification: GTRI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The complex language used in the notifications of the CBIC regarding customs duties needs simplification to help industry in understanding those orders as they carry crucial details, economic think tank GTRI said on Thursday.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said for this the CBIC (Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs) must use services of communication experts for help in drafting easy to understand notifications containing necessary details.

This will help over a lakh firms importing merchandise exceeding USD 660 billion in 2023 and it will also add to the ease of doing business with zero cost to the government and immense benefit of clarity to the Indian industry, it said.

“Notifying import duties is a critical mandate of CBIC. Firms pay import duties as notified by CBIC, but firms cannot do it on their own as the CBIC notifications use complex language and mostly refer to back notifications unintentionally hiding complete details needed to know the duty or import conditions on a product,” GTRI Co-Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

Using simple language would also enhance transparency in its tariff and other notifications, he added.

Import duties in India vary significantly, ranging from 0-150 per cent.

These duties include compo-

nents like basic customs duty, social welfare cess, Agriculture Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC), and IGST (Integrated Goods and Services Tax).

Citing an example, the GTRI said a company importing tennis shoes would pay 35 per cent basic customs duty, 3.5 per cent social welfare cess, nil AIDC, and 18 per cent IGST.

However, the total duty is not a simple sum of these percentages but is calculated using a specific formula, resulting in a total duty of 63.43 per cent.

“It is impossible for a layman to find out individual duty components for a product and calculate the total duty payable,” Srivastava said.

This complexity poses a challenge, especially for small firms, in determining the correct customs duty for their products, the GTRI said, adding that they have to seek expert help to understand and comply with the various duties, as the information is spread across numerous notifications each year.

Talking about a recent notification regarding some gold items, it said a person needed to look at, at least 11 notifications that amended the oldest notification.

“This roundabout reference makes understanding the update challenging. The notification could have simply stated that the government has imposed an AIDC of 5 per cent on gold or silver findings, avoiding the need for cross-referencing multiple documents,” it added.

Rupee settles 1 paisa higher at 83.11 a dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee rose 1 paisa in a range-bound trade to close at 83.11 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as the support from weak American currency overseas was negated by rising crude oil prices.

Forex traders said the rupee is trading in a narrow range as muted domestic equities and sustained foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.13 against the greenback. The unit oscillated between an intraday low of 83.14 and a high of 83.08 and finally settled at 83.11 (provisional) against the dollar, 1 paisa higher from its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee had settled at 83.12 against the US dollar.

The rupee traded on a flat note amid weak domestic markets and rising crude oil prices.

Foreign fund outflows also weighed on the domestic currency, said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Public sector Indian Bank is engaged in floating a wholly-owned subsidiary with a capital infusion of Rs 10 crore and it is expected to commence operations in the next financial year, a top official said here on Thursday.

The subsidiary would largely focus on back-office processing, collection, sales and marketing, Indian Bank Managing Director and CEO Shanti Lal Jain said.

“Around a week back, we got the financial approval. It will be a wholly-owned subsidiary. We will be putting Rs 10 crore as capital and we are in the process of recruiting people at

Indian Bank wholly-owned subsidiary to start next fiscal: MD

the top level like CEO, CTO...,” he told reporters.

The plan to launch a subsidiary is to focus on sales and marketing, collection and recovery process, he said.

“There are many works that we are doing. Call centre work, already we are in the process of recruiting people. Maybe in the next financial year, it will be in operation. This subsidiary will not be as big as Indian Bank, they will do our work, feet on the street for collection, recovery like that,” he said responding to a query.

The bank on Wednesday reported a 52 per cent jump in its net profits at Rs 2,119 crore in the October-December 2023 quarter, on the back of improvements in core income and a reduction in bad loans.

The bank earned a net profit of Rs 1,396 crore in the corresponding quarter of last year. Observing that the digital transactions in the bank have increased to 87 per cent during

the quarter under review, he said, the bank has set a target of witnessing digital transactions to the tune of Rs 75,000 crore digital transactions and as of December 2023, it stood at Rs 52,000 crore.

“We are moving towards the target (of Rs 75,000 crore) digital transactions in the current financial year...” he said. Jain said the lender has also earmarked Rs 200 crore towards upgrading cyber security over the next three years.

the quarter under review, he said, the bank has set a target of witnessing digital transactions to the tune of Rs 75,000 crore digital transactions and as of December 2023, it stood at Rs 52,000 crore.

“We are moving towards the target (of Rs 75,000 crore) digital transactions in the current financial year...” he said. Jain said the lender has also earmarked Rs 200 crore towards upgrading cyber security over the next three years.

Bajaj Auto shares climb over 5 pc; mcap jumps ₹10,915 cr post Q3 earnings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Bajaj Auto Ltd on Thursday climbed over 5 per cent after the company reported a 38 per cent jump in consolidated Profit After Tax (PAT) to Rs 2,032.62 crore in the December quarter.

The stock jumped 5.35 per cent to settle at Rs 7,596.85 on the BSE. During the day, it rallied 5.73 per cent to Rs 7,625 — its 52-week high.

Shares of the company on the NSE climbed 5.22 per cent to Rs 7,590. During the day, it

advanced 5.71 per cent to reach a 52-week high of Rs 7,625.15.

The company’s market valuation jumped by Rs 10,915.17 crore to Rs 2,15,127.41 crore. The company had posted a consolidated PAT of Rs 1,472.7 crore in the year-ago period, Bajaj Auto said in a regulatory filing.

Consolidated total revenue from operations in the third quarter of the ongoing fiscal stood at Rs 12,165.33 crore, up from Rs 9,318.54 crore in the year-ago period, it added.



JSW Steel Q3 profit jumps five-fold

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

JSW Steel Ltd on Thursday reported five-fold rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,450 crore for December quarter 2023-24, on the back of strong domestic demand.

The company had logged a net profit of Rs 474 crore in the year-ago period, JSW Steel said in a filing to BSE.

Income during the third quarter increased to Rs 42,134 crore from Rs 39,322 crore in the year-ago period.

“The strong performance was driven by capacity utilisation rising to 94 per cent during the quarter vs 89 per cent in Q2 FY24 at the Indian operations,” the company said in a statement.

JSW Steel is the flagship business of the diversified, USD 23 billion JSW Group. The group is also into energy, infrastructure, cement, paints, sports, and venture capital.

Gold declines ₹150; silver jumps ₹200

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices declined Rs 150 to Rs 63,050 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a fall in precious metal prices internationally, according to HDFC Securities.

The yellow metal had ended at Rs 63,200 per 10 grams in the previous trade. However, silver jumped Rs 200 to Rs 76,200 per kilogram.

“Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 63,050 per 10 grams, down by Rs 150, taking bearish cues from the overseas market,” Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,016 per ounce, down by USD 10 from the previous close.

However, silver was trading marginally higher at USD 22.78 per ounce.

Recycling reduces burden on natural resources: Joshi

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Thursday emphasised on the importance of recycling metals for circular economy, saying the process reduces the burden on natural resources, which are “finite”.

The minister for coal and mines made the remarks at the 11th International Material Recycling Conference (IMRC) in Kolkata.

As far as minerals are concerned, their resources (reserves) are finite and recycling metals such as steel and aluminium, reduces the burden on natu-



ral resources for these materials, the minister said in a video address.

Recycling is important because it is sus-

tainable. It plays an important role in consuming the available resources minimising the energy consumption in metal processing. The government wants to make India a hub of circular economy, Joshi said. However, mining is also important, he said, as the sector provides livelihood to crores of people in the country.

The recycling process helps divert the metal scrap from landfills, helps offset carbon emissions and saves energy consumption, Joshi added.

In his address, former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant termed recycling as “a socio economic opportunity”.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

e-Tender Notice No. ETCCECONIIBS2024002, Dated : 19.01.2024

NAME OF WORK : CONSTRUCTION OF ROAD OVER BRIDGE OF SPAN 1x56.0m BOW STRING GIRDER + 1x36.0m COMPOSITE GIRDER + 1x24.0m COMPOSITE GIRDER WITH RCC DECK SLAB AT RAILWAY Km.337/35-37 & LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY (LHS) OF SIZE 4.00x3.00m AT RAILWAY Km. 337/29-31 IN LIEU OF LEVEL CROSSING NO. 142 BETWEEN JAJPUR KEONJHAR ROAD - JAKHAPURA SECTION ON HOWRAH - CHENNAI MAIN LINE UNDER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the Work (₹) : 2766.68 Lakhs, EMD (₹) : 15,33,400/-, Completion Period of the Work : 18 (Eighteen) Months.

Tender Closing Date & Time : At 1200 Hrs. of 19.02.2024.

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers / bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer / bidder can participate on e-tendering.

The tenderers should read all instructions to the tenderers carefully and ensure compliance of all instructions including check lists, para 3.1 (additional check-list) of Tender form (Second sheet) Annexure-I of chapter-2 of Tender documents, submission of Annexure-B/G & G1 duly verified and signed by Chartered Accountant.

Chief Administrative Officer (Con), Bhubaneswar

LOST

By virtue of an affidavit before Notary public Bhubaneswar, I, Sri Sanjaya Kumar Swain, S/O-Akshya Kumar Swain, resident of D/L-67, VSS Nagar, Bhubaneswar declare that, my class-X (ICSE) Board certificate vide Index no-T/3562/078 & mark-sheet has been lost and damaged by white ants at my home. This document is required for the purpose of issue new/duplicate certificate & marksheet.

S/d-Sanjaya kumar Swain

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No. eT-CRW-MCS-EL-9-2023

NAME OF WORK : REPAIRING & OVERHAULING (E-CHECK) OF ONE NUMBER DA SETS (CUMMINS MAKE DIESEL ENGINE) EQUIPPED IN POWER CAR NO.131543 LWLRM AT CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP/MANCHESWAR.

Advised Value (₹) : 27,01,615.35, EMD (₹) : 54,000.00, Period of Completion : 03 Months.

Bidding Start Date : 24.01.2024

Closing Date & Time : At 1500 hrs. of 07.02.2024.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer, CRW / Mancheswar

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

WORKS DEPARTMENT

E-mail: ceroads.bhse@gmail.com

Bid Identification No. CE-DPI & R-37/2023-24

1. The Chief Engineer (DPI & Roads), Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for Roadwork as mentioned below:

2. Nature of work : Road works

3. No. of work : 2Nos.

4. Tender Paper cost : Rs.10,000.00

5. Class of Contractor : Special Class/Super Class

6. Available of bid document : From 10.00 A.M. of 30.01.2024 to 4.30 PM of 13.02.2024

7. Date of opening of Bid : Dt.13.02.2024 at 4.35 P.M.

8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <https://tenderodisha.gov.in> . Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

OIPR-3411110058/2324

Chief Engineer (DPI & Roads), Odisha(UC)

I have not announced retirement: Mary Kom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Her future is a subject of intense speculation since that final Olympic appearance in Tokyo back in 2021 but celebrated Indian woman boxer M C Mary Kom on Thursday refuted talk of retirement even though she is on the wrong side


of the international cut-off age for amateur boxers. The 41-year-old six-time world champion, who won an Olympic bronze in the 2012 London edition, found herself at the centre of a social media storm after reportedly declaring that due to the 40-year age cap for amateur boxers, she has been forced to

retire. In a statement this morning, she declared that she had been misquoted and a formal announcement of retirement is still some time away. "I haven't announced retirement yet and I have been misquoted. I will personally come in front of media whenever I want to announce it. I have gone

through some media reports stating that I have announced retirement and this is not true," the Manipuri flyweight (51kg) category boxer asserted. She then tried to give context to her earlier comment, insisting that she was merely talking

about the international rules and not referring to herself specifically. "I was attending a school event in Dibrugarh (Assam) on 24 January 2024 wherein I was motivating children and I said 'I still have hunger of achieving in sports but age limit in Olympics

doesn't allow me to participate though I can carry on with my sport," she said. "I am still focusing on my fitness and whenever I will announce retirement I will inform everyone. Please do correct this," she added.



ବିଜ୍ଞାପନ ନିବିଷ୍ଟା ଏବଂ ଜନ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଅଧିକାରୀଙ୍କ ବାବଦରେ, ଗଜପତି, ପାରାଲକ୍ଷେମୁଣ୍ଡି

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF DISTRICT MEDICAL & PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER: GAJAPATI, PARALAKHEMUNDI

ଈ-ମେଲ: gaipaticdmo@gmail.com / 60146 ନମ୍ବର, ୦୬୮ ୧୫-୨୨୨୨୦୫/୨୨୨୧୦୫/୨୨୨୧୦୫

E-775

No. 799 /2024

dated, 24.1.2024

EXPRESSION OF INTREST FOR ENGAGEMENT OF DOCTORS

ON NEGOTIATION BASIS IN THE GAJAPATI DISTRICT UNDER CORPUS FUND.


1 Specialist in the Discipline Below 70 1 no. post in each category Remuneration will be negotiation basis on hiring Daily/ Weekly.

Anesthesia/ Skin & VD/ Peadiatrics/ ICU Trained Doctors / Pathology Spl./ TB&CD Spl./ Psychiatry Spl.

Expression of interest of Doctors / Private Practioners having Post Graduate Qualification in the Discipline of Anesthesia/ Skin & VD/ Peadiatrics/ ICU Trained Doctors / Pathology Spl./ TB&CD Spl./ Psychiatry Spl. for DHH-Paralakhemundi of Gajapati district are invited under Corpus fund within dated 20-02-2024. The details of eligibility criteria and other conditions of Service can be downloaded from the District Website [http:// www.gajapati.nic.in](http://www.gajapati.nic.in). The Candidate must read the down loaded eligibility criteria and other terms and conditions carefully for the above engagements and submit one set of the self attested Xerox copy of required documents with application form. The undersigned has reserves the rights to cancel the above recruitment process at any time without assigning any reason thereof.

OIPR-10105/11/0013/2324

Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, Gajapati, Paralakhemundi



GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER

MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, KHARJARI

E-mail: cemidivision,kharjar@rediffmail.com

e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Bid Identification Notice No.-03/SE MIDKHR/2023-24

L1 No:- 53 / MIDKHR


Dt:- 24.01.2024

The Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Kharjar, Dist-Nuapada on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate Bids in Single Cover System through e-procurement to be received in online mode only for the works as detailed in the table below. The bid should be submitted online in the web site www.tenderodisha.gov.in by eligible contractors.

1. Name of work	: Construction of Civil Works under M.I Division, Kharjar
2. Total No. of works	: 11 (Eleven) Nos. Only
3. Estimated cost	: Varies from 13.00 Lakhs to 41.20 Lakhs Approximately
4. Class of Contractor	: As mentioned against work
5. Period of completion	: As mentioned against work
6. Date and time of availability of Bid	: From 11:00 AM on 31.01.2024 and up to 5:30 PM on 07.02.2024 Document in portal
7. Last date / time for receipt of Bid	: Up to 5:30 PM on 07.02.2024
8. Date / Time of opening of Bid Document	: From 11:00 AM on 08.02.2024 At 0/o M.I. Division, Kharjar, Nuapada
9. Date / Time of Lottery (if Required)	: From 11:00 AM on 12.02.2024 At 0/o M.I. Division, Kharjar, Nuapada
10. Name and Address Officer	: Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Kharjar, Nuapada Officer Inviting the Bid.
11. Mode of Payment of Bid cost and Bid security.	: Online

OIPR-32090/11/0005/2324

Superintending Engineer





इफको नैनो यूरिया एवं इफको नैनो डीएपी का वादा, उपज अधिक और लाभ ज्यादा

देश का आविष्कार, देश में बना, देश के किसानों को समर्पित

इफको नैनो यूरिया तटल

FCO अभिवृद्धि दुधिया का पदार्थ नैनो उर्वरक






इफको नैनो डीएपी तटल

FCO अभिवृद्धि दुधिया का पदार्थ नैनो उर्वरक

INDIAN FARMERS FERTILIZER COOPERATIVE LIMITED, PARADEEP UNIT




ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବଜାର ଓଡ଼ିଶା

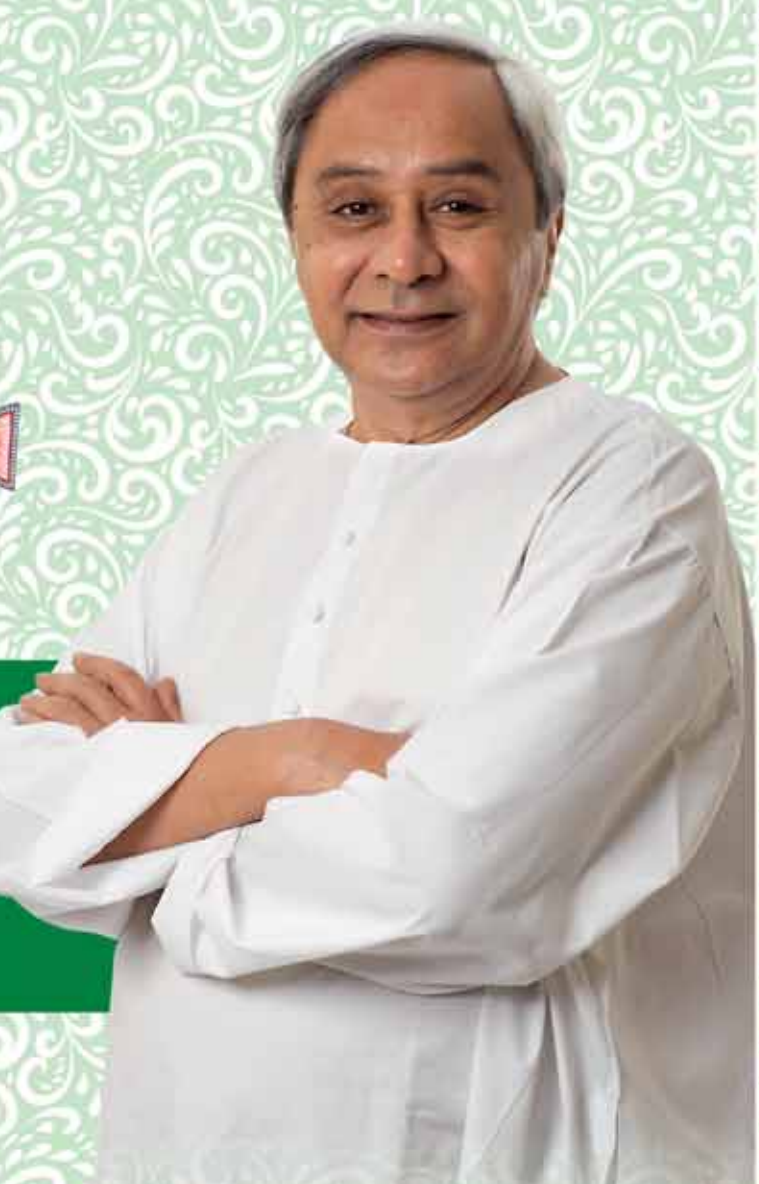
ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

ଆଦିବାସୀ ଶୈଳୀ ୨୦୨୪

୨୬ ଜାନୁଆରୀରୁ ୫ ଫେବୃଆରୀ ୨୦୨୪

ଆଦିବାସୀ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ ପଡ଼ିଆ, ଯୁନିଟ୍-୧, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର








ଜନଜାତିଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ଓ ସଂଗୃହୀତ କଳାସାମଗ୍ରୀ, ଲଘୁ ବନଜାତ ଦ୍ରବ୍ୟ, କୃଷିଜାତ ଦ୍ରବ୍ୟ, ନିତ୍ୟ ବ୍ୟବହାରିକ ସାମଗ୍ରୀର ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ ଏବଂ ବିକ୍ରୟ

ଜନଜାତି କଳାକାରଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ନୃତ୍ୟ, ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ଓ ନାଟକ ଆଦି ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ

ରାଜଧାନୀରେ ଆଦିବାସୀ ଗାଁ ଓ ହାଟର ଅନୁଭୂତି



ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ ସମୟ : ପ୍ରତ୍ୟହ ଅପରାହ୍ନ ୨ଟା ୩୦ରୁ ରାତି ୯ ଟା

ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ : ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ୬ ଟା ୩୦ରୁ ରାତି ୮ ଟା ୩୦

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ଅନୁସୂଚିତ ଜନଜାତି ଓ ଅନୁସୂଚିତ ଜାତି ଉନ୍ନୟନ ତଥା ସାମ୍ବାଦିତ ଓ ପଛୁଆ ବର୍ଗ କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବିଭାଗ

SPINNERS PUT INDIA IN STRONG POSITION ON DAY ONE

India 119/1 after bowling out England for 246



PTI ■ HYDERABAD

After spinners put England batters through a harsh scrutiny, Yashasvi Jaiswal rolled out his own version of 'Bazball' en route to a crushing fifty as India posted 119 for one to take the upper hand on day one of the opening Test here on Thursday. At close, Jaiswal (76 batting, 70 balls, 9x4, 3x6) and Shubman Gill (14 batting) were at the crease and the hosts are 127 runs in arrears of England's anaemic first innings total of 246, which was built around skipper Ben Stokes' hardheaded 88-ball 70. India were comfortably placed at 119 for one at stumps after bowling out England for 246 on the opening day of the first Test here on Thursday. Around Stokes, England batsmen crumbled as the spin trika of Ravichandran Ashwin (3/68), Ravindra Jadeja (3/88) and Axar Patel (2/33) rudely nudged them back to reality of batting on an Indian pitch that offers barrowful of turn and grip even from day one. But when the Indian openers came out bat the RGI Stadium, pitch appeared to have lost its bite and the England tweekers looked like a defanged lot. Jaiswal wrapped himself with the leader's cape despite the presence of his captain Rohit Sharma (24, 27 balls) at the other end, tearing into England bowlers with gusto. The gap between runs and balls could give the left-hander's

innings a hue of carelessness but it was anything but that. Jaiswal started his and the team's innings with a clipped boundary to square leg off pacer Mark Wood, but that was just the appetizer as the left-hander offered a harsh welcome to Tom Hartley to international cricket. The 22-year-old smashed the England left-arm spinner for two sixes in his first over, one over long-on and the other in front of the square. His twinkling feet and fast hands made it tough for the England spinners to settle into a rhythm against him. Jaiswal and Rohit added 80 runs in just 12.1 overs to give their side a wonderful launching pad. It came to an end when Rohit gave a catch to Stokes off left-arm spinner Jack Leach while trying to clear him over the long-on. But for the rest of the innings, it was a futile toil for the English bowlers as this could be the beginning of a long and tiring tour for them. To make it even more exasperating for them, they have already exhausted all the three reviews for this innings as well. However, the whole atmosphere was different when the Indian spinners were operating - the ball bounced, turned and gripped to leave the English batters an edgy group except a few small passages. One of them came in the post-lunch session when Joe Root (29, 60 balls) and Jonny Bairstow (37,

58 balls) added 61 runs for the fourth-wicket as England attempted to stay above the fast-rising water. Root and Bairstow, generally, relied on sweep and the reverse avatar of that shot occasionally to gather runs. However, Root was culpable of being too pre-meditative and it eventually led to his downfall. Jadeja hit a fuller length which

resulted in a top-edge off Root's bat that flew to short fine leg where Jasprit Bumrah did not have to strain himself much to complete the catch. Bairstow too did not last long as Axar delivered a peach from wide of the crease to take out the batter's off-stump. Ben Foakes has this reputation of being a fine player of spin but on this day only struggle was vis-


ible as he departed with a 24-ball four, offering a simple catch to stumper KS Bharat off Axar as England lost five wickets in that session for 107 runs. It was left to captain Stokes, who employed conventional and non-conventional sweeps to counter spin, to wage a lonely battle in the company of tailenders and even looked solid during his stay in the middle.

But then on dire occasions like the one England encountered here, even a lion-hearted warrior like Stokes could only add a modicum of respectability to the total. After a sedate beginning, Stokes slipped into his own and played some dazzling shots before Bumrah disturbed his stumps. His innings contained six fours and three sixes.


In the morning session, England might have daydreamed of another buccaneering effort after openers Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley made 25 runs in the first four overs which later swelled to 55 in 11.5 overs. But Ashwin underlined his mastery over left-handers for a zillionth time while dismissing Duckett. The 37-year-old managed to

skid one on to beat Duckett's defence to hit his pads as the latter played for non-existent turn. Umpire Chris Gaffaney did not have to think twice before raising his finger, and even a review could not save Duckett. The Indian spinners rushed through that creek to dismantle the England innings as India tightened the grip over the proceedings.




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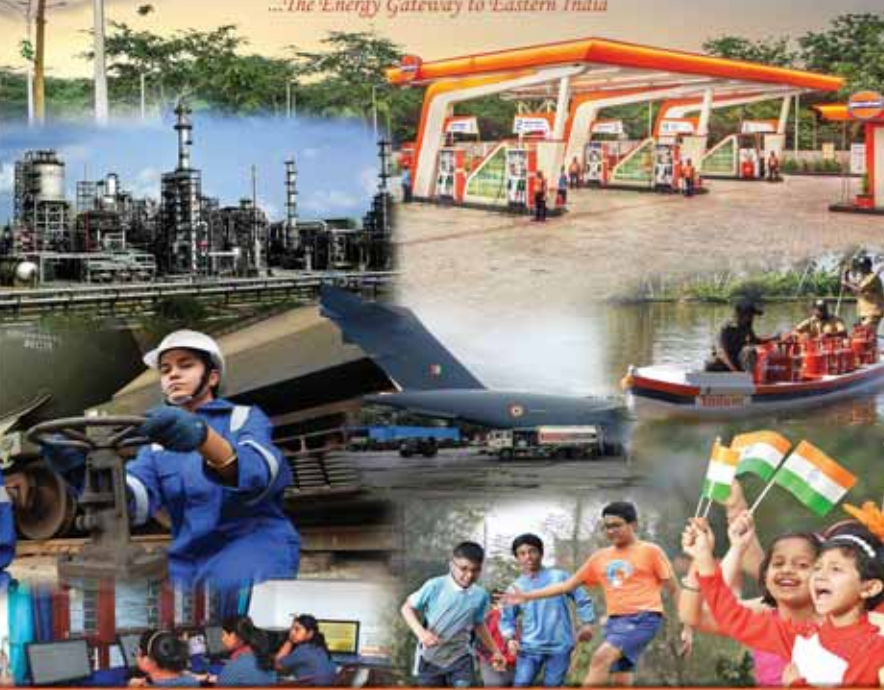


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