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INSIDE

WORLD 8
RUSSIAN GENERAL IGOR
KIRILLOV KILLED BY
BOMB IN MOSCOW



You are responsible for the mess: SC tells Greater Noida Authority

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Considering the plight of the hassled homebuyers, the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) to submit a proposal for grievance redressal, and imposed Rs 5 lakh cost on it for failing to file a timely response.

A Bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar expressed dissatisfaction over the approach of GNIDA and said, "You are responsible for the mess. Of course, developers made money from the homebuyers. But that does not condone your acts."

The Bench said it may order a CBI probe into the whole "mess" if the GNIDA did not come up with a plan to redress the grievances of the homebuyers. "You come up with a plan in 10 days... otherwise we will order a CBI investigation... You will have to ensure that interests of homebuyers are safeguarded. You are also part of the problem. You allowed this mess to be created," the CJ said.

The Bench suggested the GNIDA to take over the entire land, develop the projects and give the flats to the homebuyers. Seeking a detailed affidavit from GNIDA, the Bench asked it to provide information including the date of allotment of the land and the date of execution of the lease deeds in favour of the private



Photo: Ranjan D/mri

company. Besides seeking a comprehensive proposal for the homebuyers, the Bench asked the GNIDA to give information on why the allotment of land was not cancelled when the developers violated the terms of the projects.

Senior advocate Shoeb Alam, appearing for over 800 homebuyers, said a PSU was willing to develop the stalled projects and pay up the dues to GNIDA and others, and moreover, no creditors or investors would have to suffer haircuts.

The top court was hearing about 12 appeals arising out of a National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) judgment in relation to the insolvency proceedings of debt-ridden realty firm Earth Infrastructure.

The NCLAT had declined a plea of a batch of homebuyers who challenged the NCLT's approval of Alpha Corp Development's bid to acquire Earth Infrastructure. The NCLAT had on June 8, 2021, approved the resolution plan from Alpha Corp Development. The committee

of creditor of the Earth Infrastructure had voted in favour of Alpha Corp with a majority of 99 per cent.

Due to the protracted legal battle, five housing projects, three in Greater Noida and two in Gurugram, of the realty firm are stalled leaving hundreds of homebuyers in the lurch. Earlier, Alpha Corp had said it would invest around Rs 900 crore to complete the three stalled projects of Earth Infrastructure that it acquired through the insolvency process at Greater Noida.

The housing projects were launched between 2010 and 2012, but were not completed in the stipulated time period. Approximately 2,900 units were to be developed in these projects. Ananta by Alpha Corp (erstwhile Earth Copia), Sector 112, Gurugram, is a housing project launched in February 2011; Earth Sapphire Court, Greater Noida, is a commercial project launched in July 2010 and Earth Techone, located on Yamuna Expressway in Greater Noida, is a mixed project launched in June 2012.



Photo: Ranjan D/mri/The Pioneer

Winter haze shrouds National Capital

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

A bitter cold wave, and dense fog gripped Delhi-National Capital Region on Tuesday, with air quality plunging back into the 'severe' category and drastically reducing visibility across the city. The Air Quality Index (AQI) of Delhi stood at 433 while the minimum temperature was 5.9 degrees Celsius, two notches below normal while the maximum temperature settled at 24.4 degrees Celsius, two notches above normal. The AQI was expected to remain in the 'severe' category for the next two days.

Of Delhi's 35 monitoring stations, 28 recorded the air quality in the 'severe' category, with some breaching the 450 mark that is classified as 'severe plus'. Monitoring stations in Mandir Marg, Jahangirpuri,

Narela, Nehru Nagar, Patparganj, Punjabi Bagh, Rohini, ITO, Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, DTU, Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, Mandir Marg, Pusa, Shadipur recorded the AQI in the 'severe' category. The AQI was in the 'severe plus' category in Alipur, Anand Vihar, Ashok Vihar, Bawana, Burari, CRRI Mathura Road, North Campus, Okhla Phase 2, Sirifort, Sonia Vihar and Vivek Vihar. According to India Meteorological Department (IMD), meteorological conditions are likely to be unfavourable for effective dispersion of pollutants."

The major source of Delhi's pollution was vehicular emission, contributing 18.8 per cent of PM2.5. There was no contribution of stubble burning to Delhi's pollution as the season is over in Punjab and Haryana. PM2.5 remained

the primary pollutant, with levels recorded at 252 micrograms per cubic metre at 4 pm.

Meanwhile, haze and cold wave conditions have caused severe disruption across the region. Thick fog enveloped various parts of the district, severely reduced visibility and created challenges for commuters. According to the IMD the national capital registered a minimum temperature of 4.5 degrees Celsius at 5.30 am, which later settled at an average of 5.9 degree Celsius. The temperature in certain areas of Delhi went even below 4.5 degrees Celsius. The minimum temperature in Pusa was recorded at 3.5 degrees Celsius, while in Ayanagar, the minimum temperature was recorded at 4 degrees Celsius. At Najafgarh, the minimum temperature was

slightly higher, at 6.2 degrees Celsius.

As temperatures dropped further and fog reduced visibility, the Delhi airport administration implemented low visibility procedures on Tuesday. Moderate fog reported at Safdarjung airport. Safdarjung airport recorded lowest visibility 350m at 8 am, which improved thereafter becoming 400m at 8.30 am. Palam airport recorded lowest visibility 600 m during 8 am hours to 9 am hours which improved thereafter becoming 700m at 9.30 am.

However, the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) authority clarified that flight operations were not affected by the current conditions. A passenger advisory was issued, urging travelers to check with their respective airlines for the latest flight updates. "Low

visibility procedures are in place at Delhi airport. Flight operations remain normal. Passengers are advised to contact their airline for updated flight details," the airport administration posted on X.

Meanwhile, Delhi-NCR schools on Tuesday switched to the hybrid mode of conducting classes following the re-imposition of anti-pollution measures under the Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). According to the revised GRAP schedule, classes for students in grades VI-IX and XI in Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad and Gautam

Buddh Nagar must operate in hybrid mode (physical and online) under Stage IV. However, students of class X and XII have to attend school in-person.

State to have new cybercrime branch: CM

For high-level investigation

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Odisha Government is planning to set up a new cybercrime wing within the State police setup to meet the new-age challenges, informed Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday.

Addressing the valedictory session of the 69th Police Duty Meet here, he said cyber fraud, digital arrest and investment fraud are increasing every day.

"Keeping this in mind, our government is determined to strengthen and modernise the cyber cell of the police department. For this, a goal has been set to establish cyber police stations in all the districts. Apart from this, a cybercrime branch will be created for high-level investigation and monitoring of cybercrimes with a senior officer in charge," he said.



Majhi expressed concern over low conviction rates in crimes against women in the State.

"The main reason for the

low conviction rate is the lack of professional investigation and the severe lack of political will in the past," he said, adding that the State's conviction

rate should at least be taken to the national average.

"For this, the State Government is setting up more women's courts. A policy decision has been taken to set up women's courts in four districts. Now, police will investigate professionally and scientifically and give irrefutable evidence," he said.

He said modernisation of the police force, reforms in the police system, infrastructure for investigation and trained human resources are need of the hour.

"A half-prepared police force will become a textbook for catching and punishing criminals," he said, noting that all police stations would be provided with the required number of vehicles for policing.

He said that in order to enhance the efficiency of the force, the government has decided to fill about 5,000 posts.

Week-long cold wave sweeps State

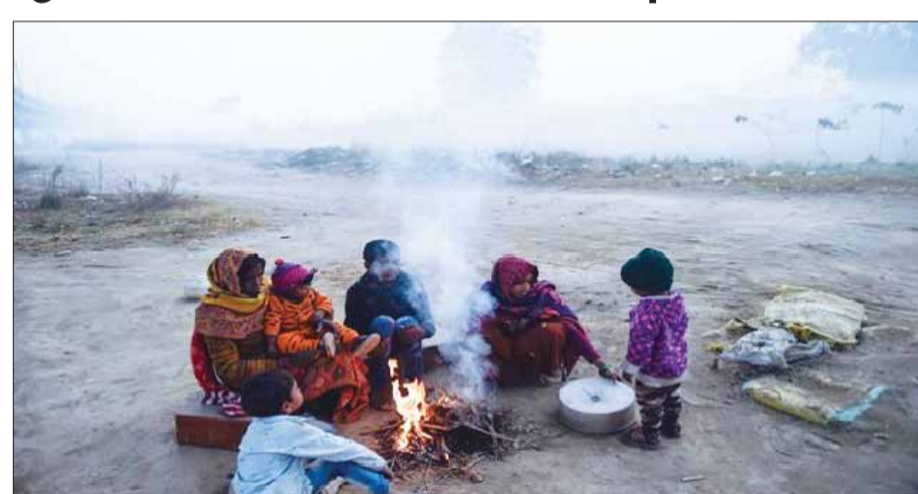
Rainfall likely in some districts

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The continued chill due to a cold wave sweeping across the State is turning unbearable as the mercury dipped to as low as 4 degrees Celsius in the past 24 hours with several places reporting frost accumulation.

The week-long cold spell produced an unusual sight in places like Tensa, Kalta, Mald and Kasira near Koida of Sundargarh district where a thick layer of frost and fog felt like snowfall.

Several hilly regions like G Udayagiri have been bearing the brunt of this severe cold for at least the past 10 days. Dense fog has almost made the sun invisible while the temperature slipped on Monday to th season's low of 4.8 degrees.



Normal lives have been thrown out of gear at almost every place. From the districts of Kalahandi to Cuttack and Kandhamal to Keonjhar, the entire State is shivering due to the sudden cold wave.

The Regional Office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here on

Tuesday issued a Yellow warning for Jharsuguda, Angul, Jagatsinghpur and Sundargarh districts.

Additionally, a dense fog warning was also issued for the next two days. Warnings for light to moderate fog were also announced for Koraput and Kandhamal districts.

However, in a slight respite, temperatures are likely to rise by 3 to 5 degrees in coming days.

Meanwhile, a low-pressure system remains active over the southern Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal. While there is no direct impact on Odisha, it may cause cloudy weather and rainfall in several parts of the State.

Bishnupada shunted out as GAD OSD

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

As anticipated, the Odisha Government on Tuesday shunted out senior Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officer Bishnupada Sethi from his current multiple positions and appointed him as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in the General Administration Department (GAD).

The government's action came after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) served Sethi notice to appear before it in connection with a Rs 10-lakh bribery case. Sethi is most likely to appear before the CBI on Wednesday.

Sethi was serving as the Principal Secretary in the Departments of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Odia Language, Literature and Culture and ST and SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare.



In Sethi's place, Sanjeeb Kumar Mishra, an IAS officer of the 1997 batch, was appointed as Principal Secretary in the ST & SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare Department. Additionally, Mishra will hold charges as Principal Secretary in the Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department and the Odia Language, Literature and Culture Department.

Manoj Kumar Sahoo, a 2006-batch IAS officer, who recently joined the Odisha Government on inter-cadre deputation, was appointed as Special Secretary to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.

'Govt mulling to introduce Santali from KG to PG'

Says Chief Minister NARESH CHANDRA PATTANAYAK ■ KEONJHAR

The State Government is mulling to impart education in Santali language from Kindergarten (KG) to post-graduation (PG), said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi while inaugurating the annual convention of the All India Santali Writers' Association here on Tuesday.

Majhi said that for the development and identity of a community, the mother tongue is the best. Due to the efforts of former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Santali language found a place in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution. This is an honour for the community.

Majhi urged the Santali writers to ensure that all the



important books in other languages are translated into Santali.

He urged the Adivasis to unite and work for the development of their community and also to preserve their language, culture and tradition.

Later, the Chief Minister participated in the golden jubilee celebrations of the Mukuna High School and also attended the final match of Talpada Football Tournament under Maidankel panchayat. In the evening, he

attended the annual function of the local Keonjhar Saraswati Shishu Vidyamandir at the Keonjhar Auditorium.

Notably, Majhi is on a three-day tour to his home district Keonjhar.

Online auto drivers hold demo in city

Against 2-wheeler passenger services

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Online auto-rickshaw drivers' associations held demonstrations in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday against ride-sharing platforms such as Ola, Uber and Rapido.

Congregating at Infocity Square of the city, hundreds of drivers expressed their resentment against the operation of two-wheeler passenger services facilitated by these companies.

The agitators blocked online bike drivers, urging passengers to disembark from these vehicles. The protests persisted despite the presence of police with some demonstrators seizing keys of the

ride-share bikes.

These protests resulted in the halting of hundreds of online motorcycles used for commercial passenger transport, creating tense situations not only in Infocity Square but also across other localities of the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack twin cities.

Online auto-rickshaw drivers said that these companies infringe upon the government's regulations concerning aggregator services. These platforms are registering private bikes for commercial passenger transport, thus affecting their earnings, they alleged. According to the union leaders, repeated attempts to seek action from authorities have gone unheeded, prompting the current strike.

Police used as political tool by BJD govt: CM

PNS ■ CUTTACK
Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi launched a broadside on the previous BJD government and accused it of using police as a political weapon during its tenure. Speaking during the annual day celebration of the Havildar Mahasangha in Cuttack, Majhi said, "The previous BJD government misused the police force. The BJD was deploying police at political events while providing protection to capitalists, businessmen and criminals." "The former Naveen Patnaik-led government ignored the problems faced by police personnel. The police association was dismantled and elections within the police force were not conducted de-



spite repeated demands by the association's office bearers," Majhi said. Highlighting the new BJP government's initiatives in the State, Majhi said that since coming to power, his government ensured elections for the police association and is committed to enabling the police to work independently and effectively in the future. He assured that the government would extend all necessary support to the police force. "Our police is very efficient. However, due to unnecessary political interference during the BJD government, the police could not perform duties independently, leading to a rise in crimes in the State. But our government will ensure all necessary support to the police force," the CM added. No comments from the BJD could be obtained over the CM's remarks.

Patients wait long at AIIMS despite cols wave

Their plight goes unheard
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

At a time when Bhubaneswar is shivering due to a severe cold wave, the sight of patients and their attendants waiting outside hospitals in the capital city is a lesser-known but distressing human plight. Ground reports featured visuals of several people from Odisha as well as the neighbouring States wrapping themselves up in thin shawls and blankets and sleeping on the footpath while waiting outside the gates of AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences), Bhubaneswar. Bhubaneswar recorded a minimum temperature below 15 degrees Celsius consecu-



tively for the past few days. Regardless, people are forced to brave the chill in order to queue up for entry to the premier hospital. "We have to queue in order to enter the hospital at the earliest when the gates open at 6 or 7 am," said a man from Balangir waiting at the AIIMS gate to enter the hospital pre-

Patient found hanging in city AIIMS

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A body of a 70-year-old patient was found hanging from a fan in a mysterious condition in the Orthopaedic Ward of the AIIMS Bhubaneswar on Monday. The deceased, identified as Dilip Kumar Sahu, hailed from Atalpur village in Jajpur district and had recently been admitted to the hospital. As of now, it is suspected that the incident took place at midnight, but the exact circumstances under which it occurred remains uncertain. Incidentally, there were 30

patients in the ward along with 10 AIIMS staff members on duty. Despite the presence of so many people, questions have been raised as to how such an incident could occur unnoticed. Later, police seized the body and sent it for postmortem but did not issue any statement on the incident. An investigation was underway with police questioning the deceased's daughter, other patients and hospital staffs. The AIIMS authorities said that the cause of death would be ascertained after the post-mortem.

In Cuttack Ex-Ravenshaw Prof's body found in Mahanadi

PNS ■ CUTTACK
A former Ravenshaw University Professor, who was missing from December 15 from the Raghunathpur area in Bhubaneswar, was found dead in Cuttack on Tuesday. His body was recovered from Mahanadi river near the Jobra Barrage. The deceased was identified as Baishnab Charan Singh (78), a former Chemistry Professor. Singh was a native of the Rajendra Nagar area in Cuttack, but he was residing in Bhubaneswar. According to his son, Singh had gone missing from the Raghunathpur area on De-

ember 15 and was last seen at the Mo Bus stand in Cuttack's Sikharpur area. Singh boarded Mo Bus No.18 to Jagatpur and he was last seen at Sikharpur at around 8.30 am on December 15, as per the footage captured by CCTV cameras installed in the bus, his son said. Though the exact reason behind Singh's death was yet to be ascertained, police have sent the body to the SCB Medical College Hospital for post-mortem. The cops have also begun an investigation to ascertain under what circumstances Singh reached Cuttack and went near the Jobra Barrage.

Red Swastik Society holds Disabled Month

120 differently-abled got electric hands
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Red Swastik Society, Odisha branch, celebrated the World Disabled Month at the Utkal Rangamanch located at Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odisha Research Center here. On the occasion, 120 differently-abled people from different districts of Odisha were provided with automatic electric hands. Along with this, 60 blankets were distributed. Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo was the chief guest at the event, organised jointly by Red Swastik Society Odisha and INALI Foundation. Singh Deo praised the work of the



society and assured to lend his support to it always. Director of SNM Group Dr Prabodh Mohanty joined as the guest of honor in the event. Society secretary Debasis Patnaik said that various

programmes have been taken and will be taken in future for the upliftment of differently-abled people in the State. Social worker Pramod Patra, vocalist Anandita Das, actress Kajal Satpathy, physiothera-

pist Prabhanjan Rayasamant and founder of Green Chilliz M Keshav Rao were honoured. Renowned vocalists rendered scintillating performances. Society chairman Bijay Acharya and all members were present.

Waste management BBSR to have Rs 175-cr compressed biogas plant

BMC and Oil India ink MoU
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Oil India Limited (OIL) have inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to set up a compressed biogas (CBG) plant at Meherpalli near Kesura in Bhubaneswar. The plant will be built at a cost of Rs 175 crore and will produce 10 tonnes of compressed biogas daily by processing 200 tonnes of waste. While the Oil India Limited will implement the project, the Odisha Government has provided eight acres of land for its

construction. The project aims at processing organic and household wastes to produce CNG gas. According to Housing & Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mohapatra, the construction of the project will be completed within two years. "We all are trying to make Bhubaneswar a greater Bhubaneswar. Oil India and BMC have entered into an agreement for the smooth management of the waste materials," Mohapatra said. OIL Managing Director Ranjit Kumar Rath informed that the company aims to set up similar biogas plants in 25 cities across the country.

IIT-BBS holds meet on circular economy

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar is organising a first-ever AICTE Faculty Development Programme (FDP) on 'Circular Economy' from December 16 to 20. The programme was inaugurated by the institute's Director Prof Shreepad Karmalkar. The objectives of the FDP are to develop a conceptual and theoretical understanding of circular economy along with the strategies and policies; to analyse innovative drives, explore business models and circular economy practices and to examine some



real-world applications, enablers and barriers, national and international policies. Circular economy fosters

a more resilient and regenerative economy by closing the loop of product lifecycles through strategies like recy-

cling, remanufacturing and renewable energy integration. Prof Karmalkar interacted with the participants and the experts of the FDP about the significance of circular economy. He also stressed on the importance of activity-based learning and collaboration in the process of learning, which can lead to a better understanding of the complex subjects. Prof V Pandu Ranga highlighted the measures being taken by the Continuing Education section of the institute in up-skilling the professionals and industry experts by relevant modules, which would have lasting impact.

Jal Purush Karji Majhi Gourav Samman presented

On Saheed Rando Majhi Diwas
BIKASH KHEMKA ■ BHAWANIPATNA



In 1970s and 80s, a tribal man Karji Majhi (25) in Kalahandi district's Serkojholia village under Maljibang panchayat applying his knowledge had constructed more than 25 small irrigation structures by diverting and channelising hilly streams. He diverted river water of Sangul and Nangul flowing nearby his village by digging small channels to facilitate water passage from one point to another. Few villagers had also helped him. With this arrangement, he could provide irrigation facilities to the farmers of more than 35 villages who irrigated around 300 acres. Farmers of Maljibang and Kutruguda including many villages in Lanjigarh block and Thuamul Rampur block's Melghara village are still irrigating for Majhi's hard work which took 3-4 years for him to complete. Since then Majhi was popularly known as 'Jal Purush'. He is no longer alive but his deeds are remembered by the locals.

While celebrating freedom fighter 'Saheed Rando Majhi Diwas' on December 10, Kalahandi Dalit Adivasi Mahasangh remembered late Karji Majhi and honoured 'Jal Purush Karji Majhi Gourav Samman' to Jagannath Pani, engineer of Indravti project and Pratava Samman to Debendra Bisi (journalist). Similarly Dhansingh Majhi was felicitated 'Veer Saheed Rando Majhi Pratava Samman' and Khamsingh Majhi was honoured with 'Gourav Samman'. General secretary of the Adivasi Sangh, Sushil Kumar Bag alleged that more than 40 years passed but Karji Majhi's work could not be improved due to government's apathy. President of the sangh Paramanand Majhi, working president Dharmendra Naik and secretary general Devi Prasad Sindoor among others were present on the occasion.

Gandhi's dietary norms for non-communicable diseases

Former cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu's tips on cancer treatment have garnered significant attention and sparked controversy. Sidhu had previously claimed that his wife, who was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer, achieved good health through strict dietary habits, naturopathy, and intermittent fasting. However, following legal objections from civil society organizations and various medical practitioners, Sidhu clarified that his wife was also undergoing treatment involving Ayurveda and a strict diet under the guidance of an oncologist. Recently, Sidhu released a two-page dietary routine on his social media, claiming it to be in the public interest. He stated that the routine is inspired by three sources of knowledge such as the ancient Indian tradition of Ayurveda, the observations and research of several eminent global doctors, and the concept of "autophagy," introduced by Nobel Laureate Yoshino experience. Autophagy involves extended fasting, where the body



ABASH PARIDA
breaks down old and damaged cells, promoting cellular renewal. Notably, Sidhu mentioned that his wife previously had an unhealthy dietary lifestyle, consuming excessive amounts of packaged foods, junk food, ice cream, and sugary treats. Many Indians, like Navjot Singh Sidhu's wife, are increasingly falling ill due to unhealthy dietary habits. According to a recent report by the Indian Council of Medical Research, 56.4% of all diseases re-

ported in India are directly linked to poor dietary practices. Additionally, such unhealthy eating patterns have led to a rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including nutrient deficiencies, obesity, hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Health experts emphasize that the prevention of these diseases lies in raising awareness, adopting healthier lifestyles, maintaining a balanced diet, and engaging in regular exercise. The importance of dietary reforms is beautifully articulated in Mahatma Gandhi's writings, particularly his work named "Diet and Dietary Reforms". In 1904, while Gandhi was leading the Satyagraha movement in South Africa against British colonial rule, his wife Kasturba's health became a matter of deep personal concern. She had been suffering from severe abdominal pain for several days and was eventually diagnosed with a stomach ulcer. The prescribed treatment included medication and Western dietary recommendations, such as beef

soup. However, Gandhi, a devout Vaishnava, found this suggestion unacceptable and resolved to explore alternative treatments. Gandhi's treatment plan was rooted in simplicity and natural remedies. It included mud poultices and wet cloth applications as external treatments. Her diet was meticulously curated with neem leaf water and tomato juice in the morning, boiled vegetables and lentil broth during the day, and a strict rule of no food after sunset. Over the course of several months, Kasturba made a remarkable recovery. In her view, Gandhi's care was not just a treatment but an embodiment of his food philosophy which is centered on simplicity, dedication, and love. This experience highlights Gandhi's profound belief in the healing power of nature and the virtues of disciplined living. Gandhi's contributions to health and nutrition are as noteworthy as his political ideologies. His works on balanced diets, vegetarianism, healthy lifestyles, and

natural remedies continue to inspire generations. Among his many writings, "A Guide to Health" (1906) and "A Key to Health" (1944) stand out as seminal texts. These books encapsulate the secrets to physical and spiritual well-being, offering a systematic approach to health and food reforms. The foundation of this "Gandhian health literature" lies in his two decades of experiments, observations, and meticulous research on dietary habits. In his writings, Gandhi challenges the conventional reliance on medicine for curing illnesses. Gandhi's dietary advice emphasized simplicity and moderation. His first recommendation for maintaining good health was to avoid spicy and oily foods. He observed that unlike Indians, Europeans and Africans showed little inclination toward heavily spiced dishes. In a column published in "Indian Opinion" on March 29, 1913, Gandhi expressed concern about Indians' obsession with spices, warning that they strain the stomach and compromise health.

He advocated eating for nourishment rather than taste. Gandhi's second piece of advice was to minimize the consumption of salt and sugar. He praised the efforts of London's "Saltless Diet" movement and shared his personal experience by saying "Kasturba and I have been eating salt-free meals for years without any adverse effects. We feel less weak, less thirsty, and have seen improvements in conditions like piles and asthma. However, salt-free food is not a medicine in itself rather it is a part of a broader approach to health." Similarly, Gandhi regarded sugar as a superfluous addition to the diet, comparable to salt and spicy foods. He acknowledged that reducing these elements might initially feel like deprivation, much like overcoming an addiction, but the long-term health benefits far outweighed the initial discomfort. His salt-free diet was instrumental in managing his high blood pressure without medication. At Gandhi's ashrams, meals were

deliberately simple and devoid of excessive seasoning, reflecting his philosophy that food should nourish the body rather than cater to the cravings of the tongue. In May 1942, during a visit to Gandhi's Sevagram Ashram, American journalist Louis Fischer questioned him: "You advocate non-violence, yet you impose the aswad vrat (vow of tastelessness) on your followers, curbing their eating habits. Isn't this a form of violence?" Gandhi responded, "The uncontrolled lust of the tongue is the enemy of the body. The human stomach is not a dustbin, no unnecessary food should be thrown into it." Gandhi's philosophy on diet is particularly relevant today. The National Institute of Nutrition has issued new dietary guidelines for Indians, emphasizing limits on sugar and salt consumption while discouraging processed foods and sugary beverages. These recommendations echo Gandhi's timeless wisdom. (Dr Parida is a columnist based in Bhubaneswar; M: 8456879522)

IIM S'pur hosts meet on branding strategies

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR
 The IIM Sambalpur, in partnership with the NSE Academy, hosted an engaging roundtable discussion titled "Beyond the Brand: Rethinking Strategies in the Era of Technology-Driven Disruption" at its Delhi campus. The event brought together 35 industry leaders and academics to explore how technology is reshaping branding and business strategies.

IIM Sambalpur Director Prof Mahadeo Jaiswal said, "IIM Sambalpur has been at the forefront of integrating AI into educational settings to drive transformative changes.

Our focus is to align with industry standards through AI applications in education." The panel featured executives from companies like Spencer's, Shoppers Stop, Flipkart, ITC and BATA, who discussed AI-driven customer insights, digital supply chain transformations and fostering customer loyalty through technology.

NSE Academy CEO Abhilash Misra reflected on the evolution of technology in India's financial sector. "Thirty years ago, the establishment of India's first electronic trading platform revolutionised capital markets. Today, similar innovation is crucial to main-

tain competitiveness," he stated.

Tata Consumer Products Vice-President Nishit Bansal stressed the need for businesses to integrate core values with technological advancements. "True business success lies in creating long-term societal value. Sustainability and diversity, combined with innovation, help differentiate brands in a competitive market," he said.

The roundtable concluded with a call for purpose-driven innovation and leveraging technology to build future-ready and resilient brands.

Adivasi Kalyan Sangh holds rally in Balangir

PNS ■ BALANGIR
 The members of Zilla Adivasi Kalyan Sangh led by its president Shyam Sundar Bhoi, Banalat Majihi, Giriraj Bhoi and others on Monday marched through the town protesting against the issue of an ST certificate to a non-tribal person.

Tribals dressed in their traditional attire and brandishing their traditional weapons danced before the collectorate and held a road blockade for almost an hour.

"We demand cancellation of the caste certificate fraudulently obtained by the person who belongs to Kuli caste as Kuli caste does not come under ST category," said Sangha president Shyam Sundar Bhoi.

The agitators submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister, Union Home Minister and Union Tribal Affairs Minister, through the Collector,



seeking a direction to all the Tehsildars, Sub Collectors and district Collectors not to issue ST caste certificate to people belonging Kuli caste.

Moreover, the appointment, promotion and admission to educational institutions of persons belonging to Kuli community under ST category be stopped and all ST caste certificates issued to the Kuli community be cancelled, they demanded.

Lawyers invite CM, Dy CM to M'giri meet

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR
 The All Odisha Lawyers' Association is going to conduct a two-day convention at Malkangiri on December 29 and 30. Members from 30 associations of lawyers along with members of All Odisha Lawyers Association, are combinedly organising the event. To make it successful they have invited Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Deputy CM KV Singh Deo and appealed for earlier implementation of health insurance meant for lawyers.

On the occasion, association general secretary Sanjit

Kumar Panigrahi, vice president Jagannath Mishra, secretary Susanta Kumar Mohapatra, Nabaangpur Bar Association president Narasingha Tripathi, Jaypur Bar Association president Trinath Lal Singh, Malkangiri Bar Association president Nrusingh Charan Mohanty, Cuttack State Bar Council member P Ramesh Patra, District Bar Association secretary Lambodar Turuk, Malkangiri Bar Association secretary Biju Sarkar, All Odisha Lawyers Association secretary Sibaram Patra, Santosh Kumar Das, Sudhir Kumar Patra and Suresh Kumar Hadappa among others Advocates were present.

10-day yoga camp ends at R'gada school



PNS ■ RAYAGADA
 The concluding ceremony of a 10-day-long Yoga Training Camp, which took place from December 5 to 14 at Rama Krishna Ashram School, was organised on Saturday.

The event marked the culmination of a highly enriching camp that focused on physical, mental and spiritual well-being through yoga. The programme started with Vedic chanting by the students.

Swami Prabhuvananda presented a brief report of the camp high-

lighting the activities and its overall impact. Sriman Dalana Meleka, a trainee shared his personal experience of the training.

This was followed by an engaging session on the benefits of yoga in daily life, presented by the trainer Yogacharya Rajesh Dalei. A vibrant yoga display by the students showcased their skills and dedication. Swami Gitatmananda warmly greeted the attendees and provided an overview of the camp's objectives and achievements. Principal Ranganath Banerjee proposed a vote of thanks.

99th birth anniv of Vajpayee Week-long T-20 Cricket Tournery in B'pur from Dec 19

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR
 On the 99th Birth Anniversary of former Prime Minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Leeds Sporting Club, Brahmapur is organising an opening ceremony of a week-long Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee Memorial T-20 Cricket Tournament (Day and Night) here from December 19.

Organising Committee headed by Brahmapur MLA K Anil Kumar has invited a band of Ministers and elected representatives to grace the event. Prominent among those include Minister of Commerce, Transport, Steel and Mines, Govt of Odisha Bibhuti Bhusan Jena as chief guest, Minister of Fisheries, Animal Resources, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Gokulananda Mallick, Aska MLA Saroj Kumar Padhi,



Surada MLA Nilamani Bisoyi, Kabisuryanagar MLA Pratap Chandra Nayak and Bhanjanagar MLA Pradyumna Kumar Nayak as guests of honour.

Brahmapur MLA Kumar is the chairman of the Organising Committee.

Similarly, on the closing day of the event to be held on December 25, Minister of Higher Education, Sports and Youth Services Suryabanshi Suraj will grace as chief guest, while Brahmapur MP Dr Pradeep Kumar Panigrahy, Aska Lok Sabha MP Anita Subhadarshini, Chikiti MLA Manoranjan Dyan

Samantara, Khallikote MLA Purnna Chandra Sethi, Digapahandi MLA Siddhanta Mahapatra, Chatrapur MLA KC Nayak will attend the event as guests of honour.

Around twelve leading teams from Odisha and neighbouring Andhra (Visakhapatnam) and Chattishgarah will participate in the tournament. Prominent among them include East Coast Railway, Rising Students Club (Cuttack), Juvenile Cricket Club (Cuttack), Pragati Sporting Club (BBSR), Sambalpur Cricket Academy, Vasupalli NCA (Visakhapatnam), Sersa CKP

Railway, Jagannath Cricket Club (Bhadrak), RSA (Rourkella), Progressive Cricket Club (Jharsuguda); Ganjam Red and Ganjam Blue. The Organising Committee has decided to award Rs. 1 lakh to the winner team and Rs 50,000 to the Runners-up team.

The entire teams were divided into two groups such as Group-A and Group-B. The semi final match of Group-A will play the match on Decent 22 evening while semi final match of Group-B will be held on December 24 evening. The final match will be held on December 25 evening.

DAV nat'l sports, Delhi Odisha contingent gets all-time high of 91 medals

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
 The DAV National Sports-2024, an event comprising prominent athletes and players from different DAV schools of the country selected through cluster and zonal level competitions, concluded at Delhi NCR recently. More than 15,000 boys and girls under-14, 17 and 19 age groups showcased their talents in the competition. The team Odisha comprising of 270 athletes participated in both individual and team events and shined with individual medals of 25 Gold, 22 Silver and 30 Bronze and team medals of 4 Gold, 5 Silver and 5 Bronze, leading to the medal tally of 91 which is an all-time record for the State and an exceptional achievement.

President of the DAV College Managing Committee, the apex body of the organization, Punam Suri inaugurated the National Sports at Major



Dhyanchand Stadium at India Gate amidst luminaries and renowned sports persons of the country. Under the ebullient directives of the Regional Director of the DAV Institutions of Odisha Dr Keshaba Chandra Satapathy and the direct supervision of the State Coordinator for National Sports and the Principal of DAV Public School, Unit-VIII, Bhubaneswar Ipsita Dash, the team Odisha was led by the Senior Physical Education Teacher of DAV Public School, Kalinga Nagar Dr Prakash Chandra Panigrahi.

5-day Athagarh Mahotsav from today



PNS ■ ATHAGARH
 The Athagarh Mahotsav 2024 will commence from December 18 and continue till December 22.

During the five-day event, different cultural programmes with melodies by local and outside artists will be organised. Several government and private stalls will exhibit and sell their products here. A Meenabazar will be an

added attraction.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and several State Ministers have given their consent to be part of the Mahotsav as esteemed guests. Different cultural and athletic competitions and matches for the purpose have been completed. The winners will be awarded by the guests, told acting president of Mahotsav Committee Fanibhusan Rath.

In Mayurbhanj Liquor packed in soft drink bottles seized

PNS ■ BARIAPADA
 Police on Tuesday seized 180 litres of country liquor concealed in soft drink bottles from a private bus at the Udala bus-stand in Mayurbhanj district and arrested three persons in connection with the incident.

The arrested were identified as Sanyasi Bisoi, Umakant Das from Hi-Tech area in Bhubaneswar and Putu Singh from Ambikadeipur area in Udala.

According to sources, the liquor was illegally being smuggled from Khunta to Bhubaneswar in a private bus.

Acting on a tipoff, the Udala police intercepted the private bus, named 'Raja Babu' and seized the contraband pack-



aged in cold drink bottles.

The two traders from Bhubaneswar had reached Khunta to collect the illicit liquor and planned to smuggle it back to capital city by a night bus. The accused revealed that for each bag of liquor successfully transported, they were paid Rs 500 by their owner.

"I came here to collect the liquor. This is the first time I came here to smuggle the country liquor," said accused Sanyasi Bisoi.

Umakant Das, another arrested smuggler said, "I was not aware of the illegal liquor smuggling. They brought me here. We were carrying the liquor in bags."

"I was carrying one bag and for each bag, our owner gave us Rs 700-800. The owner, who hails from our village, pays us to smuggle the liquor bags. I was told to deliver the bag at Hi-tech area in Bhubaneswar," Putu Singh, the third arrested accused, said.

Welfare work by Kerang Muslim women



PNS ■ KHORDHA
 The Kerang Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Organisation distributed winter clothes, dresses, shadis, jackets and sweaters to more than 400 men and women from Mission Ashra at Janla, Asha Kiran and Bap-Maa Sevashram at Jatni, Old Age Ashram at Gurjung and

Harijan and Advashi Pathar Kata Sahi of Kerang village. Besides, bread, rice, biscuits and fruits etc were distributed. The main objective of the programme was to create an environment of peace and harmony among all, to establish peace, world brotherhood and humanism. It has been informed by the organization that such welfare schemes will

continue in coming days.

District president Amatul Hafeez joined as chief guest on the occasion. Kerang Ahmadiyya Muslim Women president Shaheda Begum and vice president Rokia Banu attended as guests of honour and Serajum Munira. Amatus Sami, Zainab Afroz, Kausar Begum, Jobeda Khatun and many workers of the organization were present.

All India Major Port Cultural Meet ends



PNS ■ PARADIP
 The 24th All India Major Port Cultural Meet 2024-25 came to an end here on December 15 evening. The Paradip Port Authority (PPA) along with Major Ports Sports Control Board organised the cultural extravaganza. Gracing

the valedictory function as chief guest, PPA Chairman PL Haranadh thanked the participants for entertaining the people of port township for the last four days. Around 200 participants from 8 major ports across the country participated in the cultural meet.

Team Paradip Port Authority was crowned as the overall champion. Syama Prasad Mukerjee Port, Kolkata won the Runners-up and Mumbai

Port Authority won the 2nd Runners-up award.

Soumya Mishra, Team PPA bagged 1st prize in light vocal category. Chairman, Organising Committee, DN Sondhi presided over the proceedings. Vice chairman Capt AC Sahoo, secretary DP Sethy, co-ordinator Rabi Dash and joint secretary Ranjan Rashmi Beura were also present. DTM, PPA Sriman Narayan Mishra compered the programme.

5th Kalinga Global Film Festival ends

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
 Curtains came down on the 5th Kalinga Global Film Festival (KGFF) on Sunday, organized by KIIT-DU, with actor Amit Sial stealing the spotlight at the closing ceremony.

Known for his critically acclaimed performances in TV series like Maharani and Jamtara and films like Titli, Sial captivated the audience with his reflections on cinema, culture, and his admiration for KIIT University.

During an engaging interaction, Sial was asked about acting in Odia cinema. He responded enthusiastically, "If the story is good, I will definitely act in an Odia movie."



He went on to emphasize the immense talent in India, saying, "We have amazing talent in our country. Tribal dances and music, which used to be a staple in old movies, should find a place in today's cinema too."

Sial also praised the rich

culture and traditions of Odisha and lauded KIIT and its Founder, Dr. Achyuta Samanta.

Earlier in the day, students greeted him at the KISS campus with traditional dance and songs. The actor delighted the audience by answering

questions from students.

The closing ceremony also featured Anant Mohapatra, an acclaimed theatre and Odia film personality, who shared his insights on cinema and storytelling.

KIIT and KISS Founder Dr Samanta, Vice-Chancellor

Prof Saranjit Singh, Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof Debashis Bandyopadhyay, and Registrar Prof JR Mohanty were present. Prof Bandyopadhyay proposed the vote of thanks, marking the end of the three-day festival, which began on December 13.

Under Dr Samanta's visionary leadership, KGFF has grown into a premier platform for celebrating cinema and fostering cultural exchange. This year's festival, organized under the guidance of Himanshu Sekhar Khatua, Director General of the KIIT School of Film, Fashion, and Media Studies, showcased 45 films, including feature films, short fiction, documentaries, and student projects, across multiple venues on the sprawling KIIT campus.

Nadda attacks Congress for amending Constitution for its own benefit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Leader of the House J P Nadda attacked the Congress on Tuesday for amending the Constitution for its own benefit and alleged that its past actions of "toppling governments" in states led to staggered polls, creating the necessity for 'One Nation One Election' bill. Participating in a debate in the Upper House on the "Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India", the BJP president accused the Congress of practising politics of appeasement and attempting to bring in religion-based reservations, a charge which was vociferously contested by the opposition party. Former prime minister and JD(S) leader H D Deve Gowda called upon Parliament to contemplate whether reservation should continue to be given on the basis of caste or it should be changed to economic criteria. The BJP president, meanwhile, also spoke about the Emergency, rejecting the

Congress' claim of having apologised for it. Nadda said if the Congress regrets the step, it should join in observing 'Samvidhan Hatya Divas' on June 25 next year, the 50th anniversary of the imposition of the Emergency. Nadda quoted B R Ambedkar to say "however good a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad", and added that the "bad lot has interfered with the Constitution many times". On a day when two bills that lay down the mechanism to hold simultaneous elections were introduced in the Lok Sabha after a fiery debate, Nadda blamed the Congress for creating a situation that forced the government to take this step. "We have to bring the One Nation One Election bill because you toppled elected government in states, and elections had to be held," Nadda said. He targeted the Congress over issues ranging from Article 370 to triple talaq, and also accused it of not protecting the territorial integrity of the



country. Nadda also accused the Congress of trying to bring in reservation based on religion. The Leader of the House said Ambedkar had clearly said that reservation should not be structured in the name of religion. His remarks were objected to by Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, who raised the issue of reservation given by the Gujarat Government. Coming to Nadda's defence, Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, "What Jairam Ramesh is saying now is wrong. What the Gujarat chief minister gave was on the basis of economic backwardness. Here it is mentioned religious minorities," she said, referring to a circular pur-

portedly issued by the DoPT under the then Congress-led government. She added that Ramesh is conflicting the two (reservations given by the Gujarat government and the DoPT circular) and misleading the House. BJP MP K Laxman who heads the party's OBC Morcha backed Sitharaman's claim. Counteracting Sitharaman, Ramesh said, "We (Congress) have never spoken about religion-based reservation", adding that wherever reservation has been given like in Karnataka it is on the basis of being socially and economically backward not on the basis of religion. Sitharaman responded to Ramesh, saying that he may come up with any number of clarifications but he is misleading the House on this point. Nadda also claimed that Ambedkar, during the debates of the Constituent Assembly, had said there was no need to include the words 'secular' and 'socialist' in the Preamble of the Constitution. Speaking on reservation, Deve Gowda said "The House itself has to apply its mind on what all happened in the past and whether we should give reservation only on the basis of poverty in this country," he said. People are suffering "even with the reservations that we have given in the past and it has not lifted the people who are still suffering for two-

square meals a day", he said. The former prime minister said the House should think over whether reservation should be continued to given on the same lines as in the past or "only who are suffering with most poverty" and whose living condition is bad should be given priority. "If the House thinks over and the leaders think over, this can be thought over by the prime minister (Narendra Modi) before taking any decision on the reservation," Deve Gowda said. He said the Constitution drafted by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar has withstood the test of time. Meanwhile, Opposition members from TMC and CPI(M) on alleged that constitutional rights in Manipur had been suspended and slammed the BJP MPs for not raising the issue during the debate on the Constitution. Ram Nath Thakur, JD(U) leader and Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, said the government strives to implement the principles enshrined in the Constitution.

He congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for giving Bharat Ratna to former prime ministers P V Narasimha Rao and Charan Singh as well as former Bihar chief minister Karpoori Thakur, a champion of backward empowerment, among others, in 2023, asking who stopped the Congress-party from doing the same. Criticising the BJP for frequently taking jibes at the country's first prime minister, RJD leader Manoj Kumar Jha said Jawaharlal Nehru is a symbol of parliamentary democracy against authoritarianism. In his speech, AAP's Ashok Kumar Mittal pointed out that at a time when Parliament is discussing the journey of the Constitution, a large number of people are not getting sufficient food, lakhs are searching for jobs and 40 per cent of the population do not own houses. He also stressed that despite all challenges, the Constitution has shown the way to the country and will keep doing so even in the next 1,000 years.

67 per cent of SSWs belong to SC category: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Exposing a significant disparity in the representation of Scheduled Castes (SCs) within the workforce engaged in sewer and septic tank maintenance across India, official data has revealed that a staggering 67 per cent of sewer and septic tank workers (SSWs) in India belong to the Scheduled Caste category. These government data were made available in Parliament by Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale in a written response to a question in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. He said that out of 54,574 validated sewer and septic tank workers profiled under the 'National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem' (NAMASTE) scheme, 37,060 are from the SC category. The statistics further show that 15.73 per cent of the workers belong to the Other Backward Classes (OBCs),



8.31 per cent are from the Scheduled Tribes (STs), while only 8.05 per cent come from the General category. In total, 57,758 workers across 33 States and Union Territories have been profiled, out of which 54,574 have been validated. Data integration for states like Odisha and Tamil Nadu into the central NAMASTE database is currently underway. The NAMASTE scheme, launched in 2023-24 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), aims to mechanise sewer maintenance and eliminate the dangerous practice of manual scavenging. A total of 16,791 PPE kits and 43 Safety Devices Kits for Emergency Response Sanitation Units (ERSUs) have been distributed. Ayushman cards for health insurance have been issued to

13,604 beneficiaries. Capital subsidies totalling Rs 13.96 crore have been provided to 503 workers and their dependents for sanitation-related projects. An additional Rs 2.85 crore has been released to 226 beneficiaries from the manual scavenger category for alternate self-employment projects. To raise awareness on the hazards of unsafe cleaning practices, 837 workshops have been conducted since the scheme's launch. Efforts to mechanise sanitation work and reduce hazardous manual cleaning have also been prioritised. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission Urban (SBM-U) 2.0, MoHUA has sanctioned Rs. 371 crore to 26 states and UTs for the procurement of 2,585 desludging vehicles. Under the NAMASTE programme, the government profiled workers engaged in septic and sewer tank cleaning comprehensively and aims to fully mechanise sewer maintenance and eliminate fatalities linked to dangerous cleaning practices.

ED restored properties worth Rs 22, 280 crore to victims, says FM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the Enforcement Directorate has restored properties worth Rs 22,280 crore to the victims or rightful claimants and asserted that the fight against economic offenders will continue unabated. Replying to a debate on the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants in the Lok Sabha, she said Rs 14,131.6 crore worth properties belonging to fugitive Vijay Mallya have been restored to public sector banks. As regards the Nirav Modi case, properties to the tune of Rs 1,052.58 crore have been restored to PSBs and private banks. In the Mehul Choksi case, properties worth Rs 2,565.90 crore have been attached and will be auctioned. In the National Spot Exchange Ltd (NSEL) case, Rs 17.47 crore worth properties were restored to the genuine



investors who were defrauded, said the Finance Minister. "On the PMLA, ED has successfully restored properties valued at least Rs 22,280 crore from major cases... We have not left anyone, even if they fled the country, we've gone after them. ED has collected this money and given back to the banks. "...So it is important to recognize that we have not left anybody (committing) economic offences. We are after them. We will be making sure that money, which has got to go back to banks, will go back," Sitharaman said. With regard to foreign black money, the Minister said the Black Money Act of 2015 is actually having a deterrent effect on a lot of taxpayers and they come forward on their own to disclose their foreign assets. She said the number of taxpayers disclosing foreign assets has gone up to 2 lakh in 2024-25, from 60,467 in 2021-22. Under the Act, as of June 2024, demand of more than Rs 17,520 crore has been raised in 697 cases. Total 163 prosecutions have been launched.

Concept of simultaneous polls not new in India: Minister

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid ruckus in Parliament over the One Nation One Election (ONOE) bill on Tuesday, the Ministry of Law and Justice said the concept of simultaneous elections is not a new idea in India. Sharing the details of ONOE, the minister said elections to the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies were conducted simultaneously from 1951 to 1967 following the adoption of the Constitution. The first general elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies were held together in 1951-52, a practice that continued for three subsequent general elections in 1957, 1962, and 1967. The ministry said however, this cycle of synchronised elections was disrupted in 1968 and 1969 due to the premature dissolution of some State Legislative Assemblies. The Fourth Lok Sabha was also dissolved prematurely in 1970, with fresh elections held in 1971. Unlike the First, Second, and Third Lok Sabha, which completed their full five-year terms, the Fifth Lok Sabha's term was extended until 1977 under Article 352 because of the declaration of Emergency. Since then, only a few Lok Sabha terms have lasted the full five years, such as the Eighth, Tenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth. Others, including the Sixth, Seventh, Ninth, Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth, were dissolved early. "State Assemblies have faced similar disruptions over the years. Premature dissolutions and term extensions have become a recurring challenge. These developments have firmly disrupted the cycle of simultaneous elections, leading to the current pattern of staggered electoral schedules across the

country". "The High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections, headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, was constituted by the Government of India on 2nd September 2023, received over 21,500 responses, with 80% in favour of simultaneous elections. The responses came from all corners of the country, including Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar, Nagaland, Dadra, and Nagar Haveli. The highest responses were received from Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, West Bengal, Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh", it said. According to the government, 47 political parties submitted their views. Of these, 32 parties supported simultaneous elections, citing benefits like resource optimization and social harmony. 15 parties raised concerns about potential anti-democratic effects and marginalization of regional parties. The Committee consulted Former Chief Justices of India, Former Election Commissioners, and legal experts. A majority supported the concept of simultaneous elections, emphasizing the waste of resources and socio-economic disruptions caused by frequent elections. The Committee proposed amendments to Articles 82A and 324A of the Indian Constitution to enable simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and local bodies. The Committee recommended implementing simultaneous elections in two phases: Phase 1: Synchronizing Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies elections. Phase 2: Synchronizing elections for Municipalities and Panchayats with Lok Sabha and State Legislative elections within 100 days.

'990 transgenders rehabilitated through shelter homes in last three years'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In last three years, 990 destitute transgender persons have been rehabilitated through garima grehs (Shelter homes) and as many as 725 were imparted skill development training. At the same time, 24,015 transgender persons have been issued identity certificates through the National Portal for Transgender persons, the Government informed Parliament on Tuesday. Additionally, Transgender Welfare Boards and Protection Cells have been set up in multiple states and union territories to address the welfare and security of the community. These efforts are complemented by healthcare support through the Ayushman Bharat scheme, ensuring a more inclusive and supportive environment for transgender persons in India, said Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment BL Verma, in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha. The Minister said that transgender welfare boards and Transgender Protection Cells have been set up in 19 and 12 States/UTs respectively for the welfare and security of the individuals from the community. The protection cells under Director General of Police aims to monitor cases of offences against transgender persons and to ensure timely



registration, investigation and prosecution of such offences, said the Minister. The TWBs have been set up in Rajasthan, Mizoram, Chandigarh, Andhra Pradesh, Pondicherry, Maharashtra, Kerala, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir and Andaman & Nicobar. The States where protection cell has been set up are Chhattisgarh, West Bengal,

Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Andaman & Nicobar, Sikkim, Punjab, Mizoram, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh. The Minister also informed that MoU with National Health Authority (NHA) for convergence with Ayushman Bharat scheme of NHA has been done for providing health facilities under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (PMJAY) scheme to transgender persons. Eighteen Garima Grehs, shelter homes for destitute transgender persons have been established in 15 States namely Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal (2 shelters) and Maharashtra (3). The main aim of Garima Greh is to provide shelter to transgender persons with basic amenities like food, medical care, and recreational facilities besides providing support for the capacity-building/skill development of the sector, added the Minister. The National Portal for Transgender Persons is an end-to-end online process where the applicant can apply for the TG certificate and also download the certificate after issue without any requirement to go to any office of issue. "This portal has more than 62 Lakh visitors and as of now, 24,015 certificates have been issued."

ED conducts fresh searches against operatives of betting website

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate Tuesday said it has conducted fresh searches against the operatives of a betting website, owned by some Pakistani nationals, that also was involved in "illegal" broadcast of Men's T20 Cricket World Cup matches. The searches were undertaken by the federal agency between December 10-12 in Delhi, Mumbai and Pune in the case against the portal named 'Magicwin'. The ED's case, filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), is based on an FIR registered by the cyber crime unit of the Ahmedabad Police in Gujarat. Bank deposits worth Rs 30 lakh were frozen during the raids apart from seizure of "incriminating" documents, the

the APIs (application programming interface) of the original games. The agency said betting activities like deposits, placing of betting and withdrawal are "controlled" by the "owners" of Magicwin. The ED claimed its probe found that the money, deposited in the bank accounts by the players/bettors, was "diverted" through layers of "shell and mule" bank accounts and further the profit part of the owners were invested in crypto assets, withdrawn in cash or sent to Dubai through Hawala channels. The winning amounts of the players/bettors were transferred to their bank accounts through merchant accounts of various shell companies maintained with payment gateways. These amounts were also transferred to the player's bank account through domestic money transfer (DMT), it said.

Rajnath says DPSUs will carry forward modernisation, indigenisation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday here said new Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU) will carry forward modernisation, indigenisation and set new dimensions by incorporating world class technologies. He made this assertion during a meeting of Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The roles and functions of the new DPSUs, created post corporatisation of erstwhile Ordnance Factory Board, were deliberated upon during the meeting. The committee members were apprised on the financial figures, modernisation, capital expenditure, exports, new products developed and ongoing R&D projects, defence ministry said. The defence minister appreci-

ated the efforts taken by the new DPSUs in indigenisation of critical products, modernisation of production facilities and promotion of MSMEs. He appreciated the fact that post corporatisation, the new DPSUs have shown improvement in productivity and quality. There has been good progress in the sales and profit of these DPSUs in a very short span of time, he added. Rajnath exuded confidence that the new DPSUs will carry forward modernisation and indigenisation, and will set new dimensions in quality, turnover, profitability and other financial parameters by incorporating world class technologies. "Our new DPSUs will make India 'Aatmanirbhar' in the field of defence production," he said. On the concerns and suggestions of some of the committee members on certain HR-related issues within the new DPSUs, the defence minister assured them that all issues emanating from the corporatisation of DPSUs are being addressed adequately in consultation with all the stakeholders. He appreciated the suggestions, and said that these would be examined for implementation. Minister of State for defence Sanjay Seth, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan, Secretary (Defence Production) Sanjeev Kumar and other senior officers of MoD were present in the meeting.



PM slams Congress for water disputes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi on Tuesday hit out at the Congress, saying they talk big in the name of farmers but they neither do anything for them nor let others do anything.

He also alleged the party encourages water disputes among states rather than resolving them, and said the delay in the implementation of the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) is a direct proof of the Congress' intention.

The ERCP envisages intra-basin transfer of water within the Chambal basin to provide water to 13 deficient districts of eastern Rajasthan.

"The Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) was delayed for so long by the Congress, this is also a direct proof of the Congress' intentions. They talk big in the name of farmers but they neither do anything themselves for the farmers nor let others do anything," Modi said.

He was addressing the 'Ek Varsh-Parinaam Utkarsh' event to mark the completion of the Rajasthan government's one year in office. He also inaugurated or laid the foundation stones for 24 projects related to energy, road, railways and water worth over Rs 46,300 crore.

The PM said the Parvati-Kalisindh-Chambal Link Project will provide irrigation as well as drinking water facility to 21 districts of Rajasthan and accelerate the development of both Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

On various water disputes between states, he said while the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) policy is to promote dialogue, the Congress continues to fan water discords.

"The BJP's policy is of

dialogue, not of conflict. We believe in cooperation, not opposition. We believe in solutions, not disruption. Therefore, our government has approved and also expanded the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project. As soon as the BJP government was formed in MP and Rajasthan, an agreement was reached on the Parvati-Kalisindh-Chambal project," he said.

The PM noted that he had launched a big campaign to bring Narmada water to different parts of Gujarat when he was the chief minister, and charged the Congress and some NGOs adopted various tactics to stop it.

"The Congress never wants to reduce water problems. The water of our rivers used to flow to across the borders, but our farmers did not get its benefits. Instead of finding a solution, the Congress continued to promote water disputes between states," he said.

PM Modi also said that the BJP is getting huge public support in different states where elections were held. "The nation has given the BJP the opportunity to serve the country for the third consecutive time in Lok Sabha. This did not happen in India in the last 60 years," he said.

"Today, the BJP's double engine governments are becoming a symbol of good governance. Whatever resolution the BJP takes, it makes honest efforts to fulfil it. Today, the people of the country are saying that BJP is the guarantee of good governance," he said, and lauded the work of Bhajanlal Sharma-led BJP government in the state.

"In the last one year, Bhajanlal ji and his entire team have worked very hard to give new momentum and direction to



PM Narendra Modi with Rajasthan CM Bhajanlal Sharma during the 'Ek Varsh-Parinaam Utkarsh' event. PTI

the development of Rajasthan. This first year has, in a way, laid a strong foundation for the many years to come," he said.

Modi said people blessed the BJP with the responsibility to serve Rajasthan for multiple terms and party did its best. "Bhairon Singh Shekhawat laid a strong foundation of development in Rajasthan, Vasundhara Raje took the legacy forward and now Bhajanlal Sharma's government is engaged in further enriching good governance. Its impact can be seen in one year," he said.

Modi said the Central government is constantly trying to improve the economic condition of villages and focusing on promoting every means of earning there. Rajasthan has ample potential for solar energy and it can become the leading state in the sector, he said.

The PM said north India will

get direct connectivity to Kandla from the Jamnagar-Amritsar Economic Corridor. "Rajasthan's transport sector will benefit. Big warehouses will be built and new job opportunities will be created," he said.

"The BJP makes honest efforts to fulfil every promise it makes. The BJP has been getting huge support in states. The country has given the party the opportunity to serve the country for the third time in a row in Lok Sabha," he said.

He also mentioned the victory of the party in Maharashtra and Haryana assembly elections, and bypolls in Rajasthan.

Talking about women empowerment, he said 10 crore women, including lakhs from Rajasthan, joined Self-Help Groups in the last decade. He also highlighted the government's women-specific programmes such as

the Lakhpati Didi scheme, Namu Drone Didi Scheme and Bima Sakhi Scheme. The PM encouraged party workers to work towards water conservation and make people aware about it, saying the BJP is not just the biggest political party but a huge social movement.

CM Bhajanlal also addressed the meeting and highlighted the achievements of his government. Union ministers C R Patil, Bhagirath Chaudhary, Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav, Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari and Prem Chand Bairwa and other leaders were also present in the programme.

Earlier, Modi reached the meeting venue in an open jeep, flanked on his left by the CM and BJP state president Madan Rathore on his right. The vehicle was escorted by a group of women carrying 'Kalash' on head.

Fundamentalist group finds temple in Muslim majority area of Varanasi

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ VARANASI

A temple has been discovered in the Muslim-majority Madanpura area of Varanasi. The temple, reportedly locked for the past decade and filled with soil, came to light after a social media post highlighted its existence. Members of a Hindu fundamentalist organisation visited the site and have called for the temple to be reopened. The group learned about the temple through a social media post that read: "Attention: A Shiva temple lies closed in the lanes of Kashi. This temple is near house number D-31 in Madanpura." Upon visiting the location, the leader of the group found the temple locked, with soil accumulated inside. Local residents were unable to provide clear information about the temple's history or the reasons for its closure.

The group has appealed to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath to intervene and facilitate the reopening of the temple. The organisation is also seeking clarification on who locked the temple and why. In response to the situation, police arrived at the scene to maintain order and persuaded the gathered members to disperse peacefully. Members of the fundamentalist group, who discovered the existence of the temple via a social media post, now claim that it is mentioned in the Kashi Khand, an ancient text detailing the sacred geography of Varanasi. According to the group, the temple is identified as Siddheshwar, located south of Pushpadanteshwar, with a nearby Siddhiteerth well. However, members of the group are clueless about the historical and cultural significance of the temple. Gaurav Banswal, deputy commissioner of police for the Kashi Zone, stated that while the temple is indeed old and

currently locked, no one has been able to confirm ownership or provide details about its closure. The administration plans to conduct a site inspection to ascertain the facts and determine the appropriate course of action. In the meantime, police presence has been increased in the area as a precautionary measure. The fundamentalist organisation which claims the temple is ancient, has been active in Varanasi, notably it has been involved in campaigns to remove statues of Sai Baba from temples in Varanasi, asserting that only traditional deities should be worshipped in the city's temples. The local administration is expected to conduct a thorough inspection of the temple to verify its historical significance and assess the situation. Further actions will be based on the findings of this inspection and directives from higher authorities.

Opposition walks out of Maharashtra Assembly over custodial death

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Opposition staged a walk out from the State Assembly after Speaker Rahul Narwekar refused to allow an immediate discussion on the recent custodial death of Sonnath Surevanshi at Parbhani and the alleged murder of sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh and slammed the Devendra Fadnavis government for human rights violations and police brutality. On the second day of the ongoing winter session of State Legislature in Nagpur, several opposition leaders Nana Patole, Vijay Wadettiwar, Nitin Raut (all from Congress) and Sandeep Kshirsagar (Sharad Pawar-led NCP) expressed serious concern over the manner in which a Dalit youth died in police custody and the killing of a sarpanch in Beed district and demanded an immediate discussion on the issue.

Soon after the proceedings began in the House, Nana Patole raised the twin issues of custodial death of a Dalit youth in Parbhani and the killing of a sarpanch in Beed district, and asked the Speaker to suspend all the other work and hold discussion on the issue.

Opposition Members like Wadettiwar, Nitin Raut and Sandeep Kshirsagar joined Patole in his clamour for immediate discussion on the twin issues.

However, the Speaker declined to allow a discussion on the issue on Tuesday on the ground that it had already been decided to have a discussion under rule 101 on Wednesday considering the seriousness of the incident. However, the Opposition members were not

happy with the Speaker's refused to allow immediate discussion on the issue. They walked out from the House in protest.

The gravity of the issue could be gauged from the fact even Namita Mundada, a ruling BJP MLA from Kej in Beed district also shared the Opposition's concern over the murder of a sarpanch from her Assembly constituency, contending that the incident had caused considerable anger among the people of the village where the murder had taken place in broad day-light. She urged Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to take immediate action for the arrest of the accused behind the murder.

After walking out from the Assembly, the Opposition members staged a protest on the State Legislature premises.

Talking to media persons outside the House, Wadettiwar came down heavily on the Speaker for trying to silence the Opposition in the House. "Despite our repeated pleas for a discussion on the issue, the Speaker refused to let us speak. This is a clear-cut attempt to stifle the voice of dissent from the Opposition and help the government to forsake accountability for its failures," he said.

Condemning the custodial death in Parbhani and killing of a sarpanch in Beed district, Raut said: "No one who has true faith in the Constitution can allow such police brutality and murder of a sarpanch. During Parbhani disturbances, innocent citizens, including children, were detained, beaten, and one of the arrested persons died in police custody. This exposes the government's failure to protect citizens"

Yogi criticises Priyanka's bag contrasts with Indian labour in Israel

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath took a swipe at Congress leader and Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra during the Winter Session of the state Assembly, criticising her for carrying a bag with Palestine written on it. He contrasted her action with the State government's efforts to send skilled youth from Uttar Pradesh to Israel for work.

"Yesterday, a Congress leader was seen roaming around with a Palestine bag, while we are sending the youth of Uttar Pradesh to Israel," CM Yogi remarked. He highlighted that over 5,600 youths from the state have gone to Israel for construction work, earning a monthly salary of Rs 1.5 Lakh along with free accommodation and food. He added that the Israeli ambassador had praised the skills of UP's youth and expressed interest in hiring more workers from the state. The CM underscored the government's commitment to skill development, stating that more than 12 lakh youths in Uttar Pradesh have been trained under various programs.

The controversy erupted after Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was seen in Parliament on Monday carrying the bag. Responding to the criticism, she dismissed the remarks as patriarchal. "Who is going to decide what clothes I wear now? That's typical patriarchy. I will wear what I want," she told reporters.

The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) criticism gained traction as leaders such as Rajya Sabha MP Dinesh Sharma accused the Gandhi family of promoting foreign thinking. Union Minister of State Banwari Lal Verma added, "Priyanka Gandhi came with a Palestine bag, she should carry an India bag instead."

Meanwhile, opposition leaders have rallied behind Priyanka Gandhi, defending her against what they termed an unnecessary controversy fueled by political motives.

TMC leader highlights condition of Muslims in West Bengal, calls for qualitative development

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress (TMC) MLA and a former IPS officer Humayun Kabir has said that the condition of the Muslims particularly in West Bengal was worse than even the members of Scheduled Castes.

"I'm not a votary of quantitative growth. Rather, I favour qualitative development of Muslims. I think the condition of the Muslims particularly those in Bengal is not as it should have been. You have to visit their areas and look at the condition they live in to realise

their plight," said Kabir, a former deputy inspector general of the West Bengal Police, who joined the TMC ahead of the 2021 Assembly elections.

His statements come just amid a raging controversy over senior TMC minister and Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim's recent controversial remarks.

When asked to comment on Hakim's remarks Kabir said, "It is the qualitative development and not quantitative growth that matters. A family comprising the parents and two children

can sustain in a better manner than a family with five children. But in any case the family has to have the wherewithal and the education to sustain itself. I don't dishonor what a rickshawalla or for that matter a vegetable vendor does but for me the large majority of Muslims can have better qualitative life if they have access to education and economic resources, which is not the case at present. So, I think the craving should be for a qualitative development rather than quantitative growth." Kabir's statements could have

impact on the party's Muslim vote base which has been Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's electoral mainstay, worried insiders said.

On Kabir's anguish over the 'below par' quality of life that the Muslims of West Bengal led senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh -- who had to clean a lot of mess left by Hakim a day before -- on Tuesday offered explanations comparing the condition of the life led by the Muslims in the past and the one they lead at present. Their lives had improved quite a bit from what it used to be even a decade ago, he said.



President Droupadi Murmu with a recipient during the first convocation of AIIMS Mangalagiri. PTI

President highlights women's role in medicine at AIIMS convocation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AMARAVATI

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said the rising participation of women in the medical profession and their significant contributions demonstrate that India is becoming a truly developed society. Addressing the first convocation of AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) at Mangalagiri near here, she said relentless promotion of holistic health and ensuring health for all should be the guiding principle of every medical professional of this institute.

"The rising participation of women in the medical profession and their significant contributions demonstrate that we are becoming a truly developed society. This also highlighted the fact that given

opportunity, our daughters excel in every field," the President said.

The government has taken up several schemes, including Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme and made treatment accessible for those facing difficulties in accessing treatment, she said.

Along with the government, it is also the responsibility of a conscious society to ensure that no one should be left out of medical services due to financial or other reasons, Murmu stressed.

The President said Indian doctors, based on their talent and hard work, are in the forefront in the developed nations. She said people from other countries come to India to avail healthcare services. India is developing into an important centre in affordable medical tourism on the world

map, she said, adding doctors of the country play an important role in this regard.

She called upon young doctors to give priority to providing medical care and services to people living in rural, tribal and remote areas. Yogasan and Pranayam have also been accepted from the modern point of view in the context of holistic health care, she noted.

Andhra Pradesh Governor S Abdul Nazeer, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Union Minister of State for Ayush (Independent Charge) Prataprao Jadhav, Andhra Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav and other dignitaries were present.

The foundation for AIIMS-Mangalagiri was laid in 2015 and the first batch of MBBS students were inducted on August 30, 2018, which passed out today.

Protests in Kerala over man's death in wild elephant attack, locals demand action

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOCHI

Kuttampuzha, a forest-fringe village here, witnessed a protest by local people over the death of a man who was trampled to death by a wild elephant. The deceased man, Eldose (40), a native of Knachery here, met with the tragic end on Monday night while he was walking home after reaching the area by a KSRTC bus in Urulanthanni in Kuttampuzha panchayat. His disfigured body was later found by a local man. Local people said Eldose was a bachelor and the only

breadwinner of his family, comprising aged parents and a sister. Angry villagers staged a protest in the area for hours on Monday night alleging the forest officials' lack of effective interventions to address the human-animal conflict. They did not even allow the authorities to shift Eldose's body from the place till the wee hours of Tuesday, demanding adequate compensation to his family and a permanent solution to the increasing human-animal conflict. District Collector Umesh and people's

representatives also had to face the heat of the villagers' protest. At one point, the Collector even had to request the angry people with folded hands to allow the shifting of the body to the hospital. He later assured a compensation of Rs 10 lakh to the deceased man's family and announced a review meeting on December 27 to address various matters in this regard. Meanwhile, forest officials began the digging of a trench to prevent wild animals from entering the village. The post-mortem procedures of Eldose were completed on Tuesday morning, and the

body was kept at his house for the public to pay their homage. A people's hartal was also organised in Kothamangalam and Kuttampuzha over the incident. Both the state government and the opposition UDF described the death of the man as "unfortunate". While Kerala Forest Minister A K Saseendran said the protest staged by local people could not be considered as unjustified, Leader of Opposition V D Satheesan said the human-animal conflict has been increasing in forest fringe areas of the state.

BJP seeks clarity from BJD over MP's questions to President Murmu over Manipur, Sambhal, Odisha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha's ruling BJP on Tuesday sought a reply from BJD president Naveen Patnaik on his party MP Sulata Deo's statement in Rajya Sabha "targeting" President Droupadi Murmu. Deo, while participating in the discussion on the 'Glorious journey of 75 years of the Constitution of India' in the Rajya Sabha on Monday had "targeted" Murmu, who hails from Odisha, BJP Odisha spokesperson Anil Biswal said. "Honourable President is a daughter of Odisha. She has expressed her anguish over the Kar rape case. But why is she silent on Manipur which is on boil for over the last one-and-a-half years? Why is she silent on Sambhal? There have been 1,250 rapes in Odisha in the last six



BJD MP Sulata Deo questioned the President's silence over Manipur, Sambhal and rapes in Odisha. PTI

months. Where is the President? When will she break her silence? Is this what our Constitution teaches us?" Deo had said. Reacting to Deo's statement in the Upper House of the Parliament, Biswal in a post

on X said: "The manner in which a BJD Rajya Sabha MP dragged President Droupadi Murmu into petty politics, is not acceptable. She is the pride of Odisha. But, the RS MP's statement has hurt the people of Odisha."

"The question arises whether this is the personal opinion of the concerned Rajya Sabha MP or does BJD chief Naveen Babu also agree with this opinion? If there is no consensus, then why is Naveen Babu silent?" Biswal asked. Biswal also alleged that when the BJD was in power in the state, it had "insulted" the President by causing power cuts during her programmes. "Now, there is an attempt to insult her in the Rajya Sabha. This is not the ideal sign of a political party," the BJP spokesperson said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A timely assurance

Sri Lanka assures New Delhi that it will not permit anybody to use its territory to threaten India's security

In what must come as music to the ears of the Indian government, the Sri Lankan President has said that his country will not allow anyone to use its territory to threaten India's security. This assurance comes at a time when China is aggressively pursuing 'Mission Indian Ocean' - which targets India. In a joint statement issued, Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake made Colombo's position clear during his dialogue with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. This assurance is seen as a critical development in India-Sri Lanka relations, especially given China's use of Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port for docking its naval surveillance and spy ships, including the ballistic missile tracking ship Yuan Wang 5. China's growing footprint in the Indian Ocean has raised red flags for New Delhi. The Hambantota Port, now under a 99-year lease to China following Sri Lanka's inability to service its debt, has become a hub for Chinese naval operations. Over the past two years, Beijing has stationed the Yuan Wang



5, a 25,000-tonne satellite and missile tracking ship, at Hambantota multiple times. This vessel, equipped with advanced tracking and communication systems, has been closely monitoring satellite and missile activities in the region, creating strategic challenges for India. In 2022, Sri Lanka briefly delayed the docking of Yuan Wang 5 following Indian concerns but eventually allowed the vessel to dock under the guise of 'replenishment.' Since then, Chinese surveillance ships have regularly patrolled the Indian Ocean, adding to India's apprehensions about Beijing's strategic intentions in the region. The agreement between India and Sri Lanka ensures that Sri Lankan territory, including its waters,

will not be used in any manner that could harm India's security or regional peace. This is a welcome relief for New Delhi, which views such commitments as crucial for maintaining stability in the Indian Ocean Region. This of course hasn't happened overnight. India's steadfast support for Sri Lanka during its economic crisis in 2022 has further solidified the bond between the two nations. President Dissanayake expressed gratitude for India's timely assistance, which was instrumental in stabilising Sri Lanka's economy during one of its most challenging periods. As far as China is concerned it has been courting Sri Lanka for the sole purpose of encircling India and getting a foothold in Indian Ocean. China's influence in Sri Lanka has grown significantly, particularly after Colombo defaulted on its \$1.7 billion loan for the Hambantota Port project. India has consistently raised concerns about the strategic implications of Chinese investments and activities in Sri Lanka. In this background the assurance of Sri Lankan president signals Sri Lanka's intent to balance its ties with both regional powers while safeguarding regional stability. The agreement also underscores Colombo's recognition of the importance of India's security and regional stability and paves the way for a stronger, more strategic India-Sri Lanka alliance in the years to come.

PICTALK



Tourists enjoy paragliding, in Manali

Nepal embraces China's BRI

Nepal's deepening ties with China through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have set alarm bells ringing in New Delhi



PARUL CHANDRA

India has cause for extreme worry. In yet another indicator of China's growing sway over Nepal, the two are moving forward to implement Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Himalayan nation. India is not only opposed to this in principle on grounds of sovereignty but also fears it will enable China to increase its already considerable inroads into Nepal.

If 2017 marked Nepal's initial step to coming on board the BRI with an MoU, the year 2024 marks a giant leap for the Himalayan nation in that direction. A framework agreement for cooperation on the BRI was signed during Nepalese PM K P Sharma Oli's visit to China in early December, apart from nine other pacts. With the strategically located Himalayan nation having become a hub for Great Powers contestation, the US too would be uneasy with the latest Beijing-Kathmandu tango. While the US had managed to get Nepal on board its own Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact to fund Kathmandu's power and transport infrastructure, the BRI seems far broader. Kathmandu is trying to play down the framework as just a continuation of the 2017 MoU. The framework, however, underlines Kathmandu and Beijing's renewed push for the BRI, an initiative on which New Delhi harbours deep suspicions for what it perceives as China's hegemonic ambitions through debt-trap diplomacy. Sovereignty is another major concern, with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), another project under BRI, passing through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. India is certainly worried about PM Oli-led Nepal once again moving into China's sphere of influence. The CPN-UML leader is widely seen as being pro-China, and bilateral ties with India were prickly during his previous stints as the PM. India has yet to host Oli since he took charge as PM in July



this year for the fourth time, with him first heading for Beijing, in a break from the tradition of visiting New Delhi. Also, showing scant regard for New Delhi's sensitivities, the Oli government recently allowed 220 Buddhist monks from China to travel to Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha even as the Nanhai Buddhism Shenzhen roundtable was being held in Kathmandu. Oli delivered the inaugural address at this roundtable. There were also reports the China-appointed Panchen Lama would travel to Lumbini, though it did not eventually happen. The Oli government's encouragement of Beijing's concerted moves to claim Buddhism as a shared heritage will not go down well with New Delhi, which has been making its efforts to build on its shared Buddhist heritage with Nepal. Kathmandu's thrust on greater economic cooperation with Beijing - the BRI is part of this endeavour - would also whittle down India's influence over Nepal. The BRI framework agreement, incidentally, also envisages the opening of branches of Chinese banks and financial institutions in



WITH THE STRATEGICALLY LOCATED HIMALAYAN NATION HAVING BECOME A HUB FOR GREAT POWERS CONTESTATION, THE US TOO WOULD BE UNEASY WITH THE LATEST BEIJING-KATHMANDU TANGO

Nepal. India has traditionally had deep economic linkages with Nepal, nurtured in no small measure due to reasons of geography - the two neighbours share a long and porous 1,751-km-long border. This, along with the landlocked nature of Nepal, has helped India become its largest trading partner. During the 2022-23 fiscal, bilateral trade was pegged at \$8.85 billion. This included \$8 billion of exports from India to Nepal, with \$840 million of exports in the reverse direction. As per the Nepal Rastra Bank, India's share in Nepal's trade accounted for 64.1% in 2022-23. PM Oli sees cooperation on BRI as a means to forge closer economic ties with China, with the framework agreement resolving to deepen the economic partnership by "injecting new momentum to trade, infrastructure and connectivity cooperation". Not a single project under the BRI rubric has been executed in Nepal since the 2017 MoU. Nepal would be hoping that the 10 initial projects, including those meant to boost regional connectivity, will now see the light of day. India has its work cut out and should

ensure it does not come across as overbearing. India's approach in the Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura border dispute, where New Delhi ignored Kathmandu's request for foreign secretary-level talks, is a case in point. It led Oli, in his earlier stint as the PM, to cock a snook at New Delhi by changing his country's map showing the disputed territories as part of Nepal. Neither did New Delhi show respect due to a close neighbour when it decided to give a quiet burial to the joint 2018 Eminent Persons Group (EPG) report, which suggested that the 1950 Treaty of Peace And Friendship be replaced with a new one? Nepal has also been unhappy with India's refusal to give overflight rights for aircraft using the Chinese-built Gautam Buddha International Airport in Lumbini. India would do well to remember that its domineering approach only serves to alienate a close neighbour further and push it into China's ever-willing embrace. India should not lose sight of its strategic imperatives. (The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIA STRUGGLES IN BRISBANE TEST

Madam - While Travis Head hits a century again in the Brisbane test, it was a surprising and grave omission of the crafty and successful off-spinner Washington Sundar for the third test at Gabba. While Sundar has been among the wickets in recent tests and also did well with the bat, the head coach and the out-of-form skipper Rohit Sharma couldn't realise the need for a quality off-spinner is a blunder at the moment. The need for the quality off-spinner is mandatory when the Aussies have two solid left-handers, Travis Head and Alex Carey. When Head is the consistent match winner for the Aussies, leaving Washington Sundar out will prove costly for India in this test. Whenever there were solid left-hand batters, the formulae of the Indian team in the past from the era of Skipper Ajit Wadekar used to play Erapaali Prasanna and S Venkataraghavan proved to be of great success. After Rohit won the toss and put the Aussies to bat first, the Aussies had scored 445, and now the pressure will be on the Indian batters, who may succumb to pressure again, as proved by losing the 4 top order for a paltry 51. After having won the first test under the standby skipper Jasprit Bumrah, Rohit Sharma seems to have not yet learnt the lesson that the composition of the right combinations is important to be in the match. Missing a clever off-spinner can never be an easy task for the team to come back once they lose the grip in the first innings, which is what's happening at present in Brisbane. Bumrah alone can't take the match away from the opponents; this needs to be realised by head coach Gautam Gambhir. By dropping down in the order, Skipper Rohit is unbeaten on zero, and Rahul, with 33 against his name, has been the only consolation for the fans while rain stopped play. Rain God can be the only saviour as it looks for the team to have a sigh of relief. Rohit and Kohli must take a voluntary exit rather than bring the morale down of the team at this juncture.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Rural education needs reform



For a majority of Indian school children, especially from rural pockets, a feeling of uneasiness sets in when they hear something in English. They find it difficult to listen to and understand the English language. In a country like India, classes of mixed-ability

groups are a feature of every small village. While the teaching-learning process is done in the local language in rural villages, most of the competitive examinations are held in the English language. The rural atmosphere doesn't provide these students the opportunity to speak and learn English. In fact, in many northern villages, English becomes the third language, with the local language and Hindi as the first and second languages, respectively. The policymakers have to bridge the urban-rural divide when it comes to English teaching. An English teacher, teaching in rural schools, has to come up with innovative strategies in the classrooms. Skilled and committed teachers need to be appointed at the primary level, and they should be upgraded and trained to meet the problems faced by the learners.

R Sivakumar | Gandhi Nagar

HEALTHCARE REFORMS FOR PUBLIC

Madam - If the AAP government has done one good thing for society by making Mohalla clinics, the BJP has done another by making Jan Aushadi chemist shops. One can now get a free consultation from the AAP clinic and get medicines at nearly one-fifth the rate from a Jan Aushadi shop, thereby catering to the health aspect of a common man. The prominent good work visible on the ground needs to be applauded for both. The belief that a drug in a normal chemist shop is better than the generic drug being sold by a Jan Aushadi shop (popularly known as 'Modi ki Dukaan' in Patiala) is a myth that can be best removed by the doctors to their patients depending on the degree of moral courage they have to refuse obligations of pharmaceutical companies and give priority to generic rather than trademarked medicines to their patients. The fleeing private pharmacies need to be brought down to their knees in the interest of the public for their overinflated rates of medicines.

R S Narula | Patiala

PURCHASING POWER DECLINES

Madam - For the success of any economy, a vibrant market with sound and sustained demands is imperative, as production and market cannot flourish in a dry market. To vibrate the market, people's purchasing power should be increased by ensuring employment and a viable wage. The Indian economy is driven with an objective of enriching the rich, leaving the 81 crore poor in a lurch to manage sustaining life with 5 kgs of free rice per month. Even the small employed section is left without a reasonable increase in wage and faces the untamed inflation. The changes being pushed through in the name of labour reforms are going to pull down demands and create telling effects on the already volatile economy. Such a programme inevitably leads to dwindling demands. Course correction is inevitable to ensure bridging the gap between the poor and the affluent.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

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Why reading and writing matter more in the age of AI

As AI grows increasingly sophisticated, our commitment to these skills will determine whether we remain active participants in innovation—or passive consumers



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN

In an era increasingly defined by technological innovation, reading and writing—cornerstones of human intellect—are facing a profound transformation. While artificial intelligence (AI) bots like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google Bard redefine the boundaries of information generation, the necessity of cultivating human literacy has never been more crucial. The transition from Neanderthals to modern humans (Homo sapiens) involved significant cognitive and cultural advancements, but Neanderthals themselves did not read or write. Reading and writing developed after modern humans became the dominant hominin species. These are not merely communication tools but exercises that keep our cognitive faculties sharp and resilient. When we read, our brains decode symbols, conjuring vivid images, emotions, and concepts. This intricate process activates the left temporal cortex, which is responsible for language processing, and strengthens neural connectivity. Studies



underscore that reading enhances memory, concentration, and analytical thinking. Engaging with diverse genres deepens empathy and broadens perspectives, fostering a nuanced understanding of the world. Writing, on the other hand, is an intellectual partner to reading. Crafting words—whether in a journal, essay, or story—requires us to organise thoughts, synthesise ideas, and express them clearly. This process activates the prefrontal cortex, the brain's hub for decision-making and problem-solving. Writing is more than an intellectual task; it is therapeutic. Research shows that expressive writing can alleviate stress, enhance mood,

and even bolster the immune system. The tactile act of writing also strengthens memory, embedding information deeply within our minds. Reading and writing foster neuroplasticity, enabling the brain to adapt and form new connections. They are antidotes to cognitive decline and shields against neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's. Regular engagement with these skills cultivates intellectual independence, creativity, and emotional depth—uniquely human attributes. Yet, as AI bots revolutionise the way we consume and produce information, there is an alarming decline in human literacy. Tools like Book AI, which transforms any book into a conversational chatbot, exemplify AI's capacity to digest and reproduce complex information effortlessly. AI lacks the intrinsic human qualities of creativity, empathy, and ethical judgment. As AI literacy surges, the stagnation of human literacy risks creating a dangerous imbalance. Over-reliance on AI can diminish critical think-

ing and communication skills, weakening the very attributes that distinguish humans from machines. While the fear of displacement is understandable, the answer lies in shifting our perspective. AI is not an adversary but a powerful partner that can amplify human capabilities and drive innovation. Individuals can leverage their unique strengths to complement AI capabilities by prioritising the development of reading and writing skills. In an environment controlled by artificial intelligence, these abilities are necessary to navigate complicated concepts, understandably articulate them, and affirm human importance. The development of artificial intelligence highlights the significance of human expertise rather than diminishing it. By committing to studying throughout our lives, we can ensure that technology will not replace our humanity but rather improve it. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

REDISCOVER HAPPINESS

Happiness is a state of mind that transcends life's adversities



RAVI VALLURI

A couple first met in an estimable business school in India where they were conferred reputable degrees in management. The couple soon migrated to the land of El Dorado in search of greener pastures, seeking professional and economic security. They were a happy couple as the angels showered gargantuan benediction. Soon, a new dimension to their lives arrived in the form of angelic twins. When the twins turned six months old, it was time to visit the hometown of their parents. They were received by sentimental and misty-eyed grandparents.

The sojourn concluded the mother and twins were afloat on a flight back to their home. However, fate had other plans and a double whammy struck the family. The father never reached the airport as he was killed in a car crash on the way to the airport. The disconsolate woman became a mental wreck, her moments of happiness fastened only in her memory bank and the picture album. The alluring woman was transfigured into stone. A cousin empathised with her distraught mental state and robustly suggested that she undertake the Happiness Course of the Art of Living. After considerable blandishment and extensive persuasion, she enrolled for the course and deposited all her emotions and feelings while undergoing the unique rhythmic breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya. Life need not be tragic if only we realise that happiness is a state of mind that can



be achieved independent of material success.

As per ancient Japanese mythology, the light from Tsukuyomi, the Shinto God of the moon could induce illusions and delusions. Hecate, the Greek Goddess of the dark moon bestowed visions, but also caused humans to be afflicted with insanity. The human body is made up of seventy per cent of water elements. Full moon water recharges the body, mind and spirit and bestows harmony on our thought processes. Therefore, practising the Full Moon Meditation has a consequential and noteworthy influence on the mind, whereby one is suffused with efficacious thoughts and purges nugatory ones. It was a cathartic experience for the young single mother to emerge from her traumatic experience by unflinchingly practising this technique. It is an established fact that the Sakyan prince, Siddhartha, upon attaining enlightenment on the full moon day metamorphosed into the Compassionate One, Gautama Buddha and made a prescient statement, "Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared." How does one define an efficacious emotion called happiness? Happiness is a state of well-being, jollity, blitheness and primarily to be contented in life. The amphitheatre of the mind is a veritable nuclear reactor, where waves of thoughts and emotions arise and subside. These in turn determine our happiness quotient and consequentially the quality of our lives.

There once lived a farmer, who grew apples. He perpetually grumbled that there was not adequate produce to sustain the family. Providentially, there was a spurt in production and apples grew in plenitude. Still dissatisfied, the farmer cavilled that he was now laden with gruelling work, apples were rotting and prices now plunged! Sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras has postulated certain cardinal principles to live harmoniously, encompassed in happiness. These are non-violence, truthfulness, no regrets, not accepting invectives or salutations hurled by people, physical cleanliness of the body, inner contentment, forbearance or penance, self-study or examination of the mind and development and finally love and surrender to the supreme cosmic force.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Pesticides are poisoning the Punjab soil



AS MITTAL

Punjab's agriculture is facing a harrowing reality—its lifeblood, the soil, is being contaminated by toxic pesticide residues at alarmingly high levels



It's time to face the disturbing truth about Punjab's agriculture—and it's a nightmare. In districts like Bathinda, Mansa, and Ludhiana, up to 60 per cent of farm soil samples are infested with toxic pesticide residues—including the deadly chemicals endosulfan and carbofuran—at levels far beyond what's even remotely safe. This isn't just a warning; it's a full-blown crisis, a ticking time bomb, the result of irresponsible, reckless pesticide and fertiliser abuse running rampant in our fields.

On World Soil Day—December 5th—we're forced to confront the cold reality of a rapidly disintegrating agriculture system, while the world's been talking about "Caring for Soils: Measure, Monitor, and Manage"! The consequences of this madness are devastating. Our once fertile land is transforming into a barren wasteland, and that's only the beginning. These toxic chemicals aren't just staying in the soil. They're seeping into our food chain—contaminating every bite we take and slowly poisoning us all. But it doesn't stop there. These toxic residues are embedding themselves into our very DNA, passing down a legacy of genetic mutations to our children and grandchildren.

We are breeding a future full of compromised health and genetic decay. This is a catastrophe that will echo across generations. We're not just destroying our present health; we're condemning our children to inherit the consequences of our stupidity and greed. The survival of future generations is at risk, and the clock is ticking—every moment of inaction is a moment closer to irreversible genetic damage. It's time to wake up, stop burying our heads in the sand, and confront this crisis head-on before it's too late for the survival of future generations.

The Pesticide Management Bill, 2020: India's regulatory framework for pesticides, established in 1968, is woefully outdated and incapable of addressing the modern-day challenges posed by the rampant overuse of agrochemicals. Although efforts to amend this framework have been ongoing since 2008, significant gaps remain in safeguarding farmers, consumers, and the environment. The legislation—still governed by the Insecticides Act of 1968 and the Insecticides Rules of 1971—requires comprehensive reforms to address the multifaceted risks associated with pesticide overuse. The Pesticide

Management Bill (PMB) 2020 was introduced to replace outdated legislation, but critical concerns must be addressed. While the bill outlines pesticide registration and licensing procedures, it must protect farmers more adequately from hazardous exposure. Statistics from Pesticide Action Network (PAN) International paint a grim picture: approximately 11,000 deaths globally are attributed to accidental pesticide poisoning annually, with India accounting for a staggering 6,600 fatalities. These numbers highlight critical deficiencies in pesticide usage protocols and safety measures.

Farmers and rural communities often bear the brunt of chemical exposures, especially in agriculturally intensive regions. For instance, Punjab, which heavily depends on rice and wheat cultivation, reports alarming pesticide consumption rates. With an average usage of 77 kg/hectare, significantly above the national average of 62 kg/hectare, Punjab ranks third in India after UP and Maharashtra for pesticide consumption.

A study by the Central Soil Salinity Research Institute (CSSRI) revealed that 6.74 million hectares of land in India are affected by salinity, a condition exacerbated by the overuse of agrochemicals. Persistent pesticide application has been found to reduce microbial biomass by 30-50 per cent, compromising soil fertility and diminishing the land's ability to provide essential nutrients to crops.

A Call for Robust Regulation Pesticides—insecticides, fungicides, or herbicides—play a vital role in modern agriculture. However, their toxic nature necessitates stringent oversight throughout their lifecycle, from production to disposal. The current regulatory framework lacks provisions for periodic review of registered pesticides based on emerging toxicological data. This oversight exposes the public to significant health risks, particularly in a country where improper handling of pesticides is widespread.

Training and Awareness: A Neglected Imperative Over the past three decades, the indiscriminate use of pesticides has surged, often driven by aggressive marketing strategies that portray chemical inputs as indispensable for high crop yields.

The limited scale of training initiatives highlights the need for more current efforts. Between 1994-95 and 2021-22, the Plant Protection Department of Agriculture and Farming Welfare Ministry trained only 585,000 farmers in Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a dismal figure in a nation with over 150 million farmers. According to the International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management, governments and industry stakeholders must provide comprehensive training and information to farmers and retailers. Yet, the implementation of these guidelines still needs to be more robust. Retailers often serve as farmers' sole point of contact, and in many cases, they disseminate misleading or incomplete information. Data Collection: Bridging Critical Gaps The absence of robust data collection mechanisms further undermines India's regulatory ecosystem.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) documents pesticide poisoning deaths only if they are registered as medico-legal cases, excluding countless instances of non-institutional exposure and chronic health effects. This data void impedes effective policymaking and perpetuates a lack of accountability among stakeholders.

Addressing Weak Grievance Mechanisms: One of the most glaring deficiencies in India's pesticide regulation is the lack of accessible grievance redressal systems. Farmers and agricultural workers exposed to pesticides face prohibitive costs and lengthy procedures when seeking justice. Meanwhile, state governments can impose only temporary bans on hazardous pesticides, typically lasting 60 days, exposing vulnerable communities to ongoing risks.

Personal Protective Equipment: A

Forgotten Necessity The Pesticide Management Bill 2020 neglects the safety of small-scale farmers, who often lack access to affordable, climate-appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Farm workers face heightened health risks without mandatory provisions requiring them to supply adequate protective gear, especially in hot and humid agricultural regions. Labelling and Consumer Protection India's pesticide labelling standards fall short of both domestic and international norms. Safety information is frequently crammed into illegible leaflets, leaving farmers ill-informed about risks and proper usage.

Although the Consumer Protection Act theoretically covers farmers, legal recourse against manufacturers for misleading labels or substandard products is rarely pursued. The Way Forward India can no longer afford to ignore the human and environmental toll of unsafe pesticide practices. Establishing a robust, farmer-centric legal framework aligned with international standards is the only way forward to ensure safe and sustainable agriculture. A gradual shift towards agro-ecological farming methods that emphasise non-chemical pest management is imperative. The government must phase out hazardous pesticides and promote environmentally friendly alternatives to safeguard farmers' health and ensure consumer food safety. Addressing the gaps in the Pesticide Management Bill 2020 and adopting proactive measures, such as mandatory training and the provision of accurate information on pesticide usage and risks, are critical steps towards securing safe and healthier future generations.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association. Views expressed are personal)



INDIA'S REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR PESTICIDES, ESTABLISHED IN 1968, IS WOEFULLY OUTDATED AND INCAPABLE OF ADDRESSING THE MODERN-DAY CHALLENGES POSED BY THE RAMPANT OVERUSE OF AGROCHEMICALS

India@2024: A resilient economy on the fast track to growth

But challenges such as persistent inflation, a slowdown in the banking sector and environmental concerns continue to pose hurdles

India has firmly established itself as the fastest-growing economy among the G20 nations, with a projected GDP growth rate of 6.5 per cent-7 per cent for the fiscal year 2024-25. This remarkable trajectory underscores the nation's economic resilience and immense potential despite global challenges. The year 2024 presents a vivid picture of India's economic landscape, marked by notable achievements and emerging challenges.



KAJLEEN KAUR

direct investment (FDI) has also shown a dramatic surge, rising 45 per cent year-on-year to USD 29.79 billion in the first half of 2024-25, with key inflows in services, telecom, and pharmaceuticals. Complementing this momentum, India's foreign exchange reserves swelled to \$704.89 bil-

lion, driven by an \$87.6 billion increase this year alone. This growth includes a \$10.468 billion boost in foreign currency assets and a \$2 billion rise in gold reserves, which now stand at \$65.7 billion.

India's fintech sector continues to shine on the global stage, ranking as the third-largest fintech economy after the USA and the UK. The country also boasts the fourth-largest stock market in the world, with a market capitalisation of \$4.33 trillion, surpassing Hong Kong. A significant milestone in digital payments was achieved with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which saw transaction values soar to an astounding Rs 200 trillion in 2024, compared to Rs 139 trillion in the previous year. India even showcased its

UPI prowess on a global stage, introducing the system at the Eiffel Tower in Paris as part of a digital payments agreement with France.

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue collection also reached unprecedented levels, hitting Rs 2.10 lakh crore—a substantial 12.4 per cent increase from the previous year. This growth was driven by a robust 13.4 per cent rise in domestic transactions and an 8.3 per cent increase in imports, showcasing the strength of India's tax infrastructure.

Amid these promising figures, certain challenges continue to loom. Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), remains persistently high, exceeding 5 per cent. The banking sector has



witnessed a slowdown, with credit growth declining to 11 per cent in November 2024 from 20.6 per cent the previous year. Deposit growth also moderated, with banks adding Rs 13.8 lakh crore in deposits between April and November, compared to Rs 16.1 lakh crore during the same period

last year. In response, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reduced the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 50 basis points to 4 per cent in December to improve liquidity and stimulate credit growth.

Qualitative indicators present a mixed picture. India climbed 14 ranks on the UNDP

Gender Inequality Index, highlighting significant strides in bridging the gender gap. It also improved its position on the Global Innovation Index, rising from 40th to 39th among 133 global economies, driven by entrepreneurial activity, vibrant startups, and successful public-private partnerships. The Human Development Report 2023-24 placed India at 134th among 193 countries, reflecting gains in life expectancy, education, and Gross National Income. However, no progress was seen in the Happiness Index, where India remains at 126th, largely due to dissatisfaction among older citizens, perceived discrimination, and poor health metrics. Moreover, India continues to struggle in environmental performance,

ranking 176th out of 180 countries. Challenges such as air quality, biodiversity loss, and greenhouse gas emissions demand urgent attention.

As India navigates these complexities, it is also undergoing key transitions. The US economy has entered a new phase, and India sees a shift in RBI leadership, with Sanjay Malhotra taking over as the 26th Governor after Shaktikanta Das's tenure. While the final assessment of FY2024-25 remains pending, India's growth story offers optimism for a brighter future and a strong foundation for the vision of 'Viksit Bharat@2047'.

(The writer is an assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi. Views expressed are personal)

Russian general killed by bomb in Moscow

AP ■ MOSCOW

A senior Russian general was killed Tuesday by a bomb hidden in a scooter outside his apartment building in Moscow, a day after Ukraine's security service levelled criminal charges against him. A Ukrainian official said the service carried out the attack.

Lt. Gen. Igor Kirillov, the chief of the military's nuclear, biological and chemical protection forces, was killed as he left for his office. Kirillov's assistant also died in the attack.

Kirillov, 54, was under sanctions from several countries, including the UK and Canada, for his actions in Moscow's war in Ukraine. On Monday, Ukraine's Security Service, or SBU, opened a criminal investigation against him, accusing him of directing the use of banned chemical weapons.

An official with the SBU said the agency was behind the attack. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to release the information, described Kirillov as a "war

criminal and an entirely legitimate target." The SBU has said it recorded more than 4,800 occasions when Russia used chemical weapons on the battlefield since its full-scale invasion in February 2022. In May, the US State Department said that it had recorded the use of chloropicrin, a poison gas first deployed in World War I, against Ukrainian troops. Russia has denied using any chemical weapons in Ukraine and, in turn, has accused Kyiv of using toxic agents in combat. Kirillov, who took his current job in 2017, was one of the most high-profile figures to level those accusations. He held numerous briefings to accuse the Ukrainian military of using toxic agents and planning to launch attacks with radioactive substances — claims that Ukraine and its Western allies rejected as propaganda. The bomb used in Tuesday's attack was triggered remotely, according to Russian news reports. Images from the scene showed shattered windows and scorched brickwork.

Russia's top state investigative agency said it's investigating Kirillov's death as a case of terrorism, and officials in Moscow vowed to punish Ukraine. Dmitry Medvedev, deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, described the attack as an attempt by Kyiv to distract public attention away from its military failures and vowed that its "senior military-political leadership will face inevitable retribution."

Over the past year, Russia has been on the front foot in the war in Ukraine, grinding deeper into the eastern region of Donetsk region despite heavy losses. Ukraine tried to change the dynamic with an incursion into Russia's Kursk region, but it has continued to slowly lose ground on its own territory. Since Russia invaded, several prominent figures have been killed in targeted attacks believed to have been carried out by Ukraine.

Darya Dugina, a commentator on Russian TV channels and the daughter of Kremlin-linked nationalist ideologue Alexander Dugin, died in a



Investigators work at the place where Lt. General Igor Kirillov, the head of Russia's Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Defence Forces and his assistant were killed by an explosive device planted close to a residential apartment's block in Moscow on Tuesday

2022 car bombing that investigators suspected was aimed at her father. Vladlen Tatarsky, a popular military blogger, died in April 2023, when a statuette given to him at a party in St. Petersburg exploded. A Russian woman, who said she presented the figurine on orders of a contact in Ukraine, was convicted in the case and handed a 27-year sentence.

In December 2023, Illia Kiva, a former pro-Moscow Ukrainian lawmaker who fled to Russia, was shot and killed near Moscow. The Ukrainian military intelligence lauded the killing, warning that other "traitors of Ukraine" would share the same fate.

On December 9, an explosive device was placed under a car in the Russian-occupied Ukrainian city of Donetsk, reportedly targeting Sergei Yevsyukov, the former head of the Olenivka Prison where dozens of Ukrainian prisoners of war died in a missile strike in July 2022. One other was injured in the blast. Russian authorities said they detained a suspect in the attack.

Bangladesh official belittles India's role in 1971 Liberation War

PTI ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh interim government's Law Adviser Asif Nazrul has criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's post on X commemorating Victory Day saying, "India was merely an ally in this victory, nothing more."

Victory Day or "Bijoy Dibosh" is commemorated every year on December 16 when the Pakistan military surrendered to Indian forces in 1971, bringing about the liberation of Bangladesh.

Nazrul's comment was reposted by the office of Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus. A screenshot of Modi's post that paid tribute to Indian soldiers for their role in the historic victory in 1971, Nazrul wrote on Facebook in Bengali on Monday, "I strongly protest. December 16, 1971, marks Bangladesh's Victory

Day. India was merely an ally in this victory, nothing more." Yunus' Press Secretary Shaiful Alam shared Nazrul's post. The Daily Star newspaper reported on Tuesday. Anti-Discrimination Student Movement Convener Hasnat Abdullah also criticised Modi's post.

Abdullah wrote on Facebook that this was Bangladesh's Liberation War and it was for the country's independence against Pakistan. He said Modi has claimed it was solely India's war and their achievement, disregarding Bangladesh's existence in their narrative.

"When India claims this independence as their achievement, I see this as a threat to our independence, sovereignty and oneness. It's necessary for us to fight against this threat by India. We need to carry on this fight," he wrote. Modi, in a post on X, had said,

"Today, on Vijay Diwas, we honour the courage and sacrifices of the brave soldiers who contributed to India's historic victory in 1971. Their selfless dedication and unwavering resolve safeguarded our nation and brought glory to us. "This day is a tribute to their extraordinary valour and their unshakable spirit. Their sacrifices will forever inspire generations and remain deeply embedded in our nation's history." Chief Adviser Yunus led Bangladesh Monday in marking the 54th Victory Day, his speech making no mention of founding leader Mujibur Rahman while calling deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's administration the "world's worst autocratic government". Rahman's daughter Hasina was ousted from power on August 5 after massive student-led protests against her Awami

League government. There was also no mention of India's role in Yunus' address to the Nation on Bijoy Dibosh. India commemorates December 16 as Vijay Diwas when over 90,000 Pakistani soldiers surrendered before the Indian Army, leading to the creation of Bangladesh. India had also backed Bengali guerrillas in the fight against Pakistan Army after West Pakistan's leadership refused to acknowledge the 1970 election victory of Mujibur Rahman's Awami League. President Droupadi Murmu and several Indian political leaders too had paid homage Monday to the heroes of the 1971 war. "A grateful nation remembers the ultimate sacrifice of our brave-hearts whose stories inspire every Indian and shall remain a source of national pride," Murmu said on X.

Trump says it was 'stupid' for Biden to let Ukraine use US weapons to strike deeper into Russia

AP ■ PALM BEACH

President-elect Donald Trump on Monday suggested that he may reverse President Joe Biden's recent decision to allow Ukrainian forces to use American long-range weapons to strike deeper into Russian territory. Trump called the decision made by Biden last month "stupid." He also expressed anger that his incoming administration was not consulted before Biden made the move. With the loosening of the restrictions, Biden gave Ukraine long-sought permission to use the Army Tactical Missile System provided by the US to strike Russian positions hundreds miles from its border. "I don't think that should have been allowed, not when there's a possibility — certainly not just weeks before I take over," Trump said during

at a wide-ranging news conference at his Mar-a-Lago resort. "Why would they do that without asking me what I thought? I wouldn't have had him do that. I think it was a big mistake."

Trump's withering criticism of the Biden administration's move comes as the Democratic administration aims to push every last dollar already designated for Ukraine out the door to help repel Russia's invasion before Trump takes office on Jan. 20, with future aid uncertain. But even as Biden tries to surge weaponry and other aid to Ukraine in his final five weeks in office, the moment underscored that it's Trump who holds the most significant influence over how Ukraine can use its US-provided arsenal in the long run. It's a critical piece of leverage he could use to try to follow through on his campaign pledge to bring

about a swift end to the conflict. Asked if he would consider reversing the Biden administration decision, Trump responded: "I might. I think it was a very stupid thing to do." The White House pushed back on Trump's criticism, noting that the decision was made after months of deliberations that started before last month's election. "All I can assure you is that in the conversations we've had with them since the election, and we've had at various levels, we have articulated to them the logic behind it, the thinking behind it, why we were doing it," White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said of the current administration's coordination with the outgoing administration. Trump's relationship with Russian leader Vladimir Putin has been scrutinised since his

2016 campaign for president, when he called on Russia to find and make public missing emails deleted by Hillary Clinton, his Democratic opponent. Trump publicly sided with Putin over US intelligence officials on whether Russia had interfered in the 2016 election to help him, and Trump has praised the Russian leader and even called him "pretty smart" for invading Ukraine. Vice President-elect JD Vance has said that while the US has differences with Russia, it was counterproductive to approach Moscow as an enemy. Trump on Monday reiterated his call on both Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin to negotiate an end to the war, calling the death and despair caused by the conflict "car-nage."

Australian state proposes ban on protests at places of worship

AP ■ MELBOURNE

An Australian state government on Tuesday proposed new restrictions on protesters in response to rising anti-semitism, including a ban on demonstrations outside places of worship.

Victoria Premier Jacinta Allan proposed the new laws after arsonists damaged a Melbourne synagogue this month and protesters kept fearful worshippers trapped inside a Sydney synagogue for three hours a week earlier. "That's not peaceful protest. It's menacing behaviour," Allan said.

"Antisemitism is a cancer and we must leave no stone unturned to fight the evil of antisemitism, to fight the evil of this racism in all of its forms and also to continue to work to help heal our multicultural community, to help build on that social cohesion and continue to support our strong, united Victoria," she added. The new laws would protect the

right of people to "gather and pray free from fear, harassment and intimidation," her office said in a statement. The proposed laws, which will be voted on by the state legislature early next year, would establish safe access areas around places of worship and prohibit disturbances of religious gatherings. The laws would also ban protesters flying flags and displaying symbols of groups listed by Australia as terrorist organisations. Face masks used by protesters to conceal their identities and protect against capicum spray would also be banned. Anti-Defamation Commission chair Dvir Abramovich, a leading opponent of antisemitism in Australia, welcomed the proposed law. "Today, the Victorian government has declared war on hate and antisemitism — and it's about time," Abramovich said in a statement. "Victoria has drawn a line in the sand and sent a thunderous

message to the hate-mongers, the graffiti cowards, the fire-bombers, and the social media trolls: Your days of terrorising our communities are over," he added. The arson attack on Adass Israel Synagogue on December 6 marked an escalation in targeted assaults in Australia since the war between Israel and the militant Hamas group started over a year ago in the Gaza Strip. Authorities have declared it a terrorist act, which increases resources available to investigators. A federal law passed in January banned the Nazi salute and the public display of Nazi symbols in response to growing antisemitism, and the government appointed special envoys this year to combat antisemitism and Islamophobia. Australia is an increasingly multicultural society. The latest census in 2021 found that Australians born overseas or with a parent born overseas formed a majority for the first time.

China executes official involved in country's largest corruption case

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Tuesday executed Li Jianping, a former official in the north Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, who was convicted in the largest-ever corruption case in the country totalling to over USD 421 million. The death sentence of Li, former secretary of the ruling Communist Party working committee of the Hohhot economic and technological development zone, was initially issued in September 2022 and upheld on appeal in August 2024. Tuesday's execution followed the approval of the Supreme People's Court and was carried out by a court in Inner Mongolia, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Li, 64 was found guilty by an intermediate court earlier of embezzling a staggering three billion yuan (over USD 421 million) in illegal gains — the largest sum involved in a single corruption case in China's history, according to earlier reports in the Chinese official media. Since he came to power in 2012, Chinese President Xi Jinping made the anti-corruption campaign the main plank of his governance model. Official media accounts say over a million party officials, including two defence ministers and dozens of military officials, were punished and prosecuted in the campaign. In his speech delivered at the plenary session of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) in January this year, contents of which were released for the first time on Sunday by party theoretical magazine Qiushi, 71-year-old Xi has called on cadres to confront corruption head-on so that interest groups cannot prey on the ruling Communist Party.

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Pope reveals apparent bombing plot during his 2021 visit to Iraq

AP ■ ROME

Pope Francis turned 88 on Tuesday and marked the occasion with revelations that he almost didn't make it. According to excerpts of his upcoming autobiography, suicide bombers had planned to attack him during his 2021 visit to Iraq, but were killed before striking. Italian daily Corriere della Sera on Tuesday ran excerpts of "Hope: The Autobiography," written with Italian author Carlo Musso, which is being released in more than 80 countries next month. The New York Times ran other excerpts Tuesday, Francis' 88th birthday. In the Italian excerpts, Francis recalled his historic March 2021 trip to Iraq, the first ever by a pope. COVID-19 was still raging and security concerns were high, especially in Mosul. The devastated northern city had been the headquarters of Islamic State militants, whose horrific reign had largely emptied the region of its Christian



communities. According to the book, British intelligence informed Iraqi police as soon as Francis arrived in Baghdad that a woman wearing explosives was heading toward Mosul and was planning to blow herself up during the papal visit. "And that a truck was heading there fast with the same intention," Francis says in the book. The visit went ahead as planned, albeit under tight security, and became one of the most poignant of all of Francis' foreign trips: Standing in the wreckage of a Mosul church,

Francis urged Iraq's Christians to forgive the injustices against them by Muslim extremists and to rebuild. In the book, Francis said he later asked his Vatican security detail what became of the suicide bombers. "The commander replied laconically They're no longer here," Francis writes. "Iraqi police had intercepted them and made them explode. This struck me as well: Even this is the poisonous fruit of war." The book, originally planned to be published after Francis' death, is coming out at the start of the Vatican's big Holy Year, which Francis will officially inaugurate on Christmas Eve. According to Italian publisher Mondadori, "Hope" is the first autobiography ever published by a pope. Francis, however, has published other first-person, memoir-style books or book-length interviews with biographers and journalists, including "Life: My Story Through History," published earlier this year.

Grassroots funding for Ukraine's military declines as groups looks for creative ways to raise money

AP ■ KYIV

The concert took place in an old movie studio in Kyiv, the location kept secret until the final moment in case it was the target of a Russian attack. More than 1,000 soldiers and young people gathered to listen to the artists who joined forces with a military brigade in an innovative effort to raise funds for Ukraine's embattled troops. This was the first and only live performance of the charity album "Epoch," a collaboration between the 3rd Assault Brigade and eight Ukrainian bands. The project's ambitious target is to raise 50 million hryvnias (about USD 1.2 million) to buy an M113 armoured personnel carrier to help get infantry to

the front and evacuate the wounded for medical treatment. Since it launched on streaming platforms a month ago, the initiative has raised 9 million hryvnias (around USD 214,000). Grassroots fundraising for Ukrainian fighters dates back to 2014, the year Russia first annexed the southern region of Crimea and Moscow-backed separatists launched an uprising in eastern Ukraine. At that time, Ukraine's defence was made up of a regular army supported by volunteer battalions who weren't financially supported by Kyiv's government. Self-funding was critical. Now, advertisements pasted along the sidewalk in Kyiv ask for donations to help fill financial gaps across the military. By

scanning a QR code, people can help buy anything from body warmers and drones to armoured cars for soldiers defending the nearly 1,000-kilometre front line. But some charities are seeing a decline in individual donations in part because of the economic situation in the country. Oleksandr Borodyn, one of the project's organisers, says the idea for the collaboration came from the challenge of continuing to drum up funds to support troops as the war is on the cusp of marking a three-year milestone. "To raise the same amount of money as at the beginning of the war, you need much more effort. That's why we came up with the idea that a musician could donate his or her art, and

that art would earn money for the army," said Borodyn, a press officer for the 3rd Assault Brigade. The initiative comes as US President Joe Biden is rushing out billions of dollars more in military aid before Washington's support for Kyiv's defences is thrown into question when Donald Trump takes office next month. Monobank, one of the largest platforms to process donations, says that in the first 1,000 days of war, nearly 10.5 million unique users made donations totalling around 77 billion hryvnias (about USD 1.8 billion) to various fundraising organisations. But some charity groups are finding that voluntary funding isn't what it was in the first year of the full-scale invasion. The

Come Back Alive foundation supports troops with anything from military training to buying drones and electronic warfare to repel attacks. In the first year of the conflict, they raised more than 5.7 billion hryvnias (USD 184 million). So far in 2024, the figure is nearly 3.6 billion hryvnias (USD 89 million). "Many people report a worsening financial situation, which limits their ability to contribute to supporting the military," said Oleh Karpenko, deputy director of the Come Back Alive Foundation. Three years of war has had a devastating impact on Ukraine's economy. According to a World Bank report released in May, the number of Ukrainians living in poverty has grown by 1.8 million since

2020 to about 9 million, or 29 per cent of the population. To help the most vulnerable, the government launched a winter support programme at the beginning of December and within days, around 6.5 million people had applied to receive the one off 1,000 hryvnia (USD 24) payment to help cover utilities, medical services and cell-phone costs. According to Karpenko, local initiatives and smaller-scale fundraising efforts mean many people direct their contributions toward helping specific soldiers or military units they know personally. That reduces the amount received by larger organisations, which he says can promptly address urgent battlefield needs that the government can't meet.

"International support also plays a significant role in donation levels," Karpenko said. "When aid from international partners decreases, it strongly demotivates Ukrainian society. People lose motivation to donate when they perceive a lack of willingness from partners to actively supply weapons." Staring up at the large monitors set up on either side of the stage in the form of the three diagonal line symbol of the 3rd Assault Brigade, 26-year-old Oksana Kalenchenko thinks that events like the concert are hugely important in continuing to generate support. "It's a reminder to somebody that there is a war going on in Ukraine, let's keep donating, let's keep doing everything we can," Kalenchenko said.

The collaboration album features young artists from Ukraine's rock, rap and alternative scene, and many of the lyrics reflect events and the reality of living through the conflict. "We want to show the reflection of contemporary artists to the situation in Ukraine, and in general to Ukraine at war ... That's why the project is called Epoch, because it is a transmission of the era we are living in," Borodyn said. What also unites all the songs is language. Since the start of the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, Ukrainian music has experienced somewhat of a revival with many artists shunning the traditional Russian pop scene that dominated the post-Soviet era.

Political strife erupts over South Korean court as it is set to determine fate of impeached Yoon

South Korea's acting leader vowed Tuesday to convey to the world that things are back to normal following parliament's impeachment of conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol, but rival parties began squabbling over the mechanics of a court ruling to determine whether to formally unseat or reinstate him.

Yoon faces allegations of rebellion and abuse of power over his martial law introduction. Investigative authorities want him to appear for questioning later this week, but officials at Yoon's office and residence on Monday refused to receive requests for his appearance.

Judge rejects Trump's bid to dismiss hush money conviction because of SC immunity

A judge Monday rejected a President-elect Donald Trump's bid to have his hush money conviction dismissed because of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling on presidential immunity. But the case's overall future remains unclear.

Trump's lawyers then cited the Supreme Court opinion to argue that the hush money jury got some improper evidence, such as Trump's presidential financial disclosure form, testimony from some White House aides and social media posts made while he was in office.

Taipei mayor urges China to lessen confrontation

The China-friendly mayor of Taiwan's capital, Taipei, on Tuesday called for less confrontation between the sides, even as Beijing continues to send warships and fighter jets to intimidate the self-governing island democracy.

Yoon faces allegations of rebellion and abuse of power

Investigative authorities want him to appear for questioning later this week, but officials at Yoon's office and residence on Monday refused to receive requests for his appearance.

Signal & Telecom Works in Kathihar Division

Tender Notice No. N-2024-K-27. Date: 13-12-2024. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Name of the Work : S&T work in connection with Upgrade of goods yard facilities like CCTV, lighting arrangement, circulating area development and drainage along with other ancillary works at Kathihar & Ranipatra.

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given that my client Sushil Tandon is in process to sell the working capital against his property bearing No. XXV Corporation No. 5198 (Part) in Ward No. XI, area measuring 80 sq. yds., situated at Gali Bal Kishan Dass Bazar Road, Pahar Ganj, New Delhi-110055 purchased from Prem Gupta and Krishna Gupta, vide Sale Deed dated 02.09.2002 (Doc. No. 4153). He confirmed that below mentioned Sale Deed is not available in original with him and for the same, he already done a FIR on dated 3/5/2005.

Earthquake causes damage in Vanuatu

A powerful magnitude 7.3 earthquake struck just off the coast of Vanuatu on Tuesday, causing widespread destruction in the South Pacific island nation as the injured began arriving at a hospital and unconfirmed reports of casualties emerged.

Public Notice

It is hereby informed to the General Public that Tarun Sharma Son of my Client Sh. Satendra Sharma, S/o. Sh. Ram Gopal Sharma, R/o. Flat No-52-102, Unimay Bldg., Opposite AVS City Palace, Raj Nagar Extension, PO-Raj Nagar Extension, Distt. Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201017 who is married and has left his wife and son with my Client and is living separately from my Client. Tarun Sharma is out of my Client's Control and used to quarrel with him, due to which my client has broken all relations with his son Tarun Sharma and my client has evicted his son Tarun Sharma from all his Moveable & Immoveable Properties and ended all relations with him.

Corrigendum - 1 Against E-Tender Notice

No. : KYQ-CDO-ETP-02-24-25; DATED: 30-11-2024. E-TENDER NOTICE NO. KYQ-CDO-ETP-02-24-25; dated: 30-11-2024 against the work- Construction of ETP waste water recycling plant for reuse of discharge water of mechanized laundry/Kamakhya at Coach Maintenance Depot Kamakhya may be treated as CANCELLED on Administrative reasons.

Office of the Superintending Engineer

3rd Circle, Public Works Department, Pithoragarh. Email : sepwdpth@rediffmail.com. Letter No. : 6242 / 208C(Yata 'D')-03/2024. Dated : 17/12/2024.

Lost & Found

I, HEMLATA W/o LATE SH. SURYA MOHAN THAKUR have lost my original Share Certificate of FLAT NO.B-502, SWAMI DAYANAND CGHS LTD., PLOT NO.5, SECTOR-6, DWARKA, NEW DELHI, finder please contact: 9811558356

Public Notice

Information is given to the general public at large that my client Mrs. Milan Devi w/o Mr. Rajendra Saah who is the owner of Plot No. 2A, area measuring 50 Sq. Yds. i.e. 41.80 Part of Kharsa No. 124, situated at Village Vijaypur, Pagana & Tehsil Loni, District Ghaziabad, U.P. by virtue of Sale Deed dated 17.04.2023 executed by Mr. Shivam & Mr. Praveen Kumar sons of Mr. Chandar Pal (Doc. No. 5513). Any person(s), institution(s) having any claim and/or objection in respect of the said property shall communicate the same to the undersigned at our address within 07 days from the publication of this notice with documentary evidence in support thereof, failing which all the claim, of such person(s)/institution(s) shall not be binding upon the said property or purchaser. Mohd. K. Hussain, (Advocate); Mob. 8810391672 and 9871308862; 2E/23, 3rd Floor, Jhandewalan Extn., New Delhi-110055.

Consulate General of India, Milan

CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA, MILAN P.zza Paolo Ferrari, 08-20121 Milan - Italy Tel: (3902) 8057691; Fax: (3902) 72002226; Email: cons.milan@mea.gov.in. TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN The following persons have applied for the solemnization of their marriage in this Consulate. Anybody objecting to the same may contact the Consulate within one month from the date indicated above.

National Competitive E-Tender Notice

The Superintending Engineer 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of "Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand" for following works. All other information will be available online from date 23-12-2024 at 5.00 PM onward on website http://www.uktenders.gov.in

Table with 7 columns: Sl. No., Name of Work, Earnest Money (in Lac), Cost of Tender (in Rs.), Validity of Tender (day), Period of Completion (months), Contractor's Category of Registration. Includes items like Improvement work of Shaheed Shromani Chilkoti (Gaudi- Kimtoli) motor road in Champawat assembly constituency.

Track Maintenance Work at Kathihar Division

E-Tender Notice No. KIR/Engg./52 of 2024 Dated: 11-12-2024. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Tender No. 1. Brief Description of work: Track Maintenance work and other ancillary work for the period of 2 years under the jurisdiction of ADEN/Barsol Jn.

Station Development Works

E-Tender Notice No. 113/W-2/APDJ Dated: 13-12-2024. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Tender No. 29-AP-III-2024. Name of Work: At Dalgaoan (DLO) - Development of Goods Yard, Merchant Room, Goods office, Labour Rest Room, CCTV, Toilets, Water Dust Proof wall, alternative entry to Goods siding connecting road in connection with station development.

Table with 7 columns: NIT No., Zone, PIU, Total Villages, PAC (Rs.), Total PAC (Rs.), Duration (months), EMD (Rs. Lakh), Document Fee (Rs.). Includes items like Rewa, Indore, Jabalpur, Bhopal, Gwalior, Ujjain, Gwalior, Rewa, Jabalpur, Gwalior, Indore, Jabalpur, Gwalior, Indore.

Rebuilding Bridge Works

E-Tender Notice No. 110/W-2/APDJ Dated: 13-12-2024. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Tender No. 35-AP-II-2024. Name of Work: Rebuilding of Br. No.- 12A (1x1.83 M Brick Arch) by 1x2.50 m RCC Box culvert at Km-20/7-8 between Fakiragram Jn.-Golaganj Jn. Tender Value: ₹2,25,27,199.76/- Earnest Money: ₹2,62,600/- Date & Time of closing of Tender: 13.00 hrs. on 08-01-2025 & will be opened at 15.00 hrs. on 08-01-2025.

Madhya Pradesh Jal Nigam

(A Govt. of Madhya Pradesh Undertaking) "8" Arera Hills, Bhopal-462004 Ph. : 0755-2579034, 2579874, Fax : 0755-2579873, www.mppjalnigam.mp.gov.in E-mail : mpjalnigam@mp.gov.in, CIN-U41000MP2012SGC028798 NIT No. 23-35/SQC/Proc./MPJNM/2024-25 Bhopal, Dated : 16.12.2024

Notice Inviting E-Tender

Madhya Pradesh Jal Nigam (MPJN) intends to engage Unified Agency for Supervision and Quality Control (SQC) & Third-Party Inspection (TPI) for Multi Village Drinking Water Supply Schemes (MVDWSS) under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in Madhya Pradesh on man-month basis through Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method. Bids are invited online through Madhya Pradesh Government E-Procurement Portal.

