

# Eknath Shinde surrenders to BJP

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After three days of resistance to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's government formation plans in the state, a reconciled caretaker Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday extended his full support to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to take all decisions required for the formation of a new government in Maharashtra, thus paving for the anointment of Devendra Fadnis as the new CM. In what is being seen as a meek surrender before the Bharatiya Janata Party's central leadership, Shinde, at a hurriedly called news conference at his Thane residence "Shub-Deep", that he had made it clear to the BJP's top leaders that they could choose the Chief Minister and take decisions in all matters relating to the formation of a new government in Maharashtra. "I have spoken to both Modi ji and Amit bhai over phone. I have told them that there is not going to be any obstacle from my party's side. They can decide on the choice of Chief Minister, and take decisions necessary for the formation of a new government in Maharashtra... I will back them completely," Shinde said, seeking to put to rest all the speculation that he had serious reservations about Devendra Fadnis being appointed as the new Chief Minister of the state. Denying the speculation in the media that he was upset with the turn of events after the



Photo: PTI

Maharashtra Assembly polls that saw the BJP-led MahaYuti post a landslide victory, Shinde said: "I am not the one to get upset... 'Amhi radnare nahi, ladnare ahe' (we are not the ones who cry but we fight) For me CM means a common man... I work for the common people... I will continue to do so till the last drop of my blood". While evading a direct reply on whether he would accept the post of deputy Chief Minister under Fadnis or move to the Centre and accept a berth in the Union Cabinet, Shinde said: "Tomorrow... there is a meeting with Shah where all decisions will be taken". Expressing his satisfaction over two and a half years' tenure as the Chief Minister of the state, Shinde said: "I am satisfied with my tenure as the Chief Minister. For me no post is bigger than being a 'Ladki Bahu' (elder brother

to all the Ladki Bahin (favourite sisters) in the state. I did not sit at home... I went to the homes of people. I worked for the people from the bottom of my heart". Acknowledging the feelings of his party activists who wanted to see him return as the Chief Minister, Shinde said: "There is nothing wrong in their feelings. I have worked hard, and they are simply expressing their support". Shinde's surrender came after his party workers came out with a slogan "Eknath hai toh safe hai" (If Eknath is there, then we are safe)" even as Shiv Sena workers performed pujas across temples of the state praying for one more term for him. However, the BJP's central leadership was in no mood to oblige Shinde. Having delayed his decision to let the BJP leadership have its way, Shinde not just blinked but he surrendered to Modi and

Shah, thus giving a free hand to the latter to decide on what they deemed fit in matters relating to the new government formation in the state. Meanwhile, Maharashtra BJP President Chandrashekhar Bawankule and senior party leader Sudhir Mungantiwar have welcomed Shinde's decision to give a free-hand to the BJP's central leadership to form a new government in the state. "Shinde's stand is to make the NDA stronger and strengthen the MahaYuti... I thank him for the stand he has taken... Shinde played a crucial role in strengthening the MahaYuti alliance as he was instrumental in reviving a slew of projects that were stalled by the Maha Vikas Aghadi government," Bawankule said. "I express gratitude to Shinde... today, he has cleared all issues... he has made it clear that all decisions relating to the government including the choice of Chief Minister will be taken by Modi and Shah... Shinde, Fadnis and Ajit Pawar will sit with them (Modi and Shah) and discuss various issues relating to the nature of the government, distribution of portfolios and appointment of district guardian ministers," Bawankule said. "In the BJP, every one of us wants Fadnis to become the Chief Minister. Even all those in the MahaYuti want to see Fadnis as the Chief Minister. On this, the leaders of all three constituents of MahaYuti will sit across and take a formal decision," he added.

# India welcomes Israel-Lebanon ceasefire



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India, on Wednesday, welcomed the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon and said it hoped that these developments will lead to "peace and stability" in the wider region. The ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon-based Hezbollah began early Wednesday morning. Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah reached a ceasefire late Tuesday evening after months of deadly clashes that stemmed from the Israel-Gaza conflict but escalated in September this year, after several leaders of the Lebanese militant group were killed. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanked outgoing United States' President Joe Biden for his "involvement in securing the ceasefire agreement". He told Biden in a call that he appreciated the US leader's "understanding that Israel will maintain its freedom of action in enforcing it", according to Netanyahu's office. Ahead of Israel's approval of the deal, Netanyahu said the "length of the ceasefire depends on what happens in Lebanon" and the truce would allow Israel to "intensify" pressure on Hamas and focus on the "Iranian threat". The Ministry of External

Affairs(MEA)said in a statement "We welcome the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon that has been announced. We have always called for de-escalation, restraint and return to the path of dialogue and diplomacy. We hope these developments will lead to peace and stability in the wider region." In early October, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had termed the conflict in West Asia as a cause of "great concern" and "deep worry", even as he had said that in a globalised world, a conflict anywhere actually creates problems everywhere. "Honestly today, whether it is the conflict in Ukraine or the conflict in the Middle East (West Asia), these are big factors of instability, big factors of concern", Jaishankar had said during an event here. Long-displaced residents of south Lebanon have begun to return to their homes amid celebrations hours after the ceasefire, the reports in international media said. Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah reached a ceasefire after months of deadly clashes that stemmed from the Israel-Gaza conflict but escalated in September this year, after several leaders of the Lebanese militant group were killed.



PHOTO: PTI

# Delhi AQI likely to go back to be 'severe'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A cold wind blew away the thick layer of haze that has covered the National Capital for over a week, and a bright sun shone through, on Wednesday. The Air Quality Index (AQI) has also dropped to 303 in the NCR, placing it in the "very poor" category for the fourth consecutive day, while Delhi recorded its second-coldest night of the season. The minimum temperature dipped to 10.4 degrees Celsius, 0.1 notch above normal, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), which has also forecast a further drop to nine degrees Celsius at night. The coldest night of the season so far was recorded on November 21, when the temperature settled at 10.2 degrees Celsius. However, the overall AQI of Delhi improved compared to the previous 24-hour average of 396, data showed. Delhi's Air Quality Early Warning System (AQEWS), however, has forecast the air quality to be 'severe' by Thursday due to a drop in wind speed and a western disturbance influencing the meteorological conditions of the region. Two days after the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) issued an order asking schools in the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) to conduct classes in hybrid mode, schools in Gurgaon have been devising ways to ensure classes are not disrupted ahead of board exams. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the Air Quality Index (AQI) was 302 at 11 am. IQ Air real time data showed, PM2.5 concentration was stood currently 38.2 times the World Health Organization annual PM2.5 guideline value at the same time.



# NSG to set up an independent hub in Jammu

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

To cut down the response time in any adverse situation, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has accorded its formal approval to the proposal of permanently locating a component of the elite National Security Guards (NSG) in Jammu to counter any future terror threat emanating from across the border with Pakistan. At present NSG is setting up its units in Ayodhya, Pathankot and Kerala and they are expected to be operational soon by the end of this year. In addition, there are five regional hubs of NSG in Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai and Gandhinagar. These hubs were created after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack.

# Indian MPs condemn attack on minorities in Bangladesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Members of Parliament (MP), cutting across party lines, on Wednesday, condemned attacks on Hindus and other minorities and arrest of Hindu Chinmoy Krishna Das in Bangladesh. Union minister Giriraj Singh said the attack on Hindus in Bangladesh reflects that the interim government of that country is in the "clutches of fundamentalists" and sought the intervention of the United Nations in the matter. Condemning the arrest of a Hindu leader in Bangladesh, he said such attacks are against humanity. "The caretaker 'Prime Minister' of Bangladesh is in the clutches of fundamentalists. The way Hindus are being attacked is against humanity. The United Nations should intervene in this matter," Singh told reporters in the Parliament complex. Bangladesh's interim government is headed by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus. Singh said the targeting of Hindus and arrest of religious leaders shows that



PHOTO: PTI

fundamentalists are dominating the Bangladesh interim government like in the case of Pakistan. The minister was asked about the arrest of Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari in Bangladesh and the prevailing situation there. Bangladesh police had on Monday, arrested the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) monk from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport area in Dhaka while travelling to Chattogram. India on Tuesday noted with "deep concern" the arrest and denial of bail to the Hindu leader, and urged authorities in the neighbouring country to ensure the safety and security of Hindus and all other minority groups. Several other MPs also condemned the attack on minorities in Bangladesh and sought the government's intervention. TMC MP Saugata Roy also condemned the incident and said it is a matter of concern that Hindus are being subjected to atrocities. "It should not happen. I condemn it. The government should actively intervene in the matter," he said. Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said his party was worried over the situation in Bangladesh. BJP leader Samik Bhattacharya said it is unfortunate that the country is silent over atrocities being committed against minorities in Bangladesh.

# PM to arrive in State tomorrow

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi would come on a three-day visit on Odisha from November 29. He would be accorded a rousing welcome at the Biju Patnaik International Airport here. From the airport, Modi would directly go to the Raj Bhavan and from there to the BJP State headquarters. After meeting the party MPs, MLAs and other functionaries, he is scheduled to have dinner with them. On November 30, the Prime Minister would attend the States' DGPs' conference here. On December 31, he is scheduled to fly back to New Delhi. On Wednesday, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi along with BJP State president Manmohan Samal, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan, Panchayati Raj Minister Rabi Narayan Naik, Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja and DGP YB Khurania reviewed the arrangements for Modi's visit at the BJP office here.

# No starvation deaths in Kandhamal: Minister

'Victims died due to contaminated mango kernel'

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra on Wednesday outright rejected the allegation of people in Kandhamal district consuming mango kernel due to food scarcity and dying because of this kind of "bizarre" food practice. Patra told the State Assembly that the recent deaths of three women of Mandipanka village under Daringibadi block occurred as they had consumed contaminated mango kernel gruel. The minister's reply came a day after Opposition BJD and Congress stalled the Assem-

bly alleging that the women died as they were forced to eat mango kernel pudding since they were not provided their monthly rice quota under the public distribution system. "Three women from Mandipanka village of Odisha's Kandhamal died due to food poisoning after consuming gruel prepared from mango kernel. The allegation of food scarcity is untrue," said the minister. He further said, "The rumours of starvation were dispelled after a thorough investigation, which confirmed that the affected families had adequate food supplies at the time of the fatal mishap. Officials visiting the victims' homes found that they had sufficient ration." Minister Patra emphasised that even though some beneficiaries lacked Know Your Customer (KYC) documentation, every one requiring ration was duly provided the supplies. The minister cited post-mortem reports confirming that the cause of death was food poisoning rather than starvation. The government, the minister said, had extended financial support to the families of the deceased. He assured the House that efforts were being made to streamline the distribution process, ensuring beneficiaries receive rice 45 days ahead to improve logistical efficiency. To prevent future occurrences, the minister said, there are plans to open more ration centres in the remote regions alongside distributing rations covering one to two months at a time to enhance better accessibility.

# UP govt to recover damages from Sambhal accused

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government announced on Wednesday that individuals involved in the recent violence in Sambhal will be held accountable for damages to public property, with their posters prominently displayed in public areas. "This measure aims to identify and apprehend those responsible for the unrest, which claimed four lives and left several, including police personnel, injured," a senior official said. The violence erupted on Sunday in Sambhal's Kot Garvi area during a court-mandated survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid. The survey was initiated following a petition alleging that a Harihar temple once existed at the site. The situation escalated when a large crowd gathered near the mosque, chanting slogans and clashing with security personnel. Protesters set vehicles on fire and pelted stones, leading to widespread chaos. "The UP government is adopting a



firm stance against individuals involved in the Sambhal violence. Posters of stone pelters and miscreants will be displayed publicly, and recovery of damages will be sought. A reward may also be announced for information leading to their arrest," said an official spokesperson. The crackdown mirrors a similar initiative during the 2020 Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests, where posters of alleged vandals were displayed across various cities, including Lucknow. However, the move had drawn criticism and was later withdrawn following a court directive. In the aftermath of the Sambhal violence, police have arrested 25 individuals and filed seven FIRs, including one against Samajwadi Party (SP) Member Parliament (MP) Zia-ur-Rehman Barq and Sohail Iqbal, son of local SP MLA Iqbal Mehmood. Charges have also been filed against over 2,750 unidentified individuals. Superintendent of Police Krishna Kumar Vishnoi confirmed that the situation is now under control. "A magisterial inquiry is underway.

Strict action will be taken against those responsible for the unrest," he stated. Meanwhile, a copy of the FIR registered in connection with the Sambhal violence has revealed explosive details, naming Samajwadi Party (SP) MP Zia-ur-Rehman Barq as the main accused and SP MLA's son Sohail Iqbal as the second accused. In addition, a case has been lodged against 2,750 people, highlighting the scale of the unrest. The FIR alleges that SP MP Zia-ur-Rehman Barq incited the crowd to vitiate the communal atmosphere and gain political advantage. It also notes that Barq visited the Jama Masjid two days before the violence without administrative permission, which reportedly added fuel to the brewing tensions. The unrest began when a large crowd gathered at the Jama Masjid during the survey. Despite police efforts to pacify the situation, the mob refused to disperse and allegedly sought to disrupt the process.

# 1 L ghost ration card holders existed in State

After e-KYC verification, 1,77, 068 ghost beneficiaries' names deleted from list: Min

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Over 1 lakh ghost ration card holders existed under Odisha's food security scheme, informed Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra in the Assembly on Wednesday. After e-KYC verification, as many as 1,77, 068

ghost ration card holders have been deleted from the list. The Aadhaar-based e-KYC verification was conducted for 2024-25 to bring transparency to the beneficiary list under the scheme in Odisha. The entire process is a continuous process and it will continue in coming days as well, the Minister said. Out of the total 3, 36, 35, 918 PDS beneficiaries, the e-KYC verification process has been completed for 2, 69, 23,830 beneficiaries. The names of beneficiaries, who have died, are being deleted from the ration card list. Similarly, new and eligible beneficiaries will be added and subsequently new ration cards will be issued to them, the Minister said. As per official data, the Odisha government has received 6, 19, 836 applications for new ration cards under the food scheme in the State. The Odisha government has reportedly fixed 10 parameters for enrollment and issuing new ration cards. The process is already underway to delete the ghost ration card holders and addition of eligible beneficiaries in the State, Patra said.



# Crorepati Jr Mining Officer in Vig net No shortcut to returning to power for BJD

**PNS ■ CUTTACK**

The Vigilance police on Wednesday conducted raids on the properties of Padmanav Hota, Junior Mining Officer (JMO) in Keonjhar district, on the allegations of amassing properties disproportionate to his known sources of income.

During searches, three multi-storied buildings including a four-storied one in Bhubaneswar, 14 plots and a farmhouse on five acres of land have also been detected in the names of Hota and his family members.

The immovable assets include a four-storied building with an area of 5,800 sqft at Karodakanta, Bhubaneswar, a double-storied building with an area of 10,000 sqft at Jagannathpur



in Keonjhar district, a building at at Jamadeipur in Jajpur, a farmhouse over five acres at Madanpur under Ghasipura tehsil in Keonjhar, 14 plots of which four are in prime areas of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack and 10 at Danagadi in Jajpur. The measurement and valuation of the above assets are being carried out by Vigilance Technical Wing.

## In Ganjam CDPO held taking bribe

**PNS ■ CUTTACK**

The Vigilance police on Wednesday caught Sandhyarani Panigrahi, Beguniapada Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) in Ganjam district, while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 12,000 from a person.

Panigrahi had allegedly demanded the money from a staff of an Angandawdi Centre for release of arrear remuneration. Vigilance officials informed that the entire tainted bribe money has been recovered and seized from the possession of accused CDPO Panigrahi.



Following the trap, simultaneous house searches were carried out at three locations linked to the CDPO from the disproportionate assets (DA) angle. Further investigation was ongoing.

## Wild imagination by leaders only renders them laughing stocks

**SRIKANTA K TRIPATHY ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The BJD, apparently in a celebratory mood over the thumping majority of the JMM-Cong-RJD-CPM coalition in Jharkhand and the brilliant performance by the Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar's NCP that in alliance with the BJP got a landslide victory in Maharashtra, described the trend as the assertion of the prowess of the regional parties in both the States.

In the simultaneous elections in Odisha held six months back, an overconfident BJD was caught unawares by the spectacular and unexpected show of BJP that dislodged it from power. The humiliating defeat from a national party is something that the regional party in Odisha is yet to come to terms with. As the BJD was in power for the longest period of 24 years, a record of sorts ever enjoyed by any party in Odisha, so, its power-hungry leaders have been making calculations of coming back to power by hook or by crook. There are talks that the BJD may enter into a coalition with the Congress and engineer a split in the BJP to get the number to form the government though such

propositions not only look preposterous but render the BJD leaders laughing stocks. Already, a couple of senior BJD leaders like Badri Narayan Patra and Amar Satpathy (now a rebel) have pointed out the hollowness in the claim, given the majority that the BJP enjoys in the Odisha Assembly. Unlike Maharashtra, the BJP is not in coalition format in Odisha.

Its wild imagination notwithstanding, the BJD must have a look at why the regional parties in Maharashtra and Jharkhand have been a formidable force where the BJP, unlike in Odisha, has little option but to hinge on them to fight elections. In Maharashtra, the BJP, whether it was with the Shiv Sena during the pre-split time or with the Sindh's Sena and Ajit Pawar's NCP now, knows well that a big factor to win the Maratha votes is the Balasaheb legacy. Consequently, it formed an alliance with either of the two warring factions in the Shiv Sena, that is, the Uddhav Thackrey unit and Eknath Shinde unit. This time, the latter which outdid the former. While Uddhav Sena won 20 seats with less than 10% vote share, Shinde Sena won 57 seats with 12.4% of vote share. Similarly, Ajit Pawar's NCP got 41 seats (9% vote share) while Sharad Pawar's NCP won 10 seats (11.3% vote share). BJP won 132 seats and emerged as the single largest party but its two allies too outsmarted their

rival camps in terms of seats bolstering their position with greater acceptability among the electorate as regional players.

In Jharkhand, the JMM's rising trajectory is largely attributed to its unwavering allegiance to the championing of the tribal cause. In fact, the Jharkhand State was created on this line. In this election, the JMM had a cakewalk in all the tribal dominated pockets and the BJP's campaign against it did not work.

Back in Odisha, the BJD had been winning the trust of the electorate for back-to-back 5 terms largely because of the Biju legacy and as a mouthpiece for championing the State's interests. But in the last two terms, the party wavered by promoting Naveen in place of Biju. In the last term, the partymen were overconfident that they could win the 6th terms with far more ease than the earlier terms by Naveen legacy. The party miscalculated that the votes lay with the image of Naveen.

But while Biju's craze is still lying undiminished as he is widely respected as a Statesman and for all that he has done for Odisha and the country, Naveen's craze is on the wane. Despite being the longest CM in Odisha, Naveen has failed to rise to the height of his father Biju, even though the latter was CM for only two terms, with the last term being a complete one. Naveen's Achilles

heel was his overdependence on a Tamil Nadu born bureaucrat and promoting him in administration and governance, besides in BJD party affairs to No. 2 slot, next only to him, ignoring many able leaders in the party and disappointing their supporters and voters. BJP utilised this weakness to its advantage in the elections and made the Odia Ashmita a prime issue of election campaign which helped it reap enormous political dividends.

The BJD must now reflect on its core ideology of giving primacy to regional interests and aspirations, apart from sticking to the Biju legacy. Many issues of regional interests are still lying ignored, be it Special State Category status, Mahanadi water row, mineral royalty, unification of Odia speaking tracts or border disputes with neighbours. Sadly, none of these issues was resolved by Naveen during his longest stint as State premier. For the time being, the BJD needs to be patient and let the new government work in its own style. There can't be a comparison between Naveen and CM Mohan Majhi; both have their pros and cons. Besides, Majhi has completed barely six months and it is unjust to tally his work with Naveen as CM of 5 terms. Most pertinently, the BJD must give respect to the people's mandate and look into where it floundered in rising up to the expectations of the electorate.

## College Principal nabbed taking 1L bribe

**PNS ■ CUTTACK**

Vigilance sleuths on Wednesday caught Nalini Ranjan Bhuyan, Principal of Dadhibamanjew Plus Three Mahavidyalaya, Bahadajhola in Nayagarh district, while he was accepting a bribe of Rs 1 lakh.



Bhuyan had demanded the bribe from a college staffer, Hrushikesh Behera, to help in clearance of his outstanding arrears of over Rs 5 lakh.

Bhuyan was trapped by the team of Vigilance in his residence at Manikapatna

while taking the bribe.

Following the trap, a search was conducted at Bhuyan's residence and his office at the college from the disproportionate assets (DA) angle.

Further investigation was underway by the Vigilance.

## In BBSR 4-yr girl sold by poor parents for 40K



### Rescued by police

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

A four-year-old girl child was allegedly sold for money by her parents in the Badagada area in Bhubaneswar. The incident came to the fore on Wednesday.

It was alleged that a couple from Bihar, who work as daily labourers, sold their daughter in exchange for Rs 40,000. As per reports, the couple was facing financial

problems and, hence, sold their child to another couple in Pipili.

After the incident came to light, the Badagada police rescued the child and initiated an investigation.

The parents of the child admitted to the crime while also acknowledging the role of two middlemen from the Badagada locality in facilitating the exchange.

Sources said the deal was struck on Tuesday evening

and was overseen by the two women intermediaries.

The Badagada police station IIC said they acted on a tipoff from an apartment owner in the city in whose residence the couple was employed.

Getting information, Child Welfare Committee (CWC) members visited the police station and interacted with the child's parents. Police detained the two persons for questioning.

## Sujata's leave extension denied

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

Senior IAS officer Sujata Karthikeyan, wife of VK Pandian, on Wednesday, resumed duties a day after the State Government rejected her application for extension of her leave.

Sujata resumed her duties as the Special Secretary of Odisha Finance Department after a six-month sabbatical. Her return marks the end of an extended absence initiated on May 31. She had availed six months' leave immediately after the BJD's debacle in the 2024 elections.

Sujata is the spouse of V Karthikeyan Pandian, who was a prominent figure in Odisha's political arena.

The narrative surrounding her leave and return encapsulates the intersection of personal and political dynamics within Indian administrative circles.

## Death of woman in chain snatching Police nab prime accused from Keonjhar

**Total arrests rise to 2**

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

The Commissionerate police on Wednesday arrested another accused involved in the chain-snatching incident in which a woman lost her life under the Airfield police station area in Bhubaneswar on November 13.

The arrested was identified as Bidhata from Jharkhand. He was arrested from Barbil in Keonjhar district.

Senior police officials informed that Bidhata is a notorious criminal. Six special teams were formed to nab Bidhata, who is said to be the prime accused in a series of chain-snatching incidents. Efforts are on to ascertain his involvement in other crimes in Odisha. Earlier, the Airfield police station had managed to nab one accused involved in the crime after examining nearly 400 CCTV cameras in Bhubaneswar. He was identified as Raju Naidu (26), a native of Jharkhand's East Singhbhum district.

Both the accused were working as lift mechanics and staying in the city.

Notably, the victim U Bishnu Patra was going with her husband on a bike from Bhubaneswar to Haripur to visit Somanath temple when the accused attempted to loot the gold chain. In the bid, Patra fell down from the bike and later succumbed to fatal head injuries.

## Man found smoking in Lingaraj Temple

**Triggers resentment among devotees**

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

A photograph of a man smoking within the Lingaraj Temple premises in Bhubaneswar has sparked outrage across social media platforms.

The photograph, which was shared on Instagram, shows a man in close proximity to the temple's kitchen area, smoking a cigarette.

Additional Sub-Collector Mahendra Panda said that till now no written complaint has been filed by the temple authorities or police. However, there is a need to create awareness among people and such incidents need to be investigated. "We will take necessary steps in this connection," he said.

"Devotees come to the temple to seek divine blessings. Such incidents are totally unacceptable," added Panda. The photograph is said to be of one Debi Prasad Das, who is holding a cigarette in his hand and a picture has been clicked.

Many social media users condemned the incident after the photograph went viral on social media platforms. Several users termed it a breach of the temple's sanctity. Many individuals have taken to various platforms, expressing their distress and calling for respect towards the religious site.

A month back, Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty's photo from the restricted area in the Lingaraj Temple premises had gone viral on social media, hurting the sentiments of devotees.

# HITTING THE BULL'S EYE

## Mohan Majhi is doing fine; BJP will last full term

Initially, when the results of Naveen Patnaik's electoral defeat came up, quite a few imagined that the exceedingly clever BJD biggies would be able to topple the new government somehow. Naveen had nurtured a very capable team to remain in power for long. But unfortunately, the outwardly cool boss began to believe he was unbeatable as long as he lived because his name spelt magic and inspired public awe. His ruling team comprised a handful of trusted bureaucrats and a negligible few politicians who could talk clearly and run grand errands without feeling embarrassed. Pyari Mohapatra, the first advisor of Naveen, had set the house in perfect order.

It is public knowledge that the BJD was born with the help of the BJP only to embolden the anti-Congress platform with the sole view to eliminating the deep-rooted oldest political outfit which had gone berserk with power in hand for long. The Janata Party government, which had come into



**BISWARAJ PATNAIK**

existence as a gush of fresh air in 1977 after dethroning the tyrannical Indira Gandhi, did not last more than half the term as it had too many disparate elements with violently differing ideologies. They squabbled among themselves and pulled the outfit down all by themselves. So, the people brought back a reformed Indira Gandhi and let her rule like a benevolent empress until her assassination in 1984. Crazy sympathy votes from the masses across the country brought

back the Congress as if the nation did not have any alternative around then. High-flying Rajeev got coronated by default and he did an appreciable job as boss by ushering in latest technology particularly in the fields of communication and information. But he too got defamed for bringing in childhood pals as members of the executive, who messed up the system which failed soon and turned masses suspicious. Some of his trusted lieutenants including VP Singh turned rebel and seized power despite being part of a minority government with support from several strangely related parties. Thus, Rajeev could never come back a second time. Chandrasekhar was installed as PM while Rajeev got killed in 1992 by the LTTE, then the most sophisticated terror outfit after the IRA had lost the stature. A couple of mixed-body outfits took over, one after the other, headed by Gujral, Devegauda et al only to last for periods which are never fit to be put on record for having enjoyed very short tenures.

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani had founded the BJP in April 1980. The party's political beliefs are based on core beliefs of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) founded in 1925 by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, a doctor in the city of Nagpur in British India. Hedgewar was a political protege of BS Moonje, a Tilakite Congressman, Hindu Mahasabha politician and social activist from Nagpur. Similarly, after falling out with Nehru, protesting against the Liaquat-Nehru Pact, Syama Prasad Mookerjee having resigned from Nehru's cabinet and with the help of the RSS had founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the predecessor to the Bharatiya Janata Party, in 1951.

The BJP's journey has been dramatic in many ways. From just two seats in Lok Sabha in 1984 to winning two back-to-back majority victories in general elections, the BJP with its right-wing Hindutva ideology has by now firmly taken

the centre-stage of India's political landscape, displacing the Congress in a big way.

For the first time in history, the BJP had formed government in 1996 for 13 days and then for 13 months in 1998 when its government lost by a single vote in Lok Sabha. Vajpayee's pragmatic leadership had helped the party shed its 'untouchable' tag as it forged new alliances and led the first non-Congress government which completed its full five-year tenure.

Naveen came after legendary Biju Patnaik died in 1997. The Biju followers formed BJD and made Naveen party boss only to keep the Biju magic on. It worked and people began to love and respect Naveen more than they did Biju Patnaik for he is single and leads a very simple lifestyle in public. He has been lucky in getting real good advisors and aides. The latest was VK Pandian, a kind of a workaholic and gogetter who impressed the master Naveen so much as to become the de facto boss. He began running the State from 2014 when the BJP

which had helped the BJD survive and also flourish, made a huge comeback under the stewardship of Narendra Modi. Naveen from then on maintained a fantastic rapport with the BJP after it came to rule India for the second time. Pandian played his cards just too well. Under his guidance, Naveen took the sane decision of keeping the Modi-Shah duo happy. For sure, VK organised to send Ashwini Vaishnav to the Rajya Sabha. Vaishnav is supposedly reciprocating the invaluable gift VK-Naveen gave him.

However, the BJD, having turned arrogantly overconfident, lost basic sense, kept committing grave blunders and lost to everyone's shock.

Now, it looks as if the BJD is sinking further down by being publicly irresponsible. Highly-unacceptable individuals have been fielded to speak for the party which is being defamed more than gaining public respect. After Naveen lost in early June, countless people had hoped some tactful move by the BJD strategists would topple the

Mohan Majhi government because Naveen, even after his personal defeat in one constituency, was still considered the most popular Odisha leader. But as of today, this perception is fast losing steam and relevance.

Mohan Majhi is gaining ground everyday. He is a very simple person who mingles in the crowd. Top political bosses, both incumbent and former, in the developed western countries like the USA, he UK, France and Germany go for shopping and public places without fanfare or special security cover though threat perceptions are far more grave there.

Odisha CM Majhi has become quite an adorable person by now for his unassuming ways of self-conduct and treating the ordinary citizen down the road. He has only to appear appropriately assertive among colleagues and bureaucrats. All the same, his speech writers are plain horrible. His aides have to bring in quality brains that can script text that moves hearts of the masses.



# 1,772 men undergo sterilisation in State in '23-'24

Participation in tribal dists more than in urban educated dists

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Concerns about masculinity are causing Odisha men to shy away from sterilisation procedures, Health Minister Mukesh Mahalinga revealed during the launch of the 2024 Male Sterilisation Campaign. According to official statistics, there is a noticeable trend of higher participation in male sterilisation in tribal regions compared to more urbanised and educated areas. Koraput district reported the highest number of procedures in 2023-24, with 307 men opting for sterilisation. This con-

trasts starkly with the Deogarh district, where no men underwent the procedure during the period.

Several districts including Angul, Balangir, Dhenkanal, Nayagarh, Nuapada, Sambalpur and Subarnapur have registered only single-digit figures. Similarly, regions such as Puri, Khordha, Kendrapara, Kalahandi, and Jharsuguda are also showing less encouraging numbers.

A total of 1,772 men underwent sterilisation in the 2023-24 period across the State. While this represents an increase over previous years, the Health Minister noted that Odisha still trails behind other States in terms of participation.

During the 2021-22 fiscal

year, 900 men underwent the procedure, with plans to surpass 2,000 cases in the 2024-25 period. To achieve the target, training is being provided to Anganwadi and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers across all districts, along with various awareness initiatives, he said.

"Karnataka is on the top as they conduct vasectomy of around 5,000 men annually. Our State is also not too down, but we can improve a lot more. But, in comparison to female sterilization, the vasectomy rate is low due to various reasons including superstitious beliefs and unwanted rumours," informed Additional Director, Directorate of Family Welfare Muralidhar Padhi.

# Chairs fly during jatra performance in Bhadrak

Over 'controversial dialogue on Lord Jagannath'

PNS ■ BHADRAK

The incident occurred when artists of the Swarna Mahal jatra troupe allegedly delivered controversial dialogues disrespecting Lord Jagannath and a particular religion during the staging of the play 'Swami Paanee Pachhe Narka ku Jibi'.

The organisers were forced to stop the play for some time due to the protest. Subsequently, the situation was brought to normal following the intervention of the committee members. The artists were allowed to continue with their performance after some



controversial scenes were omitted from the play.

In his response, Swarna Mahal owner Khirod Swain said, "It was purely a drama and Lord Jagannath has been given full respect in it. Lord Jagannath has been glorified in the drama. The audience expressed their dissatisfaction over a dialogue on religion. Some people became emotional over the scene; and as a result, the unsavoury situation occurred."

However, eminent jatra artist Daitari Panda said the con-

roversial dialogues and scenes should be changed considering the sentiments of the audience.

"Whenever the audience is protesting against any dialogue and scenes, those controversial things should be changed in the play and it should be prepared accordingly. The owners and the directors of jatra parties should have the onus to prepare plays in such a manner that it should not hurt the sentiments of the audience," said Panda.

## IN BRIEF

### HUD Secy Padhee joins Seoul meet on housing

Bhubaneswar: Principal Secretary of the Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Department, Usha Padhee has joined an international workshop on affordable housing in Seoul, South Korea. The four-day workshop, organised by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), aims to bring together experts and leaders from various countries to discuss strategies and best practices in affordable housing development. The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs nominated Padhee to represent India at the significant event. The workshop which began on Tuesday is expected to cover a range of topics, including policy frameworks, financing mechanisms and community partnerships in the context of affordable housing projects.



### Asst Drugs Controller Sahu gets PhD

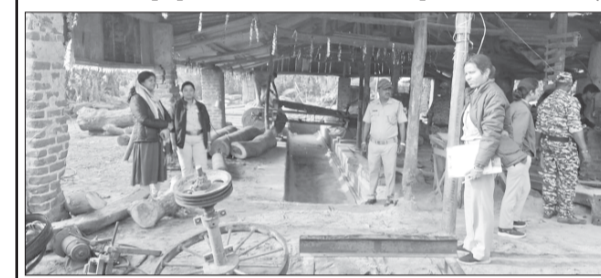
Brahmapur: Dr Lalit Kumar Sahu, a professional in the field of Drug Regulation and Pharmaceutical Sciences, has been conferred with PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences by the Siksha 'O' Anusandhan University. His research, titled "Development



of New Analytical Methods for Selected Antidiabetic Drugs and Their Formulations," was highly appreciated by Prof Ong Chin Eng, Dean of IMU University, Malaysia and Dr Sharad Wakode, Professor at Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research University, New Delhi. Dr Sahu is currently serving as Assistant Drugs Controller (South Zone) at Brahmapur. With over 15 research publications in reputed national and international journals, Dr Sahu has established himself as a leading voice in pharmaceutical research. He hails from Nayagarh district.

### 3 sawmills raided; timbers seized in Astarang

Astarang: On Tuesday, the Forest Department raided three illegal sawmills near Khudi Street on Astarang-Kakatpur road and seized equipment worth lakhs of rupees, besides many



valuable timbers. Eight teams of the Forest Department along with ACF (vigilance) Saundha Swamy and Astarang Range Officer Monalisa Mohapatra were present. People, however, complained that the slackness of the Forest Department has helped the wood mafia flourish in the area and demanded regular raids and exemplary actions against the culprits.

### New York, London Fashion Workshop in BBSR

Bhubaneswar: NEW York Institute of Fashion - NIF Global brings the exclusive and exciting Fashion Series by New York and London experts, providing its students across India with



unprecedented exposure. This month-long series, running from November 14 to December 14 bridges cultural and creative capitals, empowering students to experience global expertise right in their own classrooms.

# Ex-bureaucrat Dash gets Sahitya Samman

PNS ■ BALESWAR

An established short story writer and novelist Dr Pradip Dash, a native of Baleswar district, has received the prestigious 'Aaj Taak Sahitya Jagruti Samman' this year.

He received the prestigious award for his novel 'Charu Chibara o Charjya' from President of India Droupadi Murmu in a function held at New Delhi amidst a galaxy of literary luminaries. He has been given a plaque and a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh.

Dr Das, a former bureaucrat, was born in Olomora village under Jaleswar block. Writing, while has been his passion since college days, several books including 'Mimansa, Barbara, Ghum Pahada Ra Nai', 'Arghya and Peta Patana' etc. are credited to his creations. He has already received several other prestigious awards including the



Odisha Sahitya Akademi award and Sarala Samman by IMFA group.

"We are delighted by the achievement of Dr Das. He has been writing since his college

days. He was also tehsildar here in Baleswar. Besides his administrative efficiency he has established himself in the literary circle," said poet Krushna Kumar Mohanty.

# Ex-Phulbani MLA Kanhar now a proud farmer

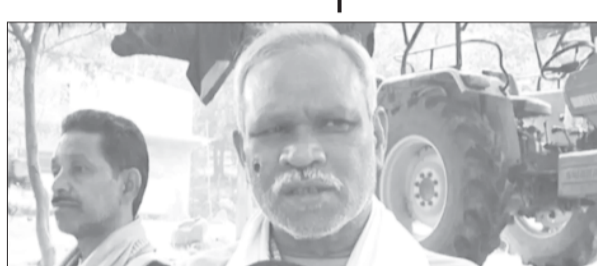
Says it's his natural way

PNS ■ PHULBANI

Once a ruling party legislator, Angada Kanhar is now a humble farmer. Gone are the luxuries of VIP culture, sprawling mansions, or a long line of attendants. Plowing his fields with a bullock and working alongside his wife, son, and daughter-in-law, he says 'it is his natural way'.

Despite spending years in power politics, Angada believes in staying connected to his roots and to the soil. The former MLA of Phulbani has transitioned from wielding political influence to toiling in the fields and cultivating crops with his family. When asked, he delivers a clear message: 'the progress of a farmer is the progress of the nation'.

A life rooted in simplicity Living in his ancestral vil-



lage in the Phiringia block, Angada owns approximately 29 acres of land, of which 20 acres are used for farming. There, he grows various crops, including the nutritious Kalabati rice, which he emphasizes is beneficial for controlling diabetes, and black turmeric, known for its medicinal properties. Moreover, he also plans to start dragon fruit farming soon.

Since 1983, Angada has been actively involved in politics, serving four times as Sarpanch, twice as a District Council Member, and once as Phiringia Block Chairperson. In 2019, he was elected MLA

from the Phulbani constituency. Despite his long political career, Angada has stayed away from the trappings of modernity or VIP culture.

At the age of 58, he surprised many by appearing for his matriculation examination in 2022. He scored 72% marks, reflecting his lifelong commitment to personal growth and education.

Angada's daughter-in-law, Jyotima Pradhan, and son, Purnachandra Kanhar, share his vision and work alongside him in the fields. Together, they represent a family dedicated to self-sufficiency and rural development.

## Re-engagement of workers above 50

# BTWU warns legal action against terms violation

UBACHAK MOHANTY ■ BALESWAR

The Birla Tyres Workers' Union (BTWU), expressing strong objection to the omission of recording of minutes of the last meeting by the district administration which was held on November 20, warned of taking legal recourse against the move.

Notably, issues workers of former Birla Tyres, especially continuation of service above age 50 till 58 while has been a burning one and proved a stumbling block in opening of the plant. The plant has been

acquired jointly by the Dalmia Bharat Refractories Limited (DBRL) and Himadri Specialty Chemical Limited (HSCCL). On Wednesday a tripartite meeting involving the workers union, the current management and Labour Department was held under the chairmanship of the ADM here.

"Today I received the minutes of the last meeting and surprisingly found our main demands, continuity of service and legal benefits were omitted which high is highly objectionable and against the inter-



est of the workers," said BTWU president Raju Bal.

"As per various court orders and the approved Resolution Plan, it is clearly established that all employees of erstwhile M/s Birla Tyres Limited shall continue their service without any retrenchment, and Section 25FF of the Industrial Disputes Act is not applicable in this case," asserted Bal.

"These critical points were discussed and proven during

the meeting but are not recorded in the minutes. We apprehend they were not recorded intentionally. This omission undermines the legal rights and entitlements of the workers and violates the principles of natural justice," he further added.

In the meeting held on November 7, it was resolved that clarification letters regarding service continuity and related benefits under the Resolution Plan would be sent to the ERP and Monitoring Committee agent Pratim Bayal, the CoC Committee, and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy

Board of India (IBBI). However, no such action has been taken by the management till date, alleged Bal, adding further that the Strategic Resolution Applicant (SRA) has not submitted any written clarification regarding service continuity and other legal benefits as per the Resolution Plan, nor has the SRA addressed the union's previous complaints.

During the meeting, it was finalized that the SRA management would produce a clear roadmap outlining their plans regarding service continuity and workers' rights in front of the committee in the

next meeting. However, the SRA has failed to submit this roadmap as promised, further delaying resolution of the workers' concerns.

"Our union categorically rejects the proposals presented by the management during the November 20 meeting regarding the engagement of employees above the age of 50 and the nomination of NOKs (Next of Kin) for employment. These proposals are in direct conflict with the workers' legal rights as upheld by the courts and the approved Resolution Plan," Bal said.

# Burden of India's taxation system on jobless youths

India's taxation system, often hailed as progressive, has left large swathes of its population, particularly unemployed youths, struggling under its weight. While unemployment in India has been a persistent problem, the burden of taxation compounds the issue. As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2022-23 by the National Statistical Office (NSO), India's overall unemployment rate stood at 4.8%, but for the youth (ages 15-29), the unemployment rate was significantly higher, at around 12.9%. The situation is especially stark for graduates, who face an unemployment rate of over 17%. This data highlights the increasing joblessness among young people in India, many of whom are burdened by loans, family responsibilities, and the pressure to start their careers.



BRUHASPATI SAMAL

Education is one of the biggest challenges faced by the unemployed youth. According to a World Bank report, the average cost of higher education in India has risen by more than 100% in the past decade, with private institutions often charging exorbitant fees. Moreover, the Goods and Ser-

vices Tax (GST) further inflates educational costs. Educational supplies such as notebooks, laptops, and other equipment attract a GST of 5-18%, depending on the item. As per government figures, the revenue from GST on education-related items in 2022 was estimated to be around Rs 1,200 crore, a figure that directly burdens students, particularly those who are already struggling to finance their education. For unemployed youth, every additional rupee spent on GST on educational supplies eats into already thin budgets, making it difficult to pursue higher

studies or vocational training. Healthcare is another area where unemployed youth bear the brunt of taxation. As of 2023, medicines attract a GST rate of 5%, while health services are taxed at 18%. This makes essential healthcare prohibitively expensive for those without a regular income. In the 2022-23 fiscal year, the government collected Rs 3,000 crore through GST on medicines alone, further illustrating the scale of this burden on the population. For unemployed individuals facing health crises, the pressure of paying for both medical care and the taxes associated with it creates an untenable situation. This is especially disheartening when health should be a basic right rather than a privilege taxed by the State.

Owning a vehicle in India has become more of a necessity than a luxury for many unemployed youth who hope to find work or start small businesses. According to data from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the road tax on private vehicles varies across States, but in most places, it is between 6-10% of the vehicle's price. Illustratively, for two-wheel-

ers, which many unemployed youth prefer as a more affordable option, the tax is often between Rs 6,000 to Rs 12,000. On top of this, toll taxes have become another burden. With more than 1,500 toll plazas across the National Highways in India, the toll charges collected amounted to over Rs 36,500 crore in 2022. Unemployed individuals who must travel to different cities or towns in search of work are left paying toll taxes at each border crossing, further increasing the cost of their job search or entrepreneurial efforts. For many unemployed youth, entrepreneurship is viewed as the only escape from joblessness. However, starting a business in India comes with its own financial challenges, exacerbated by the country's tax policies. According to the World Bank's "Ease of Doing Business" report (2020), India ranks 63rd out of 190 countries, but the taxation system is still complex and burdensome for small entrepreneurs. Start-ups that generate an annual turnover of over Rs 40 lakh must register for GST and comply with regular tax filings. As per data from the Ministry of Finance, over 1.38 crore taxpayers

were registered under GST as of 2023. The start-up ecosystem in India, while growing, is still stifled by bureaucratic processes and a complex tax regime. For unemployed youth, getting a bank loan is another struggle. Data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) shows that the average interest rate on small business loans hovers around 11-14%, making it difficult for new ventures to survive.

The aspiration to own a house, often seen as a cornerstone of financial stability, is another area where the unemployed youth face heavy taxation. According to CREDAI (Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India), the average cost of buying a house has increased by 12% in 2023 alone. In addition to the rising cost of property, taxes such as stamp duty (ranging from 5-7% of the property's value) and GST on under-construction properties (at 5-12%) make homeownership a distant dream for many. Data from the National Housing Bank shows that homeownership among youth in the 20-30 age groups has dropped by 5% over the last five years, driven primarily by rising costs and tax-

ation. Even the most basic of necessities—food, clothing, and household items—are subject to taxes that disproportionately affect the unemployed. According to government figures, the GST collection on household and daily essentials amounted to over Rs 5 lakh crore in 2022-23. Kitchen items, toiletries, and other everyday products attract a GST of 5-18%, further inflating the cost of living for unemployed individuals. This financial strain makes it difficult for them to manage their household expenses, with many forced to take on debt just to cover basic needs.

The cumulative financial burden that unemployed youth face combined with the stress of unemployment itself, takes a heavy toll on their mental health. The constant pressure of managing taxes, unemployment, and personal aspirations often leads to anxiety, depression, and in severe cases, suicidal tendencies. A 2021 report from Lancet Psychiatry indicated that India has the highest rate of suicides among youth aged 15-29, with unemployment being one of the leading causes. India's youth make up a significant portion of the elec-

torate, but many feel increasingly disillusioned with the political system. As per a Lokniti-CSDS survey conducted in 2023, more than 42% of young voters expressed dissatisfaction with the government's handling of employment and economic policies. Many feel that successive governments have failed to address the core issue of unemployment and have done little to alleviate the heavy tax burden that young people face.

India's taxation system, while crucial for funding public services, is out of step with the needs of its unemployed youth. Unless reforms are introduced to ease the tax burden on the most vulnerable sections of society, young people in India will continue to struggle with financial instability, mental health issues, and political disillusionment. It is high time for the government to rethink its policies and create a system that provides a lifeline to the unemployed, rather than weighing them down further.

(General secretary, Confederation of Central Govt. Employees and Workers Odisha State Coordination Committee, Bhubaneswar (M) 9437022669)



# Parliament Winter Session: Both Houses adjourned amid protests over Adani, Sambhal violence

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Proceedings in both houses of Parliament were adjourned for the day on Wednesday amid opposition protests over the Adani controversy and violence in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh. Opposition members trooped to the Well of the House in Lok Sabha raising slogans as soon as the House met again at 12 noon.

BJP member Dilip Saikia, who was in the chair, adjourned the proceedings for the day after parliamentary papers were laid on the table.

Earlier, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla had taken up the Question Hour when the House proceedings for the day commenced at 11 am.

However, he adjourned the proceedings amid sloganeering by the opposition members.

The Opposition members wanted to discuss the Adani controversy and the recent violence in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal.

The Adani Group said on Wednesday that Gautam Adani, and his nephew Sagar have not been charged with any violation of the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) in the indictment that authorities filed in the New York court in an alleged bribery case.

In the Rajya Sabha, protests by opposition members led to adjournment for the day without transacting any substantial business.

The uproar started after Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar



rejected 18 notices under a rule of the House to suspend scheduled business to take up issues including the demand for a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe into the Adani issue.

The proceedings were briefly adjourned due to opposition protest and when the House re-assembled at 11.30 AM, there were identical scenes. This prompted Chairman Dhankhar to adjourn the proceedings for the day, saying the "House is not in order".

The notices related to the demand for the "constitution of a JPC to investigate the alleged misconduct, including corruption, bribery, financial irregularities of the Adani Group in connivance with other authorities", violence in Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh and "rising" incidents of crime

in the national capital.

"Upper House needs to reflect and follow well-established traditions that ruling of the Chair requires reference and not cause differences. I have, in detail, given reasons why, in these situations, notices are not being accepted," Dhankhar said while rejecting the notices under Rule 267 of the House.

The Chairman also said for the last 30 years, the House has reflected a consensual approach with reference to Rule 267 every time.

"As I have reiterated on several occasions, I thought it wise to bestow focused attention given the situation that we are entering the last quarter of the century of adoption of the Constitution of India," he said.

He emphasised that the

House needs to reflect and follow well-established traditions that a ruling of the Chair requires "deference and not (be a) cause of differences." While rejecting the notices, Dhankhar also stressed that there will be occasions to raise these issues in accordance with rules.

Earlier, the Chairman extended birthday greetings to Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharyya, Wanweiroy Khariukhi and Dharmshila Gupta, all Members of Rajya Sabha.

On Monday also, the first day of the Winter Session, the Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day during the morning session itself as the opposition insisted on raising the issues related to the Adani Group. There was no sitting of the House on Tuesday

## Defence Secretary to inaugurate 11th edition of ICG's SAREX-24 in Kochi

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh will inaugurate the two-day 11th edition of Indian Coast Guard's National Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise and Workshop (SAREX-24) under the aegis of National Maritime Search and Rescue Board in Kochi starting Thursday, defence ministry said here on Wednesday.

Giving details, officials said Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Director General S Paramesh, who is also the National Maritime Search and Rescue Coordinating Authority, will be among the dignitaries attending the event.

The theme will be 'Enhancing Search and Rescue Capabilities through Regional Collaboration'. It signifies ICG's commitment to provide succor during large-scale contingencies regardless of location, nationality or circumstances in the Indian Search and Rescue Region and beyond.

The first day of the event will feature various programmes, including table-top exercise, workshop & seminars involving participation of senior officials from government agencies, Ministries and Armed Forces, various stakeholders and foreign delegates.



On the second day, the sea exercise involving two large scale contingencies will be carried out off the Kochi coast with participation of ships and aircraft of ICG, Navy, Indian Air Force, Passenger Vessel and Tug from Cochin Port Authority and boats from the Customs.

The first contingency will simulate distress onboard a passenger vessel having 500 passengers onboard, while the second scenario will depict ditching of civil aircraft with 200 passengers.

The response matrix in the sea exercise will involve various methods to evacuate distressed passengers, wherein the advent of new-age technology using satellite-aided distress beacons,

## Viksit Bharat dream hinges on quality education in schools: UN's Sharp

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Highlighting the immense potential of India's students as catalysts for change, United Nations (UN) resident coordinator in the country Shombi Sharp has said the dream of 'Viksit Bharat' hinges on ensuring that children in school receive not only quality education but are also sensitised to becoming "responsible model citizens of tomorrow".

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on Wednesday released a statement on its 'RiseUp4Peace' educational initiative that is focused on engaging and empowering young people to "resist negative influences, emerging vulnerabilities and risky behaviours".

The UN Resident Coordinator for India highlighted the immense potential of "India's 265.2 million students as catalysts for change", emphasising the importance of quality and values-driven education in shaping inclusive and peaceful societies, it said.

"The dream of 'Viksit Bharat', as articulated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, hinges on ensuring that children in school receive not only quality education but are also sensitised to become responsible model citizens of



tomorrow," he was quoted as saying in the statement.

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2023 both recognise the need to nurture responsible citizens who can contribute to peace and harmony in an increasingly complex world. But this ambition goes beyond the traditional scope of education -- it requires "reimagining educational interventions in classrooms, schools and communities", the UNODC said.

In several bustling classrooms

across India, there is a "powerful movement" quietly taking shape -- one that champions peace, lawfulness and inclusion through education. At the heart of this movement are not just the policy-makers, educators or institutions, but young people who stand as the most crucial catalysts of change, the statement said.

Emphasising the initiative's relevance and impact, over 70 policy-makers, educators and young champions ideated and charted a roadmap for fostering peace, inclusion and lawfulness in education -- as envi-

sioned in NEP 2020 and NCF 2023 -- at a 'RiseUp4Peace' policy consultation convened by India's apex curriculum body, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and UNODC South Asia in New Delhi.

Working in mixed groups, policy-makers, educators and students exchanged practical insights on curriculum integration, good practices and new ideas as well as the way forward. Key insights shared by educators emphasised the importance of a holistic

approach to education. Launched this year, the cross-cutting collaborative initiative has engaged over 30,000 stakeholders across 14 states and Union Territories (UTs) through participatory capacity building of educators, co-creation of school-led initiatives and activity-based learning of students.

'RiseUp4Peace' has spurred innovative interventions blending arts, technology and sports to empower students with the support of a diverse set of partners -- public, private and rural schools, NCERT, DERT Meghalaya, Raipur Police and educator and youth groups, the statement said.

NCERT Joint Director Amarendra Prasad Behera urged educators to actively build capacities and develop values-driven modules to transform education.

"NEP 2020 and NCF 2023 envision education as a bridge to a more just and peaceful society. Such collaborations transform vision into action," he said.

The consultation reinforced the call for a whole-of-society approach to education, with policy-makers, educators and students as equal partners in creating a roadmap to promote transformative education for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Govt launches Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Government on Wednesday launched the Bal-Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign, urging states and Union territories to create specific action plans with the goal of reducing child marriage rates to below 5% by 2029. This initiative comes in response to the ongoing concern that, despite successfully preventing nearly 2 lakh child marriages in the past year, one in five girls in India is still married before the legal age of 18. Such practices are not only a serious human rights violation but are also a criminal offense under Indian law.

Launched by Union Women and Child Development Minister Annapurna Devi, the Bal-Vivah Mukht Bharat Abhiyan will focus on the seven high-burden states - West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Tripura, Assam, and Andhra Pradesh - and nearly 300 high-burden districts where child marriage rates are high



as compared to the national average. A key feature of the initiative is the launch of the Child Marriage Free Bharat portal, a platform to raise awareness, report cases, and monitor progress.

"Child marriage is a significant challenge before us and is a practice that limits the potential of millions of girls. In our country today, one in every five girls is married before the age of 18. Child marriage is one of the most severe forms of human rights violations and is also a criminal offense under the law," Devi said.

She added that while laws like the Prevention of Child Marriage Act are instrumental, "we must also focus on raising awareness because legislation alone cannot eradicate this issue".

"Figures also reveal that nearly 2 lakh child marriages have been prevented in a single year. Additionally, a United Nations report states that the most significant global decline in child marriage rates has been observed in South Asian countries, with India playing a crucial role in this achievement," she said.

The Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat campaign seeks to engage

multiple stakeholders in a collective effort to eliminate child marriage. The minister credited schemes like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Samagra Shiksha, and the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana for improving girls' access to education and ensuring their financial future.

"With the introduction of the National Education Policy, 2020, and scholarships for disadvantaged groups, we are creating opportunities for girls to realize their potential," she said.

"Patriarchal norms continue to pose challenges, but interventions like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao have proven effective in shifting societal mindsets. With consistent efforts, we can create an enabling environment for our girls," she said.

Despite the progress, the minister cautioned that there is no room for complacency.

"We cannot stop until India is completely free of child marriages," she said, calling for active participation from citizens.

## ICF manufacturing high-speed train sets having 280 Kmph speed: Vaishnav

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, in collaboration with BEML, is designing and manufacturing high-speed train sets that will have a design speed of 280 kmph, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav told Parliament on Wednesday.

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Vaishnav said following the success of Vande Bharat trains under the "Make in India" initiative, the Indian Railways (IR) has now taken up designing and manufacturing of high-speed train sets.

"The manufacturing cost is approximately Rs 28 crore per car (excluding taxes), which is highly competitive compared with other train sets," he said, replying to questions raised by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MPs Sudhir Gupta and Ananta Nayak. "The design and manufacturing of high-speed train sets is a complex and technology-intensive process," the

minister added.

He also highlighted the major technical aspects, such as the design and manufacturing of the aerodynamic, airtight car body, design and manufacturing of electrics including propulsion for high-speed application, weight optimisation of the train sets and heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) of the trains.

"The train sets will have chair cars with best-in-class features, such as aerodynamic exteriors, sealed gangways, automatic doors, optimum climatic conditions inside compartments for passenger comfort, CCTV,

mobile-charging facilities, optimum lighting, fire safety equipment etc.," Vaishnav said.

He added that the completion of the project can be reasonably ascertained after the finalisation of the detailed design.

The minister also provided an update on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) project, under execution with technical and financial assistance from Japan, and said so far, 336 km of pier foundation, 331 km of pier construction, 260 km of girder casting and 225 km of girder launching have been completed.

"The work of the undersea tunnel (approximately 21 km) has also started," he added.

The 508-km-long MAHSR project will have 12 stations planned at Mumbai, Thane, Virar, Boisar, Vapi, Bilimora, Surat, Bharuch, Vadodara, Anand, Ahmedabad and Sabarmati and the entire land (1,389.5 Ha) required for it has been acquired, the railway minister said.

## Terror-gangster syndicate case: NIA raids nine locations across multiple States

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday conducted searches at nine locations in multiple states as part of a probe into a conspiracy by terror outfits to smuggle arms and ammunition into the country, according to an official statement.

NIA teams searched the premises of suspects in the "terror-gangster syndicate case" in Palwal, Faridabad and Gurugram districts of Haryana, Jalandhar district of Punjab, and Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh, it said.

A host of incriminating materials, including mobiles/digital devices, banking transactions and property-related documents, were seized during the searches, the statement issued by the probe agency said.

"In a massive crackdown in the terror-gangster nexus case, the NIA on Wednesday conducted extensive searches at premises linked with associates of Davinder Bambiha syndicate at nine locations in the states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh," it said.

Bambiha, a notorious gangster, was killed in a police encounter in 2016, officials said. The Bambiha gang members are

## Need to make existing laws more stringent to curb vulgar content on social media: Vaishnav

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Union minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Wednesday said there is a need to make existing laws more stringent to curb vulgar content on social media platforms.

Speaking in Lok Sabha, the Information and Broadcasting Minister said the Parliamentary Standing Committee should take up the issue and also called for a consensus to frame more strict laws in this regard.

Earlier, there were editorial checks and it was decided whether something was right or wrong, but those checks have ended. Today, social media is a platform for the freedom of press but it is uncon-



trolled and there is vulgar content, the minister said during the Question Hour.

There is a need to make existing laws more stringent to curb vulgar content on social media platforms, Vaishnav

said amid din in the House.

He was responding to questions by BJP member Arun Govil about existing mechanisms to check the illegal telecast of vulgar and sex-related content through social media

platforms and whether the government proposes to make the existing laws more stringent keeping in view the fact that the said laws are "not much effective to stop misuse of these platforms".

The government has notified Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (IT Rules, 2021) under the Information Technology Act, 2000. It provides for a code of ethics for publishers of online curated content (OTT platforms) and that OTT platforms put in place adequate safeguards for restricting age-inappropriate content for children.

In a written reply, Vaishnav said the ministry blocked 18

OTT platforms for publishing obscene and vulgar content. So far as the content on intermediary platforms like YouTube and Facebook is concerned, IT Rules, 2021 cast certain obligations on such platforms.

These platforms need to make reasonable efforts by themselves and to cause the user of their computer resource to not host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, etc. Knowingly and intentionally any information which is obscene, pornographic, paedophilic, invasive of another's privacy, including bodily privacy, insulting or harassing on the basis of gender, racially or ethnically objectionable, or that is harmful to child, he said.









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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A glimmer of hope

While the ceasefire offers a reprieve from conflict, its durability is not guaranteed, a lasting resolution still remains elusive

In a significant development for West Asia, Israel and Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militant group operating in Lebanon, have agreed to a ceasefire after months of intense conflict. The agreement, brokered with the intervention of the United States and France, comes into effect at midnight Israeli time on November 27. It is being hailed as a potential step toward de-escalation in the region, but its success and long-term implications remain uncertain. The ceasefire agreement aims to restore calm along the volatile Israel-Lebanon border. It mandates that Hezbollah and other armed groups in Lebanon halt all offensive operations against Israel. In return, Israel will refrain from military actions targeting Lebanon. A key aspect of the deal is the acknowledgement of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, which calls for the disarmament of militias and the exclusive authority of Lebanese state forces in the southern region. Israel has also agreed to withdraw its forces from positions south of the Blue Line within 60 days, provided the terms are upheld.

This ceasefire does not mean that Israeli forces are back to barracks. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has emphasised the need to focus on Iran. Israel agreed to truce as there were logistical challenges, including delays in weapons and munitions deliveries, which necessitated a pause to replenish stocks and prepare for future operations. The ceasefire comes amid a broader context of regional instability. The war between Israel and Hamas, which erupted in October 2023 after a brutal terrorist attack on Israeli civilians, has already claimed tens of thousands of lives. There is no let up in Israel's attacks on Gaza where the human crisis is getting worse. The fighting extended to Israel's northern border when Hezbollah escalated its attacks, prompting Israel to retaliate. While the ceasefire offers a glimmer of hope, challenges loom large. The success of the agreement depends on its strict implementation, particularly the disarmament of militias in Lebanon. The Lebanese government, already struggling with economic and political crises, will face immense pressure to assert its authority over Hezbollah, a deeply entrenched and well-armed organisation. Whatever the reasons for this truce but it definitely gives peace a chance. The agreement's implications for regional peace are profound. If upheld, it could reduce tensions along Israel's northern border, allowing displaced civilians to return home and facilitating humanitarian relief in affected areas. For Lebanon, the deal could bolster its sovereignty by curbing the influence of armed non-state actors, potentially paving the way for greater stability. However, unresolved issues, including the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict and tensions with Iran, continue to pose risks to lasting peace. The role of the US, France, and UNIFIL will be critical to ensuring compliance and rebuilding trust.

### PICTALK



A flock of whistling ducks fly at the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, in Morigaon

## Why band-aid solutions fail to fix Delhi pollution



KALYANI SHANKAR

Despite court orders, government promises, and short-term measures like vehicle restrictions and artificial rain, Delhi's air quality remains perilously poor

Why do the residents of Delhi experience pollution every year while the ruling class blames it on stubble burning in the neighbouring states of Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh? Can't they find a permanent solution instead of debating who will pay for the burning machines and other related expenses? The air pollution levels in Delhi are eight times higher than the WHO's prescribed limits. It has reached a level where the judiciary, executive, and parliament blame each other, and the severe pollution level continues. Returning from a month-long holiday in the US, I was immediately struck by the urgency of the pollution crisis as I landed in Delhi, past midnight this week.

The dark skies, sheets of dust, heat, and difficulty in breathing welcomed me as a stark reminder and a pressing call to action. The pollution levels in Delhi have soared to their highest this week. It has reached hazardous levels, causing state officials to limit movement and revive plans to stimulate artificial rain to clear toxins. This forced the schools and offices to close due to cloaking the city in thick brown smog and demanded immediate action. The number of respiratory diseases in children and older adults is rising, along with other health issues. In cold winters in the north, smog covers the area every year and traps harmful pollutants from fires, construction, and factories. This issue worsens when farmers burn their fields after harvesting rice to prepare for new crops. The same or even worse scenario unfolds yearly, reaching alarming levels over time. Citizens feel helpless while politicians engage in a blame game. As a result, the public endures poor air quality, which seriously threatens their health. Affluent individuals often escape to warmer destinations during winter, but children and older people suffer the most. Many schools have closed, and residents have been advised to



stay indoors. Construction work has been halted, and the government is considering implementing an odd-even vehicle use policy to control pollution. While this is a step in the right direction, the severity of the crisis requires effective solutions without further delays. According to the Central Pollution Control Board, the World Health Organization, and other monitoring agencies, Delhi's air quality index (AQI) ranges between 1,200 and 1,500. India's AQI is classified as poor when it exceeds 200, very poor when it exceeds 300, and severe or hazardous when it exceeds 400. The recommended AQI limit is between 0 and 100. This alarming situation discourages international travellers and members of the Indian diaspora from planning their annual visits. The government and politicians are well aware of the root cause of the problem but play the blame game. The Supreme Court has ordered the government to address pollution. In the past, it has even led efforts to improve air quality in Delhi. It has set rules about which vehicles can operate in the city, ordered the relocation of many factories that pollute the air, and closed businesses to reduce emissions. The court also



IN COLD WINTERS IN THE NORTH, SMOG COVERS THE AREA EVERY YEAR AND TRAPS HARMFUL POLLUTANTS FROM FIRES, CONSTRUCTION, AND FACTORIES. THIS ISSUE WORSENS WHEN FARMERS BURN THEIR FIELDS AFTER HARVESTING RICE TO PREPARE FOR NEW CROPS

pushed the government to take action. The fault lies in the implementation. Last month, the Supreme Court ruled that clean air is a fundamental human right. It ordered both the central government and state authorities to take immediate action. However, most measures, such as vehicle restrictions, industrial regulations, and public awareness campaigns, must be more effective in preventing deteriorating air quality. Critics question how effective the court's decisions are and accuse the judiciary of interfering in executive matters. In its 2024 manifesto, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Delhi did not include promises to reduce pollution, unlike previous ones. Instead, the manifesto focused on the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) and ways to cut pollution. APP highlighted the need for citizen involvement and plans to use electric buses to control pollution. Now that it has reached an alarming stage, the Centre and the state governments must take a balanced approach concerning Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, which are the real culprits. Every winter, smoke from farm fires engulfs Delhi and covers the Delhi skies.

Farmers resort to burning as it is the cheapest method of clearing their fields. The state governments demand that the Centre provide funds to assist farmers in reducing smoke emissions, but the issue persists yearly. Meanwhile, politics also plays its role. The BJP governs the Centre, while AAP rules Delhi and Punjab. The Congress remains an onlooker. This attitude does not help implement an effective plan. The experts say it's high time half-measures were shunned, and comprehensive solutions are implemented. For instance, GRAP-III must be upgraded to GRAP-IV, facilitating the enforcement of the odd-even rule. The election to the Delhi Assembly is around the corner. People must make it an election issue. In the meantime, residents of Delhi should consider quick solutions to combat pollution, such as wearing masks, indoor air-purifying plants, and the affluent using air purifiers, taking steam baths, eating healthy foods, and ensuring proper ventilation in their homes. The citizens must also assist authorities in any efforts to help control pollution. (The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### UNITY OVER DIVISION

Madam — Some political parties that do not have any people oriented policies or programmes in their agenda are using the communal platform to whip the religious sentiments to gain votes and capture power. The campaign during the last general election has seen an open spread of communal hate, which was not the predominant issue in the minds of the people. Nowhere were the people's issues, like employment, livelihood plights, or healthcare concerns, discussed or debated. That is why the people also had reacted vehemently by not giving a brutal majority to any party. The message that people are not interested in communal concerns is given repeatedly and still some forces are bent upon thriving in politics only with the help of programmes of spreading hate among communities and keeping the flame of communal hate alive. Leaving issues like employment, inflation, declining real wages, and growing costs of healthcare and education made the privilege of the affluent to be attended to with priority and more sincerity. Divisive agendas and programmes may shine in the initial stage and then lose their tempo, as witnessed all over. Such clashes help the rulers to divert the attention of the people from their mistakes and misdeeds. Even in countries ruled under theocratic principles, clashes among groups of the same religion are seen to be the perennial ones rather than giving peace to the people. In a country like India, even if one religion is allowed to dominate, the groups thriving on promoting the cause of their caste will gain further momentum to plunge the nation into a lasting socio-economic crisis. As available laws are not efficient enough to deal with such anti-people political parties and social outfits, it is the responsibility of the people to keep them at a distance. A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

#### SAVE FORESTS

Madam—Planting a tree and protecting it till it grows has been considered a

### EVM: Allegations are baseless



The Supreme Court decisively rejected a petition calling for the reintroduction of ballot papers in elections, highlighting the baseless nature of opposition allegations against Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). The court's remarks came after the petitioner argued that EVMs were vulnerable to manipulation, citing claims by various politicians, including Andhra Pradesh leaders Chandrababu Naidu and Jagan Mohan Reddy, as well as Elon Musk. The court pointed out that

these same politicians never raised concerns about EVMs when they won elections. "When you win, EVMs are fine; when you lose, EVMs are tampered." Meanwhile, opposition parties, led by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, continued to push for the return of ballot papers, with Kharge criticising the use of EVMs and demanding a campaign similar to the Bharat Jodo Yatra for their abolition. Kharge's repeated attacks on EVMs reflect the ongoing narrative within opposition circles, where EVM tampering is blamed for electoral losses. The SC's firm stance serves as a rebuke to the opposition's recurring narrative of EVM tampering, emphasising that such claims are opportunistic and lack substantiation. The opposition's continued attack on EVMs seems more like an excuse for poor performance than a genuine concern for electoral fairness. N Sathasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

#### OLI CHOOSES BEIJING

Madam — Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli broke the usual ritual of visiting New Delhi first by choosing Beijing. Like the Maldives' President, Nepal's Prime Minister appears to be a pro-Chinese supporter. We all know how notorious China is for pushing countries like Nepal into debt. After Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Maldives, seeing Nepal follow the same path makes India worried. If Nepal signs the BRI execution treaty, it would pose a significant threat to India. Though our relations with China are improving, we all know it is merely a diplomatic friendship that could turn into animosity at any time. In the diplomatic world, no one is a genuine friend or ally to any country—everyone prioritises their own benefit. India needs to remain cautious, especially as it is being surrounded by countries drowning in China's debts. Priya Thakur | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Aruna Vasudev: A tribute to the mother figure of Asian cinema

She leaves behind a profound legacy, having nurtured and inspired many. Though she is no longer among us, her influence continues to guide and motivate



SANTANU GANGULY

In 1999, I first discovered the Cinefan Asian Film Festival. Excited, I headed to the India Habitat Centre (IHC) to collect a pass, only to learn that the festival was open to all. I couldn't believe my ears. Being new to Delhi, I had assumed that everything came at a price, but this experience proved me wrong. During the festival, I came to know Aruna Vasudev, the Festival Director. I also met filmmakers and critics from around the world, making it an unforgettable experience. The following year, I eagerly awaited the festival and even took seven days of leave from work to immerse myself in films. My journalist friends noticed my dedication and shared it with Aruna Vasudev. They told her about a boy from West Delhi who traveled daily, spending mornings to midnight watching films out of sheer love for cinema. That year, I managed to watch 37 out of the 42 films screened, missing a few only because I attended seminars. Aruna di, as I later called her, was impressed but quizzed me about the films to ensure I had truly seen them. I passed her test.



At the closing ceremony, in the presence of luminaries like Sharmila Tagore, Buddhadeb Dasgupta, Rituparno Ghosh, and Nandita Das, she mentioned my name on stage. She highlighted my passion and dedication, asking me to stand so the audience could see me. Afterward, she invited me to the closing dinner. During our conversation, she asked what I did for a living. When I replied, she told me, "Forget footwear; you are meant for film." I expressed my willingness to leave my job if she could offer me an opportunity. She laughed and said, "Stay in touch; I'll let you know." I took her words to heart and kept reminding her of her promise whenever we met. Finally, in 2003, she asked me to join her team. Although she initially wanted me to start in January, I requested a

delay due to my sister's wedding. From February 1, 2003, until the end of her life, Aruna Vasudev became much more than a mentor. She was my friend, philosopher, guide, guru, and godmother. When I joined her team, I initially addressed her as "Madam." One day, she suggested I call her "Aruna di," as others did. From then on, she was Aruna di not only to me but also to my family. My work involved assisting her with the prestigious Cinefan Quarterly and the Cinefan Film Festival. During this time, she taught me much more than cinema-etiquette, communication skills, and the importance of being a good human being. One memorable instance was when she was busy on a call, and another call came through. Indicating she wasn't available, I conveyed that she was out of the country. Later, she gently corrected me, teaching that honesty in such situations was essential. Transforming a shy, lower-middle-class boy from a Bengali-medium school into someone comfortable in

Delhi's elite circles wasn't easy. Yet, she patiently guided me every step of the way. Aruna di's support was unwavering. When I asked if I was meeting her expectations, she replied that being able to pursue one's dream and earn a living from it was a rare blessing. Once, after just three months on the job, I noticed an unexpected salary increase. The accountant revealed that Aruna di was so pleased with my work that she had decided to raise it. This generosity stood in stark contrast to my earlier job in a footwear company, where long hours of grueling work brought only meager raises. Her faith in me was a source of strength. Despite occasional resentment from colleagues about the trust she placed in me, she always defended her decisions. She was my rock in both professional and personal challenges. When my mother met her, she said, "Though I gave birth to him, you have raised him." Touched by those words, Aruna di was moved to tears. (The writer is a Delhi based Film Festival curator; views expressed are personal)





## FIRST COLUMN

### A MINDFUL HEART FOR A MINDFUL LIFE

By integrating modern science with spiritual wisdom, it is essential for holistic healing



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJJI

*To be kind is more important than to be right. Many times what people need is not a brilliant mind that speaks but a special heart that listens... F. Scott Fitzgerald*

We humans are blessed with only one heart which lasts us as long as we live. Alternatively, we live till the heart lasts. In that sense, the heart is the lifeline of the human body. Anatomically, it is a vital organ that supplies blood to the whole body. Symbolically, it is equated with the most powerful emotions of the human soul i.e. love as well as with instinct, interest and deep feelings. Hence it won't be wrong to say that the heart rules our life. But, today the same very heart has indeed become a matter of great concern as alarming statistics tell us how vulnerable it is to the onset of countless disorders, thanks to our modern lifestyle and polluted environment. Concerns over the health of the heart have led to an explosion of research to find ways to boost its longevity and smooth functionality. However, when all efforts to preserve the heart fail we even have an option to replace it. Isn't it great? But still, the figures in health reports don't seem to tell a happy story about the effectiveness of these developments because today we have an ever-growing number of people who are suffering or facing the risk of heart disease.

According to the eternal law of spirituality, everything in this material world grows old, decays and gets assimilated into its original elemental form. Similarly, everything in nature is getting recycled as energy is in constant flux. So, as souls, we all get a new body at every birth. However, the elements that constitute a body are the same old matter.



In that sense, everything in the world is old material packaged as new. Hence, with every consecutive birth, we as souls get a recycled body and hence a recycled heart. We get a new body only when we first come down from the soul world because we are pure and are entitled to get the best of the available resources at the time when we enter this world. Having said the above, we must not forget the fact that there was indeed a time when we all had a brand-new heart.

Yeah! Time was indeed called the 'Golden Age' when all the human souls and the elements of nature were pristine and pure. Everyone is perfect and purest there and so everything they had, including their body, was also perfect. There was no need for them to take care of their heart. The heart was so robust and healthy that it supported the body for a long and healthy life. However, today we all live in total contrast to the golden age i.e. Iron Age and there is hardly any human being in this world today who is free from any physical ailment, be it wealthy or poor, all are suffering from some or the other disease that is linked to unhealthy lifestyle and ecological degradation. In the present age, everyone's mind is beset with weak and negative thoughts which are the biggest hindrance to living a healthy & happy life. Throughout our lives, we never understand that the root cause of all diseases is our wrong actions. It's a proven fact that we get punished for our wrong deeds. Therefore it is very important to realize that all diseases have their origin in wrong thoughts and actions.

Today, medical science has accepted that along with a healthy lifestyle, meditation too can promote a healthy heart, as it helps regulate the heart's functioning by controlling negative thoughts that induce stress-related hormones in the body leading to harmful effects. By purifying the soul of bad 'sanskaras' (personality traits) like anger, fear, hatred and ego, it cures the root cause of disease and leads to holistic healing. Therefore to have a healthy heart, apart from a healthy lifestyle, it is essential to be a good-hearted person and to feed the mind with a healthy diet of pure thoughts and feelings.

*(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)*

## Bridging the gender gap in skills and opportunities



DINESH SOOD

The beauty and wellness sector is emerging as a transformative force, equipping women with essential skills and providing financial sustainability



Despite various initiatives, a significant gender gap persists in learning and earning opportunities between men and women. Skill development can be a transformative force, enhancing women's professional growth and economic independence. By acquiring skills, women can access broader job opportunities, empowering them socially and economically.

A survey titled "Women's Economic Empowerment," conducted in 2023-24 by the Indian Statistical Institute Delhi, explores women's skill development and employment landscape. It reveals that 7 out of 10 women lack economic independence. India ranks 142nd out of 146 countries in the Global Women's Economic Participation and Opportunities Index. Women in India contribute only 17 per cent to the GDP, which is less than half the global average. Their economic participation is essential for sustainable development, gender equality, and poverty reduction.

According to the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), integrating 68 million more women into the workforce by 2025 could potentially increase India's GDP by USD 0.7 trillion. The World Bank also reports that including 50 per cent of women in the workforce could boost India's GDP growth by 1.5 percentage points.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) states that India's Women's Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) was about 32.8 per cent in 2023, while it was 67.2 per cent for men. Women are primarily found in specific sectors such as agriculture (73.2 per cent), education (44.1 per cent), and health-care and beauty-wellness (31.4 per cent). An estimated 7.5 crore women are expected to join the workforce in the coming decade. To ensure that this vital human resource—nearly half of the country's workforce—is effectively utilised and contributes at least 25 per cent to national economic growth, the government must prioritise skill development for women's empowerment. In addition to these gaps, prevalent gender stereotypes affect skill acquisition. Women generally pursue skills in beauty and wellness, textiles, clerical work, and healthcare. The DP-WEW study indicates that 30.2 per cent of skilled women aged 18 to 35 primar-



TO ENSURE THAT THIS VITAL HUMAN RESOURCE—NEARLY HALF OF THE COUNTRY'S WORKFORCE—IS EFFECTIVELY UTILISED AND CONTRIBUTES AT LEAST 25 PER CENT TO NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH, THE GOVERNMENT MUST PRIORITISE SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

ily acquire skills in the beauty and wellness sector, followed by 21.5 per cent in tailoring. The beauty and wellness sector is one of the most significant forces driving women's empowerment in India today.

The industry's rapid growth, the accessibility of skill development, the increasing number of women entering the workforce and entrepreneurship, and the rise of women in leadership roles all contribute to fostering a more equitable society. In India, the beauty and wellness sector is rapidly advancing women's empowerment by providing substantial employment to approximately 12.3 million people, of whom 66 per cent are women.

This workforce includes individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds and educated families. According to a 2023 report by Technavio, the beauty and personal care industry in India is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.5 per cent from 2021, reaching a market value of over \$20 billion and creating employment opportunities for around 20.3 million people. Promoting female entrepreneurship in India is crucial, as participation is low, with only one in five entrepreneurs being women.

The beauty and wellness sector offers women significant employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to actively promote skill development, entrepreneurship, and self-employment in this sector through targeted training initiatives, entrepreneurship education, and financial support, enabling women to enhance their professional growth. India's beauty and wellness industry has low entry barriers for women looking to become entrepreneurs.

Many women have capitalised on this sector to establish their businesses, empowering them to take control of their financial futures and

influence the industry's direction. Over 30 per cent of beauty and wellness businesses in India are now owned by women, ranging from small beauty parlours to large spa chains and wellness centres. By building businesses in this sector, women create financial independence and contribute to economic growth. Entrepreneurship fosters leadership skills, self-reliance, and resilience, making women more visible and influential economically.

Government initiatives and private institutions have been instrumental in equipping women with the necessary tools for success in the industry. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, has played a vital role in training women for careers in beauty and wellness. Initiatives like The Beauty and Wellness Sector Skill Council (BWSSC) provide certifications and skill development courses to millions of women nationwide.

According to the BWSSC, nearly 2 million women have been trained through skill development programs in beauty and wellness in India, significantly enhancing women's employability and career growth.

Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), has spent over two decades empowering 250,000 women in tier 2 cities and suburban areas with valuable skills in beauty and wellness. This initiative has helped bridge geographical disparities and enhanced their career prospects, enabling them to pursue diverse roles in the industry. The hybrid mode of training also boosts their chances for professional advancement, addressing various challenges and reducing the gender employment gap.

Beyond financial and professional empowerment, the beauty and well-

ness sector boosts women's self-esteem and confidence. In a society where women's appearances have often been scrutinised, the beauty industry allows women to express themselves, feel more self-assured, and engage actively in both social and professional spheres. Women are increasingly taking on leadership roles within this industry, driving trends and shaping its future. According to FICCI's 2021 report on the beauty and wellness sector, women hold significant leadership positions in major beauty brands and represent 50-60 per cent of senior management in several top companies.

As women advance to leadership roles, they influence industry trends, promote diversity and inclusivity, and help break down gender norms. Their leadership inspires the next generation of women to pursue prominent roles, further advancing gender equality in the workforce. With a growing focus on sustainability in the beauty and wellness sector, women have opportunities to lead initiatives that promote environmental awareness and social responsibility.

Many women in this field are focused on business growth and actively cultivating sustainable and ethical practices that positively impact society. By offering women financial independence, career advancement opportunities, and self-expression platforms, the beauty and wellness sector is reshaping the future for women in India. This sector's economic, social, and psychological benefits pave the way for a new generation of women contributing to India's growth trajectory.

*(The writer is co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and a network Member of India International Skills Centres, an initiative of Gol; the views expressed are personal)*

## Reviving the spirit of peace: A call to action for a divided world

As the voices of peacemakers grow faint and their initiatives struggle for survival, the urgency to reignite hope and unity has never been greater

This is my story. As a child, I often heard harrowing tales of emotional and physical trauma, turmoil, displacement, and violence from my family elders—stories of what they endured during Partition. They spoke of their flight from Rawalpindi and how, as refugees, they rebuilt their lives and made Delhi their home.



APS MALHOTRA

Listening to these sagas of resilience, courage, and the indomitable human spirit, I was reminded of the philosopher George Santayana's warning: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Tragically, we have done just that—forgetting the lessons of the past and repeating the same mistakes,

over and over again. Thirty-seven years after Partition, another tragedy unfolded. A so-called "big tree" fell, and the reverberations shook Delhi to its core. What followed was a horrific bloodbath: gross attempts at ethnic cleansing, as thousands of innocent people were butchered in the nation's capital within hours. Law enforcement turned a

blind eye. Places of worship were desecrated. Homes were looted, ransacked, and burned. Women were violated, and men were hunted like wild animals.

In those dark and desperate times, when it seemed as though humanity had been consumed by madness, there were still beacons of hope. Veterans like the late Kuldeep Nayar stood steadfast, risking their safety to uphold the ideals of peace. Stories of individuals and groups lighting candles, distributing sweets and roses at the Attari-Wagah border, and praying for harmony between two estranged nations filled me with admiration and hope. I longed to join them—to move from being a passive

observer to an active participant in this peace movement.

But it remained a dream for decades. Finally, some years ago, the opportunity came during a visit to Amritsar for a seminar. By sheer luck, I was given a VIP pass to witness the Beating Retreat Ceremony at the Attari-Wagah border. I was thrilled beyond words. That day, under a gentle winter sun, I took my seat near the massive gate where the ceremony unfolds. It was a spectacle to behold—smartly dressed soldiers marching in perfect sync on both sides of the border. The crowd was electric, brimming with patriotic fervor, singing Bollywood songs, and soaking in the



festive 'pind da mela' atmosphere. But as dusk fell and the ceremony ended, a sense of disappointment crept in. The cold wind seemed to mirror

my mood. None of the scenes I had dreamed of since childhood were there. There were no doves soaring freely across the man-made divide, no warm embraces or

gestures of reconciliation—only the stark reality of a deeply entrenched divide.

That day, I walked away with nothing but the wistful reveries of a peacenik. Now, as I approach the close of my 56th year, my concern for the future has grown. The peacemakers—the dreamers who championed harmony and understanding—are fading, their initiatives struggling to survive. A way forward must be found, and urgently. The solution lies within each of us, but it will take collective effort to revive the peace offensive.

If we fail to act, we risk losing this fight entirely. And history, as well as future generations, will not forgive us.

The path to peace is fraught with challenges, but it is one we must tread with urgency and determination. The fading voices of peacemakers must be reignited, their efforts revitalised, for the sake of a shared future. If we fail to come together now—to heal divisions, foster understanding, and embrace humanity's collective strength—the dream of harmony will wither away. The responsibility lies with each of us to ensure this does not happen. Let us act before it is too late, for history will not absolve us, and future generations will inherit the consequences of our inaction. Peace cannot wait.

*(The writer is an author and blogger; views are personal)*



# Peace deal designed for permanent cessation of hostilities: Biden

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden has announced that Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah have accepted a US-brokered peace deal that is designed to be a "permanent cessation" of hostilities between the two sides. As part of the ceasefire, Israel will gradually withdraw its troops from Lebanon over the next 60 days, Biden said in his address to the nation from the White House on Tuesday, shortly after Israel's Security Cabinet approved the accord. According to reports, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented to the Security Cabinet the agreement aimed at ending months-long fighting between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah which was ignited by the Gaza conflict and has killed and displaced thousands. Biden said he spoke with Netanyahu and Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati. "I'm pleased to announce that their governments have accepted the United States' proposal to end the devastating conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. I want to thank President Macron of France for his part-

nership in reaching this moment," he said. "I've directed my team to work with the governments of Israel and Lebanon to forge a ceasefire to bring the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah to a close. "Under the deal reached today, effective at 4:00 a.m. tomorrow local time, the fighting across the Lebanese-Israeli border will end. This is designed to be a permanent cessation of hostilities," he said. Biden said what is left of Hezbollah and other terrorist organisations will not be allowed to threaten the security of Israel again. "Over the next 60 days, the Lebanese Army and the State Security Forces will deploy and take control of their own territory once again. Hezbollah terrorist infrastructure in southern Lebanon will not be allowed to be rebuilt," he said. "Over the next 60 days, Israel will gradually withdraw its remaining forces and civilians on both sides will soon be able to safely return to their communities and begin to rebuild their homes, their schools, their farms, their businesses,

and their very lives," he added. Describing the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah as the deadliest in decades, Biden said lasting security for the people of the two countries cannot be achieved only on the battlefield. "Israel must be bold in turning tactical gains against Iran and its proxies into a coherent strategy that secures Israel's long-term safety and advances a broader peace and prosperity in the region," he said. In New York, UN Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed the ceasefire announcement and hoped that this would put an end to the violence, destruction and suffering the people of Israel and Lebanon have been experiencing. UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert echoed similar sentiments. "This agreement marks the starting point of a critical process, anchored in the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), to restore the safety and security that civilians on both sides of the Blue Line deserve," she said. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer described the accord

as a good deal for Israel and the region. It shows that when terrorists are beaten back both militarily and through dogged diplomacy, the likelihood of peace increases, he said. "Hezbollah said they would never give up as long as there was fighting in Gaza, but today's ceasefire agreement should show Hamas they are as isolated as ever. "Now, Hamas must release all the remaining hostages and come to a negotiated ceasefire. Carrying on their failed strategy will lead only to further suffering and SENSELESS bloodshed in Gaza. Hamas must recognise that there's no future without a strong and secure state of Israel," Schumer said. "The Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire agreement also provides an enforcement mechanism to help ensure Hezbollah remains weakened and allows displaced Lebanese and Israeli civilians to return to their homes," he said. "I applaud the Biden administration for this agreement and for continuing to work to negotiate a ceasefire and the return of all the hostages in Gaza," he said.

# Trump team claims credit for truce deal brokered by Biden govt

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration kept President-elect Donald Trump's incoming administration closely apprised of its efforts to broker the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hezbollah that is slated to go into effect early Wednesday, according to the outgoing Democratic administration. Trump's team, meanwhile, was quick to spike the football and claim credit for the rare spot of good news for a Democratic administration that's been dragged down by the grinding Mideast conflict. "Everyone is coming to the table because of President Trump," Florida Rep. Mike Waltz, Trump's choice for his national security adviser, said in a post on X on Tuesday, shortly before the Israel Cabinet signed off on the agreement. "His resounding victory sent a clear message to the rest of the world that chaos won't be tolerated. I'm glad to see concrete steps towards deescalation in the Middle East." The Biden administration's reported coordination with Trump's team on its efforts to forge the ceasefire in Lebanon is

perhaps the highest-profile example of cooperation in what's been a sometimes choppy transition period. Trump's transition team just on Tuesday reached a required agreement with President Joe Biden's White House that will allow transition staff to coordinate with the existing federal workforce before Trump takes office on Jan. 20. There has been some coordination on high levels between the outgoing Biden and incoming Trump teams, including talks between Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan and Waltz. Biden in Rose Garden remarks on Tuesday cheered the ceasefire agreement as a critical step that he hoped could be the catalyst for a broader peace in the Mideast, which has been shaken by nearly 14 months of war following Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. "This is designed to be a permanent cessation of hostilities," Biden said. "What is left of Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations will not be allowed — I emphasise, will not be allowed — to threaten the security of Israel again." White House officials are now

hopeful that a calm in Lebanon will reinvalidate a multi-country effort at finding an endgame to the devastating war in Gaza, where Hamas is still holding dozens of hostages and the conflict is more intractable. Biden said the US, as well as Israel, will engage in talks in the coming days with officials from Egypt, Qatar and Turkey to try to get Gaza talks back on track. But during Biden's moment of success in a conflict that has roiled his reputation at home and abroad, the specter of the incoming Trump administration loomed large. Trump's senior national security team was briefed by the Biden administration as negotiations unfolded and finally came to a conclusion on Tuesday, according to a senior Biden administration official. The official, who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity on a call organised by the White House, added that the incoming Trump administration officials were not directly involved in the talks, but that it was important that they knew "what we were negotiating and what the commitments were". Trump's team and allies, mean-

while, said there was no doubt that the prospect of the Republican president returning to power pushed both sides to get the agreement done. Waltz, in addition to giving Trump credit for the ceasefire deal coming together, added a warning to Iran, Hezbollah's chief financial backer. "But let's be clear: The Iran Regime is the root cause of the chaos; terror that has been unleashed across the region. We will not tolerate the status quo of their support for terrorism," Waltz said in his post. Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Trump ally, also gave a shoutout to the incoming administration, while giving a nod to Biden's team. "I appreciate the hard work of the Biden Administration, supported by President Trump, to make this ceasefire a reality," Graham said in a statement. Richard Goldberg, a senior adviser at the Washington group Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, said the moment magnifies that Iran — which he said would have needed to approve of Hezbollah agreeing to the ceasefire — is carefully weighing what lays ahead with Trump.

# As peace holds, Lebanese begin streaming south to their homes

AP ■ BEIRUT

A ceasefire between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah appeared to be holding Wednesday, as residents in cars heaped with belongings streamed back toward southern Lebanon despite warnings from the Israeli and Lebanese military that they stay away from certain areas. If it holds, the ceasefire would bring an end to nearly 14 months of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, which escalated in mid-September into all-out war and threatened to pull Hezbollah's patron Iran and Israel into a broader conflagration. It could give some reprieve to the 1.2 million Lebanese displaced by the fighting and the tens of thousands of Israelis who fled their homes along the border with Lebanon. The US- and France-brokered deal, approved by Israel late Tuesday, calls for an initial two-month halt to fighting and requires Hezbollah to end its armed presence in southern

Lebanon, while Israeli troops are to return to their side of the border. Thousands of additional Lebanese troops and UN peacekeepers would deploy in the south, and an international panel headed by the United States would monitor compliance. Hours before the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon took effect, Israel launched broad strikes that shook the Lebanese capital Beirut and a volley of rockets from Hezbollah set off air raid sirens across a large swath of northern Israel. But after the ceasefire took effect early Wednesday, quiet appeared to take hold, prompting waves of Lebanese to head home. Israel's Arabic military spokesperson Avichay Adraee warned displaced Lebanese not to return to their villages in southern Lebanon. The Lebanese military asked displaced returning to southern Lebanon to avoid frontline villages and towns near the border where Israeli troops are still present until they withdraw.



But some videos circulating on social media show displaced Lebanese defying these calls and returning to villages in the south near the coastal city of Tyre. Israeli troops were still present in parts of

southern Lebanon after Israel launched a ground invasion in October. On the highway linking Beirut with south Lebanon, thousands of people drove south with their belongings and mattresses tied on top of their cars. Traffic was gridlocked at the northern entrance of the port city of Sidon. Residents will return to vast destruction wrought by the Israeli military during its campaign, which flattened villages where the military said it found vast weapons caches and infrastructure it says was meant to launch an Oct 7-style attack on northern Israel. More than 3,760 people have been killed by Israeli fire in Lebanon the past 13 months, many of them civilians, according to Lebanese health officials. Hezbollah emerges from the war battered and bloodied, with the reputation it built by fighting Israel to a stalemate in the 2006 war tarnished. Yet its fighters still managed to put up heavy resistance on the ground, slowing Israel's advance while continuing to fire scores of rockets, missiles and drones across the border each day. "This is a moment of victory, pride and honor for us, the Shia sect, and for all of Lebanon," said Hussein

Swaidan, a resident returning to Tyre in southern Lebanon, who said he saw the ceasefire as a victory for Hezbollah. Sporadic celebratory gunfire was heard at a main roundabout in the city, as people returning honked the horns of cars and residents cheered. Some Israelis are concerned the deal doesn't go far enough. In Israel, the mood was far more subdued, with displaced Israelis concerned that the deal did not go far enough to rein in Hezbollah and that it did not address Gaza and the hostages still held there. "I think it is still not safe to return to our homes because Hezbollah is still close to us," said Eliyahu Maman, an Israeli displaced from the northern Israeli city of Kyriat Shmona, which is not far from the border with Lebanon and was hit hard by the months of fighting. The fighting killed more than 70 people in Israel, more than half civilians, as well as dozens of Israeli soldiers fighting in southern

Lebanon. A significant return of the displaced to their communities, many of which have suffered extensive damage from rocket fire, could take months. But Israel can claim major victories in the war, including the killing of Hezbollah's top leader Hassan Nasrallah and most of its senior commanders, as well as the destruction of extensive militant infrastructure. A complex attack involving exploding papers and walkie-talkies, widely attributed to Israel, appeared to show a remarkable degree of penetration of the secretive militant group. The kinds of massive, long-range rocket barrages that many Israelis had feared before the war never fully materialised, either because they were destroyed by Israeli strikes or Hezbollah held them in reserve. Hezbollah also failed to launch any ground attacks across the border, despite evidence presented by the Israeli military that it had invested heavily in preparing for such operations.

# Philippine police file complaints against V-P Sara Duterte, aides

AP ■ MANILA

Philippine police officials on Wednesday filed criminal complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte and her security staff for allegedly assaulting and disobeying orders from authorities in a recent altercation in Congress. The criminal complaints filed by the Quezon City police were separate from any legal action may arise after she publicly threatened to have President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., his wife and the House of Representatives speaker assassinated if she were killed herself in an unspecified plot. She has not provided details of that plot. The Marcos administration's legal offensive against Duterte, her father and their allies is a critical juncture in a conflict that has seethed in the last two years between the two most powerful families in the Philippines. The Department of Justice said it was also looking into potentially seditious remarks by Marcos's successor and the

vice president's father, Rodrigo Duterte, who said in a news conference that the civilian government would only listen if the military would voice concerns about corruption and irregularities under the Marcos administration. "There is a fractured governance... It is only the military who can correct it," the former president told a news conference Monday night. He said he was not agitating the military to rise against Marcos but only reaffirming the real situation in the Philippines. Still, justice officials said an investigation into the former president's remarks would proceed. The criminal complaints for assaulting, disobeying and grave coercion against police authorities were filed against the vice president and her security and other aides before state prosecutors, a police statement said. Such crimes are punishable by a jail term and a fine. The complaints were set off by a chaotic squabble over the weekend in the House of

Representatives where the vice president's chief of staff, Zuleika Lopez, has been temporarily detained. Lopez has been accused by legislators of obstructing and not cooperating with a congressional inquiry into alleged misuse of confidential and intelligence funds by the offices of the vice president and education secretary when Sara Duterte headed it under the Marcos administration. At one point, authorities were ordered to transfer Lopez to a women's prison outside Congress, causing her to become agitated. The vice president and her staff intervened to oppose the order and Lopez was eventually moved to a government hospital, where she remains confined. "The rule of law is fundamental to our democratic system. No one, regardless of his position, should be above accountability," national police chief Gen. Rommel Francisco Marbil said of the criminal complaints against the vice president and her aides.

# Trump signs MoU with WH for next phase of transition

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

President-elect Donald Trump has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with President Joe Biden's White House on the next phase of his transition so that the new administration and its team are ready from day one, the incoming chief of staff Susie Wiles has said. Unlike in the past, the transition team will not use government buildings or technology provided by the General Services Administration (GSA) and will operate as a self-sufficient organisation. It will also raise funds for the transition expenses, Wiles said on Tuesday. Trump will be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States on January 20, 2025. "After completing the selection process of his incoming Cabinet, President-elect Trump is entering the next phase of his administration's transition by executing a Memorandum of Understanding with

President Joe Biden's White House," Wiles said. "This engagement allows our intended Cabinet nominees to begin critical preparations, including the deployment of landing teams to every department and agency, and complete the orderly transition of power," she said. According to the MoU, the transition will not utilise taxpayers' funding for costs related to it, which is consistent with Trump's commitment to save taxpayers' hard-earned money. It will not use government buildings or technology provided by the GSA and will operate as a self-sufficient organisation. This organisational autonomy means a streamlined process that guarantees the Trump administration is ready from day one. The transition already has existing security and information protections built in, which means it will not require additional government and bureaucratic oversight, the MoU stated.

"The transition has an existing Ethics Plan for those involved, which will meet the requirements for personnel to seamlessly move into the Trump Administration. Pursuant to the Transition Enhancement Act, that Ethics Plan will be posted to the website of the General Services Administration website. "The Transition landing teams will quickly integrate directly into federal agencies and departments with access to documents and policy sharing. Per the agreement, the Transition will disclose the landing team members to the Biden Administration," it added. "The agreement dictates that the Trump-Vance Transition will utilise private funding, again, providing cost savings to American taxpayers. Donors to the Transition will be disclosed to the public. Consistent with Transition policy already in place, the Transition will not accept foreign donations," the Trump team said.

# Malaysian court drops one of the graft cases against Najib Razak

AP ■ KUALA LUMPUR

A Malaysian court on Wednesday dropped charges against jailed former Prime Minister Najib Razak over criminal breach of trust linked to the multibillion-dollar looting of a state fund. Najib had already been convicted in his first graft case tied to the 1Malaysia Development Berhad state fund, or 1MDB, scandal and began serving time in 2022 after losing his final appeal in his first graft case. But he faces other graft trials including Wednesday's case in which he was jointly charged with ex-treasurer chief Irwan Serigar Abdullah with six counts of misappropriating 6.6 billion ringgit (\$1.5 billion) in public funds. The money was intended as 1MDB's settlement payment to Abu Dhabi's International Petroleum Investment Company. The Kuala Lumpur High Court discharged the pair after ruling

that procedural delays and prosecutors' failure to hand over key documents were unfair to the defence, said Najib's lawyer, Muhammad Farhan. A discharge doesn't mean an acquittal as prosecutors reserve the right to revive charges against them, he said. "The decision today was based on the non-disclosure of critical documents, six years after the initial charges were brought up, which are relevant to our client's defence preparation. Therefore the court correctly exercised its jurisdiction to discharge our client of the charges," Farhan said. Najib set up 1MDB shortly after taking power in 2009. Investigators allege more than \$4.5 billion was stolen from the fund and laundered by his associates to finance Hollywood films and extravagant purchases. The scandal upended Najib's government and he was defeated in the 2018 election.

# ISKCON Bangladesh urges Yunus-led govt to promote 'peaceful coexistence' for Hindus

PTI ■ DHAKA

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) has urged the Bangladesh authorities to promote "peaceful coexistence" for Hindus in the country as it "strongly" denounced the recent arrest of the prominent community leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari. Das, the spokesperson for Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested from Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Monday as he was about to fly to Chattogram to join a rally. He was denied bail and sent to

jail by the Chattogram's Sixth Metropolitan Magistrate court in a sedition case on Tuesday. In a statement on Tuesday, ISKCON Bangladesh General Secretary Charu Chandra Das Brahmachari said, "We express our serious concern and strongly denounce the recent arrest of Chinmoy Krishna Das... We also condemn the subsequent violence and attacks against Sanatanis in various regions of Bangladesh." "We urge the government authorities to promote peaceful coexistence for the Sanatani community," he said. Underlining that Bangladesh is "our birthplace and ancestral

home," the statement urged the interim government of Bangladesh led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus "to ensure justice for all and to allow every citizen to practice their religion freely in accordance with their beliefs and conscience." The statement said Das has been a vocal advocate for the protection of minority groups in Bangladesh and it is essential to uphold his right to free speech and to support his efforts to encourage others to defend this right. "Ensuring justice and fair treatment for him is crucial," it said, adding that Das and the

Sanatam community deserve justice as citizens of Bangladesh and any form of discrimination against them must not be tolerated. Das was also a member of the ISKCON, which recently expelled him. ISKCON Bangladesh demanded that the Bangladesh government must identify and hold accountable those responsible for the attacks on the Sanatani community; protect the civil rights of Das and other Hindu members; and implement immediate and effective measures to maintain peace and harmony among all communities in the country.

# Bill passed in Australia to ban young children from social media

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Australia's House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a bill that would ban children younger than 16 years old from social media, leaving it to the Senate to finalise the world-first law. The major parties backed the bill that would make platforms including TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram liable for fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars (USD 33 million) for systemic failures to prevent young children from holding accounts. The legislation was passed with 102 votes in favour to 13

against. If the bill becomes law this week, the platforms would have one year to work out how to implement the age restrictions before the penalties are enforced. Opposition lawmaker Dan Tehan told Parliament the government had agreed to accept amendments in the Senate that would bolster privacy protections. Platforms would not be allowed to compel users to provide government-issued identity documents including passports or driver's licenses. The platforms also could not demand digital identification through a government system.

"Will it be perfect? No. But is any law perfect? No, it's not. But if it helps, even if it helps in just the smallest of ways, it will make a huge difference to people's lives," Tehan told Parliament. Communications Minister Michelle Rowland said the Senate would debate the bill later Wednesday. The major parties' support all but guarantees the legislation will be passed by the Senate where no party holds a majority of seats. Lawmakers who were not aligned with either the government or the opposition were most critical of the legislation during debate on Tuesday and

Wednesday. Criticisms include that the legislation had been rushed through Parliament without adequate scrutiny, would not work, would create privacy risks for users of all ages and would take away parents' authority to decide what's best for their children. Critics also argue the ban would isolate children, deprive them of positive aspects of social media, drive children to the dark web, make children too young for social media reluctant to report harms they encountered and take away incentives for platforms to make online spaces safer.



Imran's party suspends protest, at least four dead in crackdown

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD
Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party on Wednesday formally suspended the time being its protest here blaming the midnight crackdown by the authorities that left at least four dead and over 50 injured even as the PTI earlier claimed "hundreds" were killed in the violent clashes with security personnel.

adjacent main business district of the capital ending their protest, which his party described as a "massacre" under the "fascist military regime" even as police sources said about 450 protesters were arrested in the crackdown. "In view of the government's brutality and the government's plan to turn the capital into a slaughterhouse for unarmed citizens, (we) announce the suspension of the peaceful protest for the time being," Khan's PTI said in a press release shared on its official X account.

alleged "brutal murder of martyred (party) workers" and order legal action against the prime minister, interior minister and police chiefs of Islamabad and Punjab for "attempt to murder." Earlier on Tuesday evening, PTI supporters battled law enforcing agencies and succeeded in reaching the D-Chowk for a sit-in as part of their protest march that started on Sunday. The supporters' clash with police killed at least six security personnel and injured dozens since Monday night.

Four dead, several missing as Sri Lanka faces massive rains, floods

PTI ■ COLOMBO
Four persons, including two children, have died and several others remained missing while over 2.30 lakh individuals were affected across Sri Lanka due to inclement weather following a massive rain system over the south-west Bay of Bengal.

8:00 am - and high winds experienced in most parts of the island due to the Deep Depression (heavy rain bearing system) over the south-west Bay of Bengal. The Deep Depression is likely to move north-northwest ways closer to the east coast of Sri Lanka and intensify further into a cyclonic storm later in the day, the meteorological department said.

provide food and other essentials to those affected. News portal NewsFirst.lk said six flights scheduled to arrive at the Bandaranaika International Airport (BIA) here were diverted to other airports, including to Indian airports. Sri Lankan Airlines flight from Tokyo, Emirates flights arriving from Male, and IndiGo flight from Chennai, all destined for Colombo, were diverted to the Thiruvananthapuram

International Airport while Air Arabia flight from Sharjah was diverted to Kozhikode International Airport. Sri Lankan Airlines flight from Male and Etihad Airways flight from Abu Dhabi to Colombo, both were diverted to Mattala International Airport, NewsFirst.lk said.

found while efforts were on to trace others continued on Wednesday. The six students, between 12-16 years, and the tractor operator were on their way back from school at Sammanthurai in the Ampara district when the farm tractor trolley they were travelling on was swept by the massive floods following the heavy rains in the area. Five other children and the tractor driver were rescued, police added.

ICC prosecutor requests arrest warrants for head of Myanmar's military regime

AP ■ THE HAGUE
The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor asked judges on Wednesday to issue an arrest warrant for the head of Myanmar's military regime for crimes committed against the country's Rohingya Muslim minority.

From a refugee camp in Bangladesh, the court's top prosecutor, Karim Khan, said in a statement that he intends to request more warrants for Myanmar's leaders soon. "In doing so, we will be demonstrating, together with all of our partners, that the Rohingya have not been forgotten. That they, like all people around the world, are entitled to the protection of the law," the British barrister said.

police to attack Rohingya civilians. Khan was in Bangladesh where he met with members of the displaced Rohingya population. About 1 million of the predominantly Muslim Rohingya live in Bangladesh as refugees from Myanmar, including about 740,000 who fled in 2017. Rohingyas face widespread discrimination in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, with most denied citizenship. Myanmar's government refuses to recognise the Rohingya as one of the country's 135 lawful ethnic minorities, instead calling them Bengalis, with the implication that their native land is in Bangladesh and they are illegally settled in Myanmar.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Sarla Devi, W/o, late Harpal Singh, C-62, Keshav Nagar Mukti Ashram Delhi-39, I have debarred my sons Rohit Kumar, his wife Jagriti Chauhan Vikal Kumar his wife Ianya Sehra my daughter Aruna Kumari from my moveable and immovable properties if anyone contact them, will be their own risk, (Sarla Devi, Not Responsible).

PUBLIC NOTICE
I, Premilata Nanda W/o Late Brij Mohan Nanda R/O 52/52, Kharsa No. 94/76, Block-52, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005, I have lost original documents of my property bearing No. 52/52, Kharsa No. 94/76, Block-52, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005, documents issued by DDA such as allotment letter, perpetual lease deed & possession letter on the way from above said address to DDA office, LR No.2322886/2024 dated 21.11.2024, F.S. Crime Branch, Delhi. Please if you find my documents please take necessary action on this.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that Mr. Anil Kumar claiming to be the owner of Plot No. B-276/2, area measuring 80 sq. yds. out of total area 118 sq. yds. Kharsa No. 20/6, situated at Village Khayala Delhi abadi known as Vishnu Garden, Block S Gali No. 4, New Delhi vide GA. Dt. 11.02.1998 along with ATS executed by Mr. Mohinder Singh and Now Mrs. Gurmeet Kaur is the undisputed owner of the said property.

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Gurmeet Kaur had acquired Ground Floor & First Floor, Built up Property bearing No. S-221/132, area 88 Sq. yds out of total area 118 sq. yds. Kharsa No. 20/6, situated at Village Khayala Delhi abadi known as Vishnu Garden, Block S Gali No. 4, New Delhi vide GA. Dt. 11.02.1998 along with ATS executed by Mr. Mohinder Singh and Now Mrs. Gurmeet Kaur is the undisputed owner of the said property.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
HARBOR WORKS DIVISION NO.1
E-TENDER CALL NO. J
E-TENOR CALL NO. J
E-TENOR CALL NO. J
E-TENOR CALL NO. J

ICC prosecutor requests arrest warrants for head of Myanmar's military regime

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that I, Pragna Maheshwari W/o Mr. Nikhil Srulka am the absolute owner of Flat No. 207 on Ground Floor, Under A Category (EHS), Situated at Pocket-1, Sector-25, Rohini, Delhi-110085 vide DDA's File No. A/353(11356)/2015/DDA/14/R. My original (1) Demand Letter and (2) Site Possession Slip of the said flat have been misplaced. An Information Report of this effect has been lodged in Police Station Crime Branch, Delhi vide LR No.2328345/2024 on 22.11.2024.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform the public at large that my client, Ms. Surbhi Gupta, is the co-owner of the property situated at C-138, Upper Ground Floor, Mansarovar Garden, New Delhi-110015 (hereinafter referred to as "the Property"). It has come to her notice that certain individuals may attempt to deal with, sell, or purchase the said property without her written consent. All members of the public are hereby cautioned against entering into any agreement, transaction, or dealing concerning the above-mentioned property without obtaining prior written approval from Ms. Surbhi Gupta.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that my client Prakash Chand Jain and Usha Devi Jain both are the owners as well as Managing Directors of M/s Silicon Electronic Private Limited are in process to avail the working capital against their entire Ground Floor, built up Property bearing No. A-21, area measuring 248.50 sq.mt., situated in the layout plan of Jhansi Tanager residential Scheme, colony known as Veda, Vihar Phase II, Delhi-110025 pursuant to my claim against Mr. Anil Kumar having acquired the same vide GA. Dt. 11.02.1998 along with ATS executed by Mr. Mohinder Singh and Now Mrs. Gurmeet Kaur is the undisputed owner of the said property.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance however or otherwise is hereby requested to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address. After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Reg. Built-up Property bearing No. C-121, area measuring 100 sq. yds. out of Kharsa No. 757, situated at Village Ghonda Gurgaon, Khadar, in the abadi of Gali No. 2, Jagji Nagar, Khada, Shekhara, Delhi-110053, (Hereinafter referred to as the "Said Property"). Be it known to all that our clients, Mr. Praveen Kumar and Ms. Savitri Devi (hereinafter called the "Purchaser") intend to purchase the said property from Mr. Kishan Pal (hereinafter called the "Attorney-Holder").

Ex-Bangladesh PM Zia acquitted in graft case

PTI ■ DHAKA
Bangladesh High Court on Wednesday acquitted former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in a corruption case in which she was sentenced to seven years in jail by a lower court, according to media reports. Zia, 79, was convicted in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case in 2018 by a Dhaka court. It also sentenced her to seven years imprisonment under the former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government and fined her Tk 1 million. A bench of Justices AKM Asaduzzaman and Syed Enayet Hossain overturned the decision based on an appeal by Zia, the bdnews24.com news portal reported. Two others accused in the case were also acquitted by the court.

reported. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Chairperson was lodged in the Old Dhaka Central Jail on February 8, 2018, after a special court sentenced her to five years in prison in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. On October 30, 2018, the High Court raised her punishment to 10 years. Later, she was convicted in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case. Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, the government temporarily released Zia from jail after 776 days through an executive order, suspending her sentence on March 25, 2020, with conditions that she would stay in her Gulshan house and not leave the country. On August 6, after the regime change in Dhaka, Zia was completely freed by an order of Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin. Zia served as the prime minister of Bangladesh from March 1991 to March 1996, and again from June 2001 to October 2006.

I, Parinaidu Father of No. 15809418X L/Nk Guntreddi Suresh, R/o- 9-38, Vill- Puthikavalasa, Post & Teh- Kurnipam, Dist- Vizianagaram, A.P.- 535524, have changed my name from Parinaidu to Guntreddi Pari Naidu, vide affidavit dated 27/11/2024 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(979)C I, Gainba Bai, Mother of No.8036187A Hav Girase Ajayshing Bharatsing, R/O-MU Kampur, Dist- Dhule, Maharashtra- 425408, declare that in my son's service records, my name is wrongly written as Gainba Bai whereas my correct name is Gyanbai Bharatsing Girase. PD(980)C I, Papayamma, Mother of- No. 15791624W HAV (OFC) Yerram Naidu Butu, R/o-Vijayaramaraju Colony, Vill-Post- Kondavelagada, Teh-Nellimarla, Dist- Vizianagaram, A.P.- 535217, have changed my name from Papayamma to Buti Papayamma, vide affidavit dated 27/11/2024 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(981)C

STORES E-PROCUREMENT
E-procurement Tender Notice No. S/50/Sr.DMM/KIR/PUB/E-Tender /2024-25/05 Dated: 26-11-2024 for Supply of Materials. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS
CHANGE OF NAME
I, Parinaidu Father of No. 15809418X L/Nk Guntreddi Suresh, R/o- 9-38, Vill- Puthikavalasa, Post & Teh- Kurnipam, Dist- Vizianagaram, A.P.- 535524, have changed my name from Parinaidu to Guntreddi Pari Naidu, vide affidavit dated 27/11/2024 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(979)C

TATA POWER DELHI DISTRIBUTION LIMITED
An Internal Consumer Grievance Redressal Cell (ICGRC) has been set up as per DERC (Guidelines for establishment of the Forum and the Ombudsman for redressal of grievances of Electricity Consumers) Regulations, 2024, for registration of Consumers Grievances as per details below:

INTERNAL CONSUMER GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL CELL (ICGRC)
The Internal Consumer Grievance Redressal is headed by Ms. Dipanwita Ray (Deputy General Manager) & Sh. Gaurav Kalra (Senior Executive) The Helpline Number of the ICGRC is 011-66382301

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is hereby notified that the proposal submitted by M/s Sarvotam Industrial Real Estate Pvt. Ltd. to become a co-promoter of the Ansal Megapolis project has been rejected by the Government of Uttar Pradesh (letter no. File No. 8-3099/506/2023 - 3 /i516760/2024 b dated: 12th March 2024) and Bulandshahar Development Authority (letter no. -1717 dated: 15th March 2024).

LOST & FOUND
I, Ramesh Chand S/o Jahali Ram A-2/420 Sultan Puri Delhi-110086 I have lost My Passport, Passport No U0853060, at Peeragarhi Chowk Delhi. Mob. No.-7206478456 PD(982)C

PROVIDING PROJECT MANAGEMENT SERVICES
Tender Notice No.: N\_8\_H\_Q24\_25; dated: 22-11-2024. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Tender No.: N\_8\_H\_Q24\_25; KAVACH\_2024-25. Name of work: Providing Project Management Services for the appointment of Authority Engineer at various construction sites/sections within N.R. Railway for the implementation of KAVACH. Advertised Value : ₹ 44,44,500/- & Date of time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. on 24-12-2024.

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PUBLIC NOTICE
For kind attention of allottees of the real estate project "INDIABULLS ONE 09" developed by M/s Citra Properties Ltd.

Table with 3 columns: Particulars, Previous Bank Accounts, New Bank Accounts. Rows include Bank Name (IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank), IFSC Code (INDB0000006, ICIC0007722), Master Collection Account No. (258097592125, 77770525070), RERA A/c No. (257021992192, 77770525071), Promoter Free Cashflow A/c No. (259222318988, 77770525073).

ORISSA SPONGE IRON & STEEL LIMITED
CIN: L27102OR1979PLC000819
Regd. Office: OSIL House, Gandagarh Meher Marg, Kili Bhubaneswar - 751024 Corporate Office: A-201, First Floor, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-1, New Delhi - 110 020

POSTAL BALLOT NOTICE AND REMOTE E-VOTING INFORMATION
The members of "Orissa Sponge Iron and Steel Limited" (the "Company") are hereby informed that in compliance with the provisions of Section 108 and 110 of the Companies Act, 2013 ("the Act") read with Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, read with General Circular No. 14/2020 dated April 08, 2020, 17/2020 dated April 13, 2020, 22/2020 dated June 15, 2020, 33/2020 dated September 28, 2020, 39/2020 dated December 31, 2020, 10/2021 dated June 23, 2021 and 20/2021 dated October 08, 2021, 3/2022 dated May 05, 2022 and 11/2022 dated December 28, 2022, General Circulars No. 20/2020 dated May 05, 2020, 09/2023 dated September 25, 2023 issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs ("MCA Circulars") and Regulation 44 and 47 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 ("Listing Regulations") and other applicable provisions including any statutory modifications or re-enactment thereof for the time being in force and as amended from time to time, a Postal Ballot Notice ("Notice"), seeking consent of the members on the resolution as set out in the said Notice has been sent electronically to the members whose e-mail address are registered with the Depository Participants/ Registrar & Share Transfer agent i.e. Skyline Financial Service Private Limited ("RTA"), as on Tuesday, November 26, 2024 (Cut-off Date). The dispatch of the said notice through e-mails has been completed on Wednesday, November 27, 2024.

Members holding shares either in physical form or dematerialized form, as on the Cut-off date i.e. Tuesday, November 26, 2024, may cast their vote electronically on the business item set out in the notice of the Postal Ballot dated Monday, November 25, 2024, through electronic voting system (remote e-voting) of National Security Depository Limited ("NSDL"). The members are further informed that:

- a) The special business set out in the notice of the Postal Ballot is to be transacted through voting by electronic means.
b) The remote e-voting begins at 9:00 a.m. (IST) on Friday, November 29, 2024.
c) The remote e-voting ends at 5:00 p.m. (IST) on Saturday, December 28, 2024.
d) The cut-off date for determining the eligibility to vote by electronic means is Tuesday, November 26, 2024.
e) The members may note that (i) the remote e-voting module shall be disabled for voting and the voting by electronic means shall not be allowed after the date and time mentioned under point 'c' above; and (ii) once the vote on resolution cast by a member, the member shall not be allowed to change it subsequently.
f) The manner of remote e-voting for the members holding shares in physical mode or dematerialized mode or who have not registered their email address with the Company/Depository Participant, is provided in the notice of the Postal Ballot as available on the Company's website www.orissaspange.com and NSDL's website www.evoting.nsdl.com.
g) Manner of registering/ updating email address:
i. Members holding shares in physical mode, are requested to get their email id registered by writing to the RTA at compliances@skylinetra.com or to the Company at corporate@orissaspange.com along with signed request letter mentioning the name and address of the Member, scanned copy of the share certificate (front and back), self-attested copy of the PAN card, and self-attested copy of Address proof.
ii. In case shares are held in demat mode, members are requested to register / update their e-mail addresses with the relevant Depository Participant(s)
iii. Alternatively, members may send a request to evoting@nsdl.co.in for procuring user id and password for e-voting by providing above mentioned documents. The members may also refer to the said Notice.
h) In case of any queries, the members may refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for shareholders and e-voting user manual for Shareholders available at the download section of www.evoting.nsdl.com or on toll free no.: 022-48867000 or send a request to Pallavi Mhatre, Senior Manager, NSDL at evoting@nsdl.com. Further, for any grievance regarding e-voting the members may also write to Mr. Suraj Kumar Thakur at email id: corporate@orissaspange.com
i) The Company has appointed Mr. Neeraj Jain, Practising Company Secretary (Membership No. FCS 9599, COP 26163), Managing Partner of M/s. Neeraj Jain & Associates, Company Secretaries, to act as the Scrutinizer for conducting the Postal Ballot including e-voting process in a fair and transparent manner. The Scrutinizer will submit his report to the Chairman / any other Director / person as may be authorized by the Chairman, on or before Monday, December 30, 2024. The results of the voting conducted by Postal Ballot along with Scrutinizer's Report will be made available on the website of the Company at www.orissaspange.com and on the website of NSDL at www.evoting.nsdl.com. Additionally, the results will also be displayed at the Registered Office of the Company.

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, BHOPAL
Water Work Department
Municipal Corporation Rest House, Shyamla Hills, Bhopal Ph. No. 0755-2701669
NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER
Online tenders are being invited for the following works. The bidder can obtain detailed information and tender documents on website http://mptenders.gov.in.
Corrigendum for this NIT shall not be issued separately in newspapers. Corrigendum regarding correction can be seen on the website http://mptenders.gov.in.

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Site: P.O. Palaspanga, Dist. Keonjhar - 758 031, Odisha
E-Mail: corporate@orissaspange.com ; Website: www.orissaspange.com ; Tel: +91 11-43742000



# IT hiring expected to grow by 10-12 per cent in next six months: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

IT services hiring is expected to grow 10-12 per cent in the next six months following rapid evolution of technology which is reshaping industries and economies worldwide, a report said on Wednesday.

Emerging technologies such as Generative AI, Deep Tech, and Quantum Computing emerge are set to create over a million jobs by 2030, the report by business services provider Qness Corp said.

The report revealed that demand for talent across Global Capability Centres (GCCs) and Cybersecurity during the second quarter (July-September) sequentially surged across the country by 71 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively, compared to the previous quarter. This report is based on data from the first two-quarters of FY25 from Qness IT Staffing's operations that analyses the evolving aggregate tech hiring demand and related insights to give leaders a clear understanding of what the talent market looks like.

"India, with its burgeoning tech talent pool and innovative spirit, is at the forefront of this digital revolution. Therefore, IT services



hiring will grow 10-12 per cent in the next 6 months," Qness IT Staffing CEO Kapil Joshi said.

According to the IT Staffing Quarterly Digital Skills Report Q2FY25 report, 79 per cent of the aggregate demand emerged from the top five skill suites, including Development, ERP, Testing, Networking and Data Science. In addition to these functional skill suites, there was a rapid increase in specialized roles and skills related to

Java (30 per cent), cybersecurity (20 per cent), and DevOps (25 per cent) between the first quarter and second quarter of FY25, it said.

Meanwhile, the report also found that in the second quarter of FY25, technology talent demand saw a distinct trend across various IT Services firms leading by 37 per cent, followed by Hi-Tech (11 per cent), Consulting (11 per cent), Manufacturing (9 per cent) and BFSI (8 per cent) firms.

The report revealed that GCCs have emerged as the powerhouse of tech hiring in India during the second quarter of FY25, driven by a robust demand for skills in roles such as AI/ML, Analytics, Cybersecurity, Cloud, and DevOps, which have applications across various sectors.

When it comes to geographies, the report found that the tech landscape in the country is experiencing a boom, with Bengaluru emerging as the undisputed leader. A staggering 62 per cent of hiring requests flow through this region, followed by the West (14 per cent), North (8 per cent), and East (0.4 per cent), said the report.

After Bengaluru, the city-wise landscape in demand sharing is followed by Hyderabad (43.5 per cent) and Pune (10 per cent), it added.

Further, the report revealed that there has been a surge in talent demand across various cities due to the expansion of GCCs in India. These companies focus on hiring skilled professionals from fields like e engineering, IT, finance, and analytics, which has led to firms looking for hiring from the talent pools of tier II and III cities, it added.

# India has taken robust measures to regulate fintech industry: Finance ministry official

PTI ■ INDORE

Concrete steps have been taken to regulate the fintech industry in India as per the Financial Action Task Force's recommendations to tackle money laundering and terrorist financing, a central government official said on Wednesday.

India is among the few countries that are working on FATF recommendations to regulate the fintech industry, said Vivek Agrawal, additional secretary (department of revenue), ministry of finance, during the ongoing 41st plenary meeting of the Eurasian Group in Indore.

FATF leads global action to tackle money laundering, terrorist and proliferation financing.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also issued separate guidelines to regulate payment aggregators and payment gateways, he said.

Agrawal is attending the five-day EAG meeting as the head of the India delegation. He is also the director of the financial intelligence unit (FIU) in India.

He said it is now mandatory for virtual asset service



providers (VASPs) in the country to register themselves with the FIU.

"The development of financial technology is crucial for the growth of digital payment systems, but especially in view of the threats of money laundering and terrorist financing, the development of this technology has its own challenges as misuse of technology can lead to criminals committing cybercrimes and financial frauds anonymously," he said.

The finance ministry official said India's fintech industry is currently leading the world. "We want regulation to be done in such a way that it does not hamper the growth

# Chennai to see around 450 Global Capability Centres by 2030: CBRE



Chennai is estimated to have around 450 Global Capability Centres (GCCs) by 2030 as against 250 centres now because of supply of premium office space and availability of skilled talent, according to CBRE.

Real estate consultant CBRE on Wednesday released a report titled, 'Tamil Nadu: The Epicentre of Capability and Innovation Leadership', highlighting Chennai's rising prominence as a key destination for GCCs and its expanding commercial real estate landscape.

"Over the years, Chennai has solidified its position as a preferred hub for global corporates, which accounts for 11 per cent of India's current GCC talent. The city currently hosts 250+ GCC units, which is expected to reach around 450-460 units by 2030," CBRE said.

Chennai's robust infrastructure, proactive state government policies, and quality office development are aligned to meet the needs of global

corporates, it added.

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE, said, "As the world embraces digital transformation, GCCs have emerged as strategic drivers of India's exponential growth."

Initially attracted by cost advantages, GCCs in India now leverage the country's deep pool of skilled talent and vibrant startup ecosystem, he added.

"Tamil Nadu presents a compelling proposition for businesses seeking to establish or expand their global operations. The state, with its attractive policy incentives, strong talent pool, robust corporate ecosystem, and abundant quality office space, has solidified its position as a preferred destination for these GCCs," Magazine said.

"Chennai is India's fifth-largest office market, with 90+ million square feet of office stock as of September 2024. Total office stock in the city is expected to surpass 100 million square feet by 2026.

Commenting on the report, Angad Bedi, CMD of construction and realty firm BCD Group, said, "India's position as a technology outsourcing hub has been further elevated with the rise of the GCC ecosystem in the country as enterprises aim to tap into the wide talent pool, robust technology developed and its use case globally."

This proliferation of GCCs has been primarily led by Chennai's proactive policies attracting enterprises from across the world along with the availability of a world-class commercial real estate infrastructure, Bedi added.

According to CBRE, the city houses about 250 GCCs that employ 150,000+ professionals, contributing about 11 per cent of India's total GCC talent pool.

Strategic policies like the Tamil Nadu Startup and Innovation Policy 2023 and R&D Policy 2022 enhance its attractiveness, the consultant said.

Chennai is ranked third in GCC leasing activity in India after Bengaluru and Hyderabad during the period from January 2022-September 2024.

The city has witnessed GCC office absorption increasing from 1.4 million square feet in 2022 to 2.3 million square feet in the first nine months of 2024.

US firms accounted for 67 per cent of GCC setups between January 2022 and September 2024.

The consultant projected that GCCs would lease around 3-3.2 million sq ft of office space in 2025 in Chennai.

# Pocket FM losses narrow 21 per cent to ₹165 Crore in FY24, says on track to achieve profitability

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Audio entertainment platform Pocket FM narrowed global losses by 21 per cent to Rs 165 crore in FY24 and said it is inching "closer to profitability".

The company had posted Rs 208 crore losses in the previous financial year.

The company's global revenue came in at Rs 1,052 crore in FY24, registering a multifold jump from Rs 176 crore in FY23, the company said in a statement.

The company has a strong foothold in the US and India and has recently forayed into Europe and Latin America. About 70 per cent of the Bengaluru-headquartered firm's revenue comes from

the US, about 20 per cent from India, and 10 per cent from the rest of the world.

"As Pocket FM inches closer to profitability and strengthens its global presence, its unwavering focus on innovation, disciplined growth, and operational efficiency continues to set new benchmarks in the entertainment industry. The company's vision of creating immersive, scalable, and profitable entertainment experiences remains on a clear upward trajectory," the statement said.

Pocket FM's microtransaction-led subscription revenue increased from Rs 160 crore in FY23 to Rs 935 crore in



FY24, it further said.

Pocket FM has a freemium and microtransaction model. In the microtransaction model, listeners can pay only for the episode/series to which they want to listen. The freemium model allows the consumer to explore and hear a few minutes of any series for free.

The company's advertising revenue grew from Rs 12.5

crore in FY23 to Rs 89.34 crore in FY24.

Offering more than 75,000 audio series, Pocket FM has a global community of over 200 million listeners.

"This growth reflects our relentless efforts to redefine the entertainment landscape. With a sharp focus on leveraging AI, we are not only enhancing operational efficiency but also creating smarter processes that optimise content delivery and monetisation. Our vision remains clear: to establish Pocket FM as a global entertainment platform that consistently pushes the boundaries of content experiences," Pocket FM CFO Anurag Sharma said.

# Airfares have moderated in 2024 relative to 2023, says Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has said airfares have moderated in 2024 compared to 2023 and notably, a decline in air ticket prices was observed in various routes during festival seasons.

Amid concerns in certain quarters that air ticket prices are ruling high, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol told Rajya Sabha that airfares are not subject to regulation by the government and airlines have the flexibility to determine their airfares based on their operational needs while adhering to existing rules.

"The government generally refrains from regulating airfares to maintain market competitiveness, however, it remains vigilant, and the government intervenes to shift capacity from one sector to another to prevent exorbitant pricing to ensure passenger comfort and welfare," he said in a written reply on November 25.

Airfares are dynamic and is a function of demand and supply.

With continuous engagement with airlines & Online Ticketing Agents (OTAs) and keeping a watch on the movement of airfares by the government, Mohol said airfares have moderated in 2024 relative to 2023.

"The airlines have also been sensitised to ensure reasonability while fixing the airfares and to keep passengers' interest in mind," he added.

# Icra revises down volume growth forecast for cement industry to 4-5 per cent for FY25

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rating agency Icra has revised down its volume growth forecast for the cement industry to 4-5 per cent at 445-450 million tonne for the current fiscal on account of sluggish construction activity.

In July this year, Icra had forecast a year-on-year volume growth of 7-8 per cent, expecting a better pick-up in demand in the second half.

However, Icra has now revised its projection "on account of slower-than-expected ramp-up in construction activity across the housing and infrastructure sectors, post the General Elections," a statement said.

Besides, on a YoY basis, the operating profit margins declined by 375 basis points to 12 per cent in Q2 FY2025 and by 192 bps to 14 per cent in H1 FY2025 as prices remained under pressure due to muted demand and oversupply.



In the first half of FY25 all-India cement volumes witnessed a muted rise of 2 per cent YoY to 212 million tonne on account of the slowdown in construction activity in Q1 during the elections, followed by the ample monsoon rainfall in Q2.

"The likely improvement in farm cash flows, backed by healthy monsoons, an upbeat kharif output and elevated replenishment levels of reservoirs supporting the rabi

crop sowings, are expected to boost the rural consumption in H2, which should aid the cement demand for the rural housing segment," it said.

Moreover, sustained healthy demand for urban housing should support the pick-up in cement volumes from the housing segment. The infrastructure segment is also likely to witness greater traction in H2, supported by an increase in government spending on infrastructure projects.

"The government gross capex spend in H1 FY2025 remained subdued at Rs 4 lakh crore, against the revised Budget Estimate of Rs 11.1 lakh crore for the full year FY2025. The substantial headroom for the GoI's capital spending in H2 FY2025 to meet the FY2025 revised BE, is likely to provide a fillip to construction activity and aid in supporting the allied input sectors like cement," it said.

Besides volume, the cement industry is also facing a decline in actual realisation due to lower prices prevalent in the sector.

"The cement prices remained under pressure, declining by 10 per cent YoY to Rs 330 per bag in H1 FY2025 due to muted demand and oversupply in the market. While the lower sales realisations were partially offset by moderation in costs of coal and pet coke, which eased by 38 per cent and 13 per cent YoY in H1 FY2025, respectively," it said.

Icra estimates the cement industry's capacity addition to be at 70-75 million tonne during FY25-26, of which 33-37 million MTPA is expected to be clinker capacity and remaining grinding capacity.

"Around 33-35 million MT capacity is likely to be added in FY2025 (FY2024: 32 million MT), while 37-39 million MT addition is expected in FY2026," it said.

The eastern and southern regions are projected to lead the expansion during FY2025-FY2026 with a combined addition of 38-40 million MT capacity, equally split between the two regions.

Icra estimated overcapacity utilisation to remain moderate at 71 per cent in FY25 on an expanded base, improving from 70 per cent in FY24.

According to the Cement Manufacturers' Association (CMA), the apex body of large cement plants in India, India's installed cement capacity is 690 MT.

# India-Russia trade hits USD 66bn in 2024; target of USD 100bn by 2030 on track: Russian envoy

PTI ■ KOLKATA

A senior Russian diplomat on Wednesday said bilateral trade between the two countries has reached a record USD 66 billion in 2024, marking a fivefold increase over the past five years, with a 9 per cent rise in the first eight months of this year.

The envoy said Russia and India are on track to achieve the ambitious USD 100 billion trade target by 2030, bolstered by expanding collaborations and diversified trade opportunities.

"The recent dialogues between leaders of both countries on the possibilities of diversifying the trade basket and increasing the volume of investments in multiple sectors make the target of USD 100 billion by 2030 an achievable one," said Maxim V. Kozlov, Russian Consul General in Kolkata, at an interactive session with members of the Bharat Chamber of Commerce (BCC).

"India and Russia are more than strategic partners; we are



all-weather friends. Our bond is built on mutual trust and shared interests, making the growth of our economic ties both natural and enduring," Kozlov added.

Key sectors identified for enhanced cooperation include railways, pharmaceuticals, information technology, aviation, and cybersecurity.

Officials also highlighted emerging opportunities for Indian businesses in Russia, particularly after the withdrawal of Western brands following the Ukraine conflict.

BCC, in a statement, said Kozlov also emphasised the need to deepen collaboration in critical areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI),

robotics, urban development, and critical metals like lithium, cobalt, and nickel, which are essential for next-generation industries.

"The goal is to move beyond raw material trade and emerge as global leaders in technology-driven sectors," he added.

BCC senior vice-president Naresh Pachisia requested Kozlov to initiate the setting up of a trade desk at the Russian Federation in Kolkata, given the emerging trade and investment developments.

"This will play a pivotal role in facilitating business networks between Indian businesses and their Russian counterparts," he added.



# Gavaskar credits Kohli's stance adjustment for success in Perth

PTI ■ PERTH

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar feels a subtle adjustment to his batting stance in the second innings of the Perth Test helped Virat Kohli neutralise the Australian attack and rediscover his vintage form.

Kohli arrived in Australia after a lean run of form across formats in recent months. His struggles against spin on turning tracks raised doubts about his spot in the team.

However, he silenced his detractors by scoring his 30th Test ton in the first Test at Perth. It was his first hundred after the 121 against the West Indies at Port of Spain in July 2023.

"His body was completely relaxed when he came into bat in the second innings. In the first innings, because of the fact that India had lost two wickets early, he would have also been under pressure," Gavaskar said on Star Sports. "In that second innings, you could sense apart from chang-

ing that stance, I think he also got his legs, which were maybe just a little bit wider at the start. Just a little bit, maybe I'm thinking too much, but that little thing might have given him that height he wanted. Well, in Australia, on the bouncer pitches, you need that edge.

"I liked that mid-wicket boundary that he hit off Hazlewood. That, to me, was not the easiest of shots. A straight drive is a little easier because your stance is like that, but just to open up a little bit and play that - that was all magic."

Former Australian cricketer Matthew Hayden also commented on Kohli's stance



adjustments in the second innings, saying the move to be more upright on a pitch where variable bounce was present

worked for Kohli. "It's a very good point because the reverse can be said also to someone touring

to India and having to lower their stance. I know I certainly did that. But being able to be a little more upright

means that your head position has to stay on top of the bounce so that it starts to work in your favour.

"I said right from the start that I actually liked his move, batting in more line with the ball. I thought that was a good strategy. I think he loves to play like that, and we saw some classic cases where he just eased the ball through mid-wicket. But you can't do that from outside off stump, so getting into the line, I thought, was important."

"The other little adjustment that you mentioned, being a little more upright, so he could stay on top of the bounce, was also really important. If you're getting closer to the ball like he was -- another thing, I think, was probably playing the ball later. "When he's not in his best form, he goes quite hard, feeling for the ball. He wants to feel the ball on the bat, particularly on the front foot. But he just seemed to give himself a little more time and be a little softer."

Gavaskar compared Kohli's recent struggles to the time when tennis legends like Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal

and Novak Djokovic went without a title.

"I said in commentary that Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic, and Rafa Nadal, they are title winners. If they lose in the semi-finals, people say, 'Oh, they're not in form.' Anybody else getting into the semi-finals, you would say, 'Oh, what a wonderful performance.'"

"Similarly, with Virat Kohli, because everybody is so used to him scoring so many hundreds quite regularly, when he doesn't score 100, even if he's getting 70-80 -- which a lot of guys will be very happy to get -- people say, 'Look, he's not scoring runs.' And that is the reason why there was that feeling. "But then again, Indian fans, they're greedy fans. They're not going to be happy with their idol scoring only 60-70s. They want their icons, their idols, to score hundreds, and that is the reason there was this little talk about, 'Oh, he hasn't got a hundred since July 2023.' July 2023 is just about a year ago," he added.

## Syed Modi International: Sindhu, Lakshya storm into second round

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Top seeds PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen advanced to the second round of the women's and men's singles respectively at the Syed Modi International Super 300 badminton tournament after registering straight-game victories here on Wednesday.

Two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu defeated rising shuttler Anmol Kharb 21-17, 21-15, while Lakshya, 2021 world championships bronze medallist, powered past Malaysian qualifier Sholeh Aidil 21-12, 21-12 in another match.

Sindhu, who is returning to the tournament after a two-year hiatus, will face compatriot Ira Sharma, who triumphed over Deepshikha Singh 21-13, 21-19 in her opening match. "I'm happy to be back here after two years. I couldn't play last year because of injury, but it feels great to be playing on home soil again," Sindhu said after her win.

"I was playing against Anmol for the first time, and she did well. We've played together in the Asian Team Championships before, so I was confident. It was my first match, and I made some mistakes, but overall I'm happy



with my performance." Lakshya will next face either Ravi or Israel's Daniil Dubovenko.

"It's always great to play in front of the home crowd. I've competed here in the past, but right now, I'm focusing on my next match. My goal is to do well in the BWF tournaments and at the World Championships," said Lakshya, the 2022 Commonwealth Games champion.

In the men's singles, third seed Kiran George, eighth seed Ayush Shetty, and Meiraba Luwang Maisnam also progressed to the second round.

In the women's singles, second seed Malvika Bansod,

fifth seed Anupama Upadhyaya, Isharani Baruah, Devika Sihag, Unnati Hooda, Tasnim Mir and Shriyanshi Valishetty all advanced to the next stage.

Malvika defeated Wiktorija Dabczynska 21-16, 21-7, while Anupama overcame Azerbaijan's Keisha Fatimah Azzahra 19-21, 22-20, 21-15. Hooda, meanwhile, beat Thailand's Thamonwan Nithiittikrai 21-12, 21-16.

In the men's singles, Kiran George triumphed over Alap Mishra 21-12, 23-21; Ayush Shetty outlasted Raghu Mariswamy 21-18, 15-21, 21-16; and Meiraba Luwang Maisnam defeated Thailand's Saran Jamsri 14-21, 21-19, 21-10.

## Cricket is religion in India but not roadblock for other sports: Coe

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World Athletics boss Sebastian Coe is quite aware that cricket is nothing short of "religion" in India but he feels it shouldn't be viewed as a "roadblock" for other sports, which can challenge its dominance by producing trailblazers like javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra to capture the public imagination.

Coe, one of the candidates for next year's International Olympic Committee (IOC) presidential elections, has been in the country for the past two days, meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya among others to discuss the growth potential of Indian sports.

Expressing faith in the country's potential to become a powerhouse, the four-time Olympic medal-winning former middle distance runner said, "When you have an Indian athlete winning Olympic titles and world championships, then you are in good shape."

"When you have athletes of the calibre and high profile of Neeraj, then you can actually mount a very good challenge to other sports. And look, we know the national religion is cricket," he stated in a telephonic interview with PTI on Wednesday.

"It's really important that India have athletes that capture the



imagination of the public, ultimately the broadcasters. And Neeraj does both," added Coe, the 68-year-old Coe said.

"You have to live with what you have to live with. And you can't just sit there saying, well, India, the cricket or football or rugby or wherever these sports are really strong. You sort of give up, you don't."

"You have to be more innovative, more creative. The sporting landscape is very competitive. Cricket is a very dominant sport in India. I watch it all the time," said the long-time administrator, whose grandfather was an Indian (hotlier Sardari Lal Malhotra).

"Dialogue with PM a private conversation" India's Olympic performance at this year's Paris Games was underwhelming for a billion-strong country with six medals, none of them being gold.

track and field teams in the UK that we've had for many years,"

the 68-year-old Coe said. "You have to live with what you have to live with. And you can't just sit there saying, well, India, the cricket or football or rugby or wherever these sports are really strong. You sort of give up, you don't."

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"Dialogue with PM a private conversation" India's Olympic performance at this year's Paris Games was underwhelming for a billion-strong country with six medals, none of them being gold.

The nation is now aiming to host the quadrennial showpiece in 2036 and has submitted a letter of intent to the IOC. The bid is being backed by PM Modi, whom Coe met on Monday.

"I'm not going to divulge a private conversation. But we talked about the importance of big events in India. He was very clear that big events promote not just better competition, but have a broader societal impact, particularly on the health, mental and physical of young people" Coe said.

"And he (PM) is obviously very keen for more events to come to India and was particularly encouraging of the Indian athletics federation (AFI) to bid for more of our events," he added.

With World Athletics Ultimate Championship (WAUC) set to outshine all global athletics events in terms of star cast and record-setting prize money of USD 10 million starting 2026, Coe said India could joint the bidding process. Budapest has been chosen as the venue for the inaugural event.

"I sincerely hope so (India can aspire to host the event). But look, we have a bidding process, which we actively encourage all our federations that love athletics and have the capacity to deliver those events, to want to bid for them."

important market for us," he said.

Coe said the idea of giving USD 50,000 to gold-winning track and field athletes at the Paris Olympics was driven by a desire to provide them financial security.

"Look, there was nothing new in what we announced. And it's certainly been my philosophy for the best part of 45-50 years. I've always believed that the welfare of the athletes isn't just about mental and physical."

"It's also about giving them some financial security. So look, the decision we made was a decision that is in line with our prize money policies in the sport. I have to say that it's been welcomed by our athletes."

"Protecting women's sport is non-negotiable" The participation of transgender athletes in women's sports events has become an increasingly contentious issue with the IOC drawing flak for allowing this to happen. WA, under Coe, has maintained a strictly-women stance, a decision criticised by trans-rights advocates.

"You know my position. It's very clear. It's very much in the public domain...For me, protecting the female category, protecting women's sport is non-negotiable."

"And at World Athletics, we have very clear cut policies that make that declaration of intent very clear."

## Bayern Munich fans protest against PSG president Al-Khelaifi

AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich fans protested against Paris Saint-Germain president Nasser Al-Khelaifi during the teams' Champions League match.

The supporters in Bayern's stadium's Südkurve held up several banners making clear their opposition to the Qatari businessman during the first half of Bayern's 1-0 win.

One banner showed Al-Khelaifi's face with a line over it, another accused him of being "plutocratic" with an expletive, and more banners read: "Minister, club owner, TV rights holder, UEFA ExCo member & ECA chairman all in one?"

The 51-year-old Al-Khelaifi is



unpopular among the Bayern fans for his influence on European soccer as chairman of the European Club Association, Qatar Sports Investments — the owner of PSG — and the Qatari state-owned beIN media group. He also joined UEFA's executive committee in 2019.

Al-Khelaifi has long drawn scrutiny for apparent conflicts of interest because of his various roles. The ECA has a big influence on shaping the Champions League's playing format and commercial strategy, while beIN is one of the competition's major broadcast partners.

In 2022, UEFA left Al-Khelaifi unpunished despite finding PSG guilty of misconduct for confrontations with match officials after losing in the Champions League. There were heated scenes involving Al-Khelaifi and then-PSG sporting director Leonardo after a defeat to Real Madrid.

UEFA sanctioned Leonardo but did not cite Al-Khelaifi in its disciplinary statement, nor did it say why.

Al-Khelaifi, a former tennis professional, is a longtime friend of Qatar's ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, an International Olympic Committee member who is influential in global sports.

Bayern fans had long protest-

ed against their own club's sponsorship deals with Qatar, which was accused of human rights abuses before it hosted the 2022 World Cup. The fans eventually got their way last year when Bayern's long-running sponsorship deal with Qatar Airways was not renewed.

The Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper reported at the time that the decision came from Qatar. Sheikh Tamim was reportedly unhappy with the Bayern fans' constant criticism and the club's failure to distance itself from their protests.

Kim Min-jae's first-half header was enough for Bayern's victory, its seventh straight without conceding across all competitions.

## I want to prolong England career: Stokes' reason for skipping IPL mega auction

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

England Test captain Ben Stokes said he opted out of the recent IPL mega auction to prolong his international career, and focus on some important assignments such as the Ashes.

The newly-framed IPL rule disallow a player to enter the mini auction if he was not registered for the mega auction. A total of 52 English players went under the hammer in the auction held at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia recently.

"There's no hiding behind the fact that I'm at the back-end of my career. It's about looking at what I've got ahead and making the decision that is right for



me to be able to prolong my career as long as possible," Stokes told BBC ahead of England's first Test against New Zealand, starting here on Thursday.

"There is just so much cricket. I want to be wearing this England shirt for as long as I can," he added.

In the past, Stokes has played for Chennai Super Kings, Rajasthan Royals and Rising Pune Supergiant, for whom he was the most valuable player in 2017.

Stokes was bought by the erstwhile Pune outfit for Rs 14.5 crore ahead of IPL 2027. "It is about prioritising games and when I do play - obviously I'm in South Africa this year - so it's about looking at what I've got ahead," he said.

"Looking after my body and looking after myself as much as I can is key to that," said the 32-year-old.

The Durham man will head to South Africa for a series at the end of England's trip to New Zealand before starting preparations for next year's Ashes.

## Phillip Hughes remembered on 10th death anniversary as Abbott gets teary-eyed

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Sean Abbott was seen wiping away tears as family and friends paid tribute to the late Australian cricketer Phillip Hughes on Wednesday to mark the 10-year anniversary of his tragic death after being struck on the neck while batting.

Abbott bowled the fatal delivery that struck Hughes during a Sheffield Shield match between New South Wales and South Australia in 2014 at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

NBW players consoled Abbott as they stood for an emotional tribute, including observing a minute's silence, before the start of play on day four of their Sheffield Shield match against Tasmania at the SCG.

25 ODIs and one T20I for Australia, lost his life three days before his 26th birthday. Players in the Sheffield Shield have been wearing black armbands in matches since Saturday as a tribute to Hughes.

"Today marks the 10-year anniversary of the passing of our treasured son and brother, Phillip Joel Hughes," the family said in its message.

"Phillip was a loving, humorous and an infectious person to be around."

According to reports in local media, Abbott was consulted in advance about whether he would be comfortable with a match being scheduled on the anniversary of one of the most saddest moments in Australian sports.

The family further said, "He always aimed to make those



around him smile and enjoy the little things in life, where his beautiful smile would come to life. He shined bright even in the tough times, which is a testament to who he was as a person, and we loved everything about him.

"He was the light of our lives. Phillip had a profound love for his family and lived his life with respect to everyone around him.

Cricket Australia had planned in advance a series of initiatives to mark the 10th anniversary of Hughes' death including a tribute before the start of the second Test between India and Australia at the Adelaide Oval scheduled from December 6-10.

played on the toughest pitches around the globe, alongside the toughest of cricketers on the world stage, but never forgot where he came from and who helped along the way," the family said in the message.

"He was a unique individual that took risky and adventurous strides to conquer the dreams he set for himself to become test baggy green number 408.

"He played cricket for all the right reasons and had the ability to take it all in his stride. He loved being a part of a team and representing Australia for the game he loved so deeply."

Cricket Australia, which has produced a special documentary on him, will broadcast it ahead of the second Test between India and Australia, as part of a two-

week commemoration programme. Batting on 63, Hughes collapsed before receiving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and was subsequently taken to Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital, where he underwent surgery and was placed in an induced coma.



# Lewandowski joins Ronaldo and Messi in Champions League 100-goal club

AP ■ ROME

Robert Lewandowski joined Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi as the only players in Champions League history with 100 or more goals. But Erling Haaland is on a faster pace than anyone by boosting his total to 46 goals at age 24 on Tuesday. Still, Haaland's brace wasn't enough for Manchester City in a 3-3 draw with Feyenoord that extended the Premier League champion's winless streak to six matches. Lewandowski's early penalty kick started Barcelona off to a 3-0 win over previously unbeaten Brest to move into second place in the new single-league format. The Poland striker added goal No. 101 in second-half stoppage time. Ronaldo leads the all-time scoring list with 140 goals and Messi is next with 129. But neither Ronaldo nor Messi play in the Champions League anymore following moves to Saudi Arabia and the United States, respectively. "It's a nice number,"

Lewandowski said. "In the past I didn't think I could score more than 100 goals in the Champions League. I'm in good company alongside Cristiano and Messi." The 36-year-old Lewandowski required 125 matches to reach the century mark, two more than Messi (123) and 12 fewer than Ronaldo (137). Barcelona also got a second-half score from Dani Olmo. The top eight finishers in the standings advance directly to the round of 16 in March. Teams ranked ninth to 24th go into a knockout playoffs round in February, while the bottom 12 teams are eliminated. Haaland converted a first-half penalty to eclipse Messi as the youngest player to reach 45 goals and then scored City's third after the break to raise his total to 46 goals in 44 games. Ilkay Gundogan had City's second. But then Feyenoord struck back with goals from Anis



Hadj Moussa, Santiago Gimenez and David Hancko. Inter Milan beat Leipzig 1-0 with an own goal to move atop the standings with 13 points, one more than

Barcelona and Liverpool, which faces Real Madrid on Wednesday. The Serie A champion is the only club that hasn't conceded a goal. Bayern Munich beat Paris

Saint-Germain 1-0 — the same score from the 2020 final between the two teams. PSG ended with 10 men and remained in the elimination zone. The French powerhouse

has struggled in Europe after Kylian Mbappe's move to Real Madrid. Kim Min-jae's first-half header was enough for Bayern, especially after

Ousmane Dembelé was sent off in the 56th with his second yellow. Atalanta moved within two points of the lead with a 6-1 win at Young Boys. Charles De Ketelaere scored two and assisted on three other goals for Atalanta. Also, Arsenal kept red-hot striker Viktor Gyokeres quiet in a 5-1 win over Sporting Lisbon; and Germany star Florian Wirtz scored two goals and was involved in two more as Bayer Leverkusen boosted its chances of finishing in the top eight with a 5-0 rout of Salzburg. AC Milan followed up its win at Real Madrid with a 3-2 victory at last-place Slovan Bratislava in an early match. Christian Pulisic put the seven-time champion ahead midway through the first half by finishing off a counterattack. Then Rafael Leao restored the Rossoneri's advantage after Tigran Barseghyan had equalized for Bratislava and Tammy Abraham quickly

added another. Nino Marcelli scored with a long-range strike in the 88th for Bratislava, which ended with 10 men. Bratislava has lost all five of its matches. Argentina World Cup winner Julian Alvarez scored twice and Atletico Madrid routed Sparta Prague 6-0 in the other early game. Alvarez scored with a free kick 15 minutes in and Marcos Llorente added a long-range strike before the break. Alvarez finished off a counterattack early in the second half after being set up by substitute Antoine Griezmann, who then marked his 100th Champions League game by getting on the scoresheet himself. Angel Correa added a late brace for Atletico, which earned its biggest away win in Europe. Atletico beat Paris Saint-Germain in the previous round and extended its winning streak across all competitions to six matches.

## Aus selectors reject call to include out-of-form batters in PM's XI

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian selectors have decided against sending any out-of-form national team batters to play for the Prime Minister's XI against India in Canberra, following the hammering in the Perth Test. Hosts Australia were handed a 295-run bashing by India in the series opener of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy earlier this week and following the disappointing performance, the pressure is intensifying on the top order ahead of the second Test against India in Adelaide on December 6. The likes of Marnus Labuschagne (2, 3) and Steve Smith (0, 17) struggled against India and many, including former captain Michael Clarke, feel the duo, along with reserve batter Josh Inglis, could benefit from the two-day pink-ball warm-up game. However, the Australian think tank has denied thinking on those lines. "This was partly because time at home was considered important for the players, and also because the Australian camp do not want to give the Indian brains trust another look at any of their Test batters before the five-match series resumes,"



according to a report in the 'Sydney Morning Herald'. Head coach Andrew McDonald has also insisted that sending any player for the match in 'Canberra hasn't crossed their minds'. "No, that hasn't crossed our minds. We feel that with the long summer ahead, the prep we've got in place — albeit we've extended that by a day in Adelaide — we'll be well prepared, as we were leading into the first Test," McDonald said.

"No, we were thinking about Test one. You always look to get a positive start to the summer — it's not like you're focusing on Test match five in terms of where you want to be then. Banking wins is critical, and we've got our work cut out as to how we turn that around. "Match one was our primary focus, and you saw that in the way that we prepared players. We gave up on some international games for certain players, we went through

Shield, so we felt the preparation this summer was probably more extensive than previous summers. "We were comfortable, and the preparation is not an excuse for the performance." The PM's XI usually comprises youngsters. The two-day pink-ball fixture will feature the likes of batters Sam Konstas and Matt Renshaw and pacer Scott Boland. "The PM's XI match is a great opportunity for up-and-coming players to play alongside

some older heads against a super-strong Indian side," Albanese said. "I'm confident Jack Edwards' PM's XI team will show how to best play these incredibly impressive Indian bowlers, and I'm equally confident that Pat Cummins' Australian team will turn things around in Adelaide," he added. Inglis and Labuschagne are set to join the team in Adelaide when they reconvene on Monday, but it's likely that the latter will keep his place in the top six, thanks to his strong track record in day night Tests. "The key for us is getting back to the way we want to play and the way we know that we can play. We're not going to sit there and say, 'We lost by X amount of runs, but what does that mean for the next Test match?'" McDonald said. "It's about how we want to play, the plans we want to put in place, the execution in and around that, and the personnel to do that. We've got a bit of work to do in terms of coming out of this game, and we'll work through that over the next week. "I think the gap has come at a good stage — it gives us a bit of space. The boys will go home, get into a bit of work back home, and we'll reconvene next Monday," he added.

## West Indies end 2-year losing streak at home with 201-run win over Bangladesh

AP ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Azharri Joseph took two wickets in the first session on the fifth day as West Indies wrapped up a 201-run win over Bangladesh in Antigua in the first match of the two-Test series. Bangladesh lasted less than seven overs on Tuesday as the West Indies sealed their first home Test win in over two years. Joseph (2-32) dismissed Hasan Mahmud (0), before ending Jaker Ali's stand on 31. That left Bangladesh on 129-9, and Joseph then sent a fierce bouncer into the shoulder of Shoriful Islam. Shoriful attempted to continue, but lasted just eight balls before he was forced to retire hurt, ensuring Bangladesh's innings came to an end and giving the home side victory. It was the first time the West Indies Indies have won a test at home since they beat Bangladesh in June 2022, ending a four-match winless streak. The West Indies scored 450-9 declared in their first innings and 152 in the second.



ond. Bangladesh had 269-9 declared in its first innings and finished with 132. Justin Greaves was named player of the match for his test-defining 115 not out, his maiden test century. His innings helped the Caribbean team recover from 253 for six in the first innings. "Helping the team succeed and winning a test match is something I take pride in," Greaves said. "I'm happy with my performance, but winning the

match means even more to me." West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite said Greaves' rescue mission changed the course of the contest. "I think the way we batted in the first innings to post 450 runs was brilliant, especially considering day one in Antigua typically favours fast bowlers," he said. "Our approach, with key half-centuries and Justin's century, put us in a position to dominate the test match.

## Beating top players reinforces belief that we can be world No. 1: Treesa

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Buoyed by the World Tour Finals qualification, Indian women's doubles player Treesa Jolly now dreams of bagging a major title, and said victories over top players have reinforced her belief of achieving the world No. 1 ranking along with Gayatri Gopichand. Treesa and Gayatri, ranked 16th in the world, are the only Indians set to compete in the prestigious event in China next month. "One of our dreams is to win the Super 500, 750 BWF World Tour events. We've been waiting for that title for a long time, and I believe it will happen," Treesa told PTI. In 2022 and 2023, Treesa and Gayatri reached the semifinals of the All England Championships, a Super 1000 event, and they also made it to the semifinals of the



Singapore Open Super 750 this year. "We're taking it one step at a time. Right now, our focus is on the Syed Modi tournament. After that, we'll shift our focus to the World Tour Finals," said Treesa. The Indians were runners-up in the Syed Modi tournament in 2022, and in the same year they also clinched the Odisha Open. "Ultimately, our goal is to improve our ranking and move

into the top 10, or even the top 5. Currently, we're ranked 16th, but the priority is to perform well in every match and every tournament." The Commonwealth Games bronze medalists have delivered some big wins, including a crucial victory over the 2022 All England champions Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida of Japan in the semifinals of the Badminton Asia Team

Championships, helping India grab the title. "Whenever we lose a match, we analyse what went wrong, plan our sessions carefully, and stay focused on the upcoming match. We always give 100% effort," Treesa explained. "Playing against top-ranked players helps us understand how to approach those kinds of matches. We learn a lot, and I truly believe there's a lot to gain from those experiences. "This year, we managed to beat players ranked No. 2 and No. 6

in the world, which has been a huge confidence booster. Beating top-ranked players reinforces our belief that we can reach the top, even No. 1, with right practice and dedication. Every time we win against such players, our confidence grows stronger." The pair, who started playing together after the Covid-19 pandemic, credits back-to-back semifinal finishes for building self-belief. "We just paired up and started playing without overthinking it. Gradually, we

started getting results, and before we knew it, we were at the All England," said Treesa, who hails from Cherupuzha in Kerala. "That first All England was incredible. We were so excited — it was surreal to play in a tournament we had only seen on TV. We didn't focus on the result, just played our game, and somehow, we made it to the semifinals.

## Uncapped Beau Webster to be added to Australia squad as cover for Marsh

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Uncapped all-rounder Beau Webster is set to be drafted into the Australia squad for the second Test against India as a cover for Mitchell Marsh who battled with niggles in the series opener at Perth. Fox Cricket reported that Webster has been added to the squad for the day-night Test at Adelaide, beginning December 6. "(Marsh) He has been battling a couple of little niggles since the UK tour," Australian captain Pat Cummins said following the 295-run loss to India.

## Sable must go for high-altitude training, can train with me if he wants: Ezekiel Kemboi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

One of the greatest steeplechase runners of all time, Ezekiel Kemboi, has invited Avinash Sable for sessions with him at his base and advised the Indian star to undergo high-altitude training in places such as Kenya and Ethiopia to build endurance. Kemboi has two Olympic medals and four World Championship titles under his belt. Sable finished 11th in the Men's 3000m steeplechase final of the Paris Olympics. "I think the Indian guy Sable, the steeplechaser, the boy is still young. He still has a lot of time. What I want him to do is to have some motivation for him-

self. To have a vision, to have a target. To target what comes in a year, like world championship, Olympics," Kemboi said. "I also want to request if it could be possible for him to go to Africa... Kenya or in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for some intense training which will focus on building up his endurance so that he gets more power while running." Kemboi told PTI Videos in an exclusive interview on the sidelines of Ekamra Sports Literature festival here. The legendary athlete is optimistic about Sable's future but emphasised that the Indian should focus on strategic training. "Just go for high-altitude train-

ing... Because we have the best altitude for training in the regions of Kenya and Ethiopia for his body system to adapt to endurance. Because speed is just something easy to achieve, what matters most in athletics is endurance," he said. He also requested Sable and other athletes to come to Kenya and train under him. "My request to the Indian athletes, they are welcome in Kenya anytime especially the steeplechase guy Sable (Avinash), he can come to Kenya. I will offer him my service for free, free accommodation, and good training. I am always available for anyone who wants my assistance," said Kemboi.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,**  
**MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, KANDHAMAL.**  
 Telephone/Fax No-06842-253634  
 E-Mail: [kandipd@odisha.gov.in](mailto:kandipd@odisha.gov.in)

**BID IDENTIFICATION NO-11/2024-25/ 2842 Dt- 22 / 11 / 2024**

The Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Kandhamal on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage rate bids in double cover system only in "ON LINE" mode for the Construction of works detailed in the table from "B" Class Contractors only registered with the State Government and contractors of equivalent Grade/Class registered with Central Government /M.E.S/ Railways for execution of civil works on production of definite proof from the appropriate authority. The bidders may submit bids for any or all the following works.

1. Name of the works	Repair, Renovation & Restoration of M.I. Projects for the year 2024-25.
2. Total No. of works.	02 (two) Nos.
3. Estimated Cost.	Rs. 83.22 lakh Approximately
4. Class of Contractor.	"B" Class only
5. Period of completion.	180 (One Hundred eighty) days.
6. Date & time of Availability of Bid Document in the Portal for online bidding.	28/11/2024 at 10 A.M. to 07/12/2024 up to 5.30 P.M.
7. Last date/Time for receipt of Bid only in ONLINE.	07/12/2024 up to 5.30 P.M.
8. Date/Time of Opening of Technical Bid.	09/12/2024 at 11.00 A.M. at Office of the Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Kandhamal.
9. Date/Time of Opening of Financial Bid	13/12/2024 at 11.00 A.M. at Office of the Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Kandhamal.
10. Name & Address of the Officer Inviting the Bid.	Office of the Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Kandhamal.
11. Further details can be seen from the "e" Procurement Portal ( <a href="http://tendersodisha.gov.in">http://tendersodisha.gov.in</a> )	(Dr. Manarajan Haddoh) Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Kandhamal

OIPR-32487/11/0009/2425

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,**  
**MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION,**  
**JHARSUGUDA.** E-mail: [eamiharsuguda@gmail.com](mailto:eamiharsuguda@gmail.com)  
 Office Order No. 2502 /Dated, 25.11.2024  
 Due to unavoidable circumstances the tender vide Bid Reference No. SEMIDJSJ 04/2024-25 is hereby cancelled.

OIPR-3229/11/0005/2425

Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Jharsuguda

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER**  
**MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, SONEPUR,** E-mail: [eamisnp@yahoo.com](mailto:eamisnp@yahoo.com)  
 e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE  
**1st Corrigendum to BID IDENTIFICATION NO:SNPMI/03/2024-25.**  
 No- 1299 Date- 25.11.2024

The tender invited vide Bid Identification No-SNPMI/03/2024-25 on dated 21.11.2024 of SI No-3 (Improvement To Ghikundi MIP in Biramaharajpur Block of Subarnapur District), the Name of Block will be treated as Ullunda in stead of Biramaharajpur.

OIPR-3229/11/0009/2425

Superintending Engineer M.I. Division, Sonapur

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER**  
**CHHELIGADA HEADWORKS DIVISION, AT/PO: MAHENDRAGADA,**  
**VIA: CHANDRAGIRI, DIST: GAJAPATI. PIN - 761017.**  
 e-mail: [eamichheligada@gmail.com](mailto:eamichheligada@gmail.com)

**e-Procurement Notice No. SE-CHWD-02/2024-25**

Bid document consisting of work, estimated cost, cost of tender paper, EMD., time of completion, class of contractor, the set of terms and condition of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in e-procurement portal <http://tenderodisha.gov.in>

1. Type of the work	:- Building works
2. No. of works.	:- 10
3. Class of contractor	:- 'D', 'C' & 'B' Class contractor
4. Bid Identification No.	:- e-CHWD-04/2024-25 to e-CHWD-13/2024-25
5. Estimated cost	:- Rs. 6.46 lakhs to Rs.36.66 lakhs.
6. Period of completion	:- 3 (three ) to 6 (six) calendar months
7. Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal	:- 27.11.2024 to 06.12.2024 upto 5.00 PM
8. Last date / time for receipt of bids in the portal.	:- 06.12. 2024 upto 5.00 PM
9. Date of opening of bid	:- 07.12. 2024 at 11.30 AM., in the e-procurement cell, Office of the Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, RBVN Basin, Berhampur, Dist: Ganjam.
10. Name of the office inviting bid	:- Superintending Engineer, Chheligada Head Works Division, Mahendragada, Dist: Gajapati.

**N.B:-**  
 1) Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can be seen in the said website.  
 2) Further details can be seen from Government website: <http://tenderodisha.gov.in>

OIPR-32109/11/0004/2425

Superintending Engineer, Chheligada Head Works Division, Mahendragada (Gajapati)