



### BRIEF



The flooded Thoothukudi - Tiruchendur highway following heavy downpour, Monday.

### Reconstitute

**New Delhi:** The government on Monday reconstituted the national startup advisory council and nominates 31 non-official members, including Abhiraj Singh Bhal from Urban Company and Kunal Bahl from Snapdeal. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) had constituted the council in January 2020 to advise the government on measures needed to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and start-ups in the country.

### Bribe

**Jabalpur:** The Madhya Pradesh Lokayukta's police wing on Monday caught an assistant engineer of the state electricity board while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 60,000 from a contractor in Jabalpur city, an official said. After completing work of installing an 11 KV power line and a transformer, the contractor wanted to hand it over to the Madhya Pradesh Electricity Board, said the official of the Lokayukta's Special Police Establishment (SPE).

### Visas

**New Delhi:** The Pakistan High Commission on Monday said it has issued 62 visas to Hindu pilgrims from India to facilitate their travel to Shree Katar Raj temples in Punjab province's Chakwal district. Under the provision of a bilateral protocol on visits to religious shrines, Sikh and Hindu pilgrims from India visit Pakistan every year.

### Suicide

**Banda:** A 20-year-old woman, who had a love marriage ten months ago, allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself in Sandi village here on Monday, police said. The woman named Kiran committed suicide by hanging herself with a saree in her kutcha house in Sandi village, police said.

### Fire

**Mumbai:** A fire erupted in a hotel in Mumbai suburb of Santacruz on Monday evening, but there was no report of any injuries, officials said. A civic official said the fire broke out in the Juhu Residency Hotel, located on Juhu Tara Road in Santacruz (West), at 5.11 pm.

**Weather**  
High 25 Low 12

**MARKET**  
NIFTY 21,418.65  
SENSEX 71,315.09

**BULLION**  
GOLD 62,128  
SILVER 74,361

## Cabinet expansion soon: Sai

Raipur, Dec 18:

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Monday said the state cabinet will be expanded soon and it will comprise both old and new faces.

He was talking to reporters at the Swami Vivekananda Airport in Raipur after returning from New Delhi.

Sai took oath as the state's chief minister on December 13.

"On Sunday evening I went to Delhi. I met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Bharatiya Janata Party president JP Nadda there and held some discussions. The state cabinet will be expanded very soon," Sai said.

Asked about the induction of new faces in the cabinet, the CM said, "It will be a mix bag of old and new faces. We will have to wait for a bit for the cabinet (expansion) but it will be done soon."

On the BJP's promise to procure 21 quintal paddy per acre at the rate of Rs



3,100 per quintal as the paddy purchase exercise is underway, Sai said the promise made under 'Modi ki Guarantee' (referring to his party's poll manifesto) will be fulfilled.

The payment and procurement will be done as per the promise, he added.

Sai took oath as the state's chief minister last week along with two deputy CMs Arun Sao and

Vijay Sharma. Ten more members can be inducted into the cabinet.

As per constitutional norms, Chhattisgarh, which has a 90-member assembly, can have a maximum of 13 ministers, including the CM. The names of Brijmohan Agrawal and Amar Agrawal (both from general category), Dharamlal Kaushik and Ajay

Chandrakar (OBC), Kedar Kashyap and Vikram Usendi (Scheduled Tribe), Dayaldas Baghel (Scheduled Caste) and Rajesh Munat (Jain community) are doing the rounds as probable ministers in the Sai cabinet.

Except Dharamlal Kaushik, all these leaders served as ministers in the previous BJP governments in the state.

### 'Mix bag of old and new faces'

Asked about the induction of new faces in the cabinet, the CM said, "It will be a mix bag of old and new faces. We will have to wait for a bit for the cabinet (expansion) but it will be done soon." On the BJP's promise to procure 21 quintal paddy per acre at the rate of Rs 3,100 per quintal as the paddy purchase exercise is underway, Sai said the promise made under 'Modi ki Guarantee' (referring to his party's poll manifesto) will be fulfilled.

### ED summons to Kejriwal

**New Delhi, Dec 18 (PTI):** The Enforcement Directorate has issued a fresh summons to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for questioning on December 21 in the excise policy-linked money laundering case, officials said Monday.

He was first called by the federal agency to appear on November 2, but he did not appear alleging that the notice was "vague, motivated and unsustainable in law".

## Tight security for first session of newly-elected Chh'garh Assly

**Raipur, Dec 18:** The first session of the newly-elected Chhattisgarh assembly will begin on Tuesday amid tight security and only those persons holding the entry passes with the identity card of the institutions they belong to will be allowed entry on the premises. The first day of the session will see newly-elected members being administered the oath by the pro-tem speaker and the election of the



## 78 MPs suspended from House over security breach protest

### HIGHEST IN A DAY

33 Oppn members suspended from LS

**New Delhi, Dec 18:** The Lok Sabha on Monday suspended 33 opposition members, including Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, T R Baalu and Sougata Ray, from the House for displaying placards and raising slogans over the Parliament's security breach issue.

The opposition members disrupted the House's proceedings demanding a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah on the issue. While 30 members, including 10 from the DMK, nine from the Trinamool Congress, eight from the Congress and one each from IUML, JD(U) and RSP were suspended for the remainder of the Winter session, three other Congress members were sus-

### 45 Oppn MPs suspended in RS

**New Delhi:** As many as 45 opposition members in Rajya Sabha were on Monday suspended from the House for unruly behaviour and disregarding the directions of the Chair after they raised slogans over the Parliament security breach issue and disrupted proceedings.

pending pending a report of the Privileges Committee.

Last week, 13 opposition members were suspended from the Lok Sabha and one was suspended from the Rajya Sabha for disrupting the proceedings. The total number of suspended opposition members now stands at 47. The Lok

### After intruders, Modi attacks Parl: Cong on MPs ouster

Terming the suspension of Opposition MPs in Parliament "murder of democracy", the Congress on Monday alleged that an "extreme level of dictatorship" was in place and the government wants to "bulldoze" important legislations through without any debate. The Congress also alleged this is an "extension of the Gujarat assembly" in Parliament, an apparent swipe at the prime minister who was earlier the chief minister of the state.

Sabha was adjourned for the day soon after the suspension of 33 members was announced.

Among those suspended on Monday were Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Gaurav Gogoi, K Suresh, Amar Singh, Rajamohan Unnithan, Su. Thirunavukkarasar, K Muraleedharan, Anto Antony (all from Congress), Kalyan Banerjee, Aparupa Poddar, Prasun Banerjee, Sougata Ray,

Satabdi Ray, Protima Mondal, Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Asit Kumar Mal, Sunil Kumar Mondal (all from TMC), T R Baalu, A Raju, Dayanidhi Maran, T Samathy, K Navas Kani, Kalanidhi Veerasamy, C N Annadurai, S S Palanimanickam, G Selvam, S Ramalingam (all from DMK), ET Mohammed Basheer (IUML), N K Premachandran (RSP) and Kaushalendra Kumar (JD-U).

## ASI submits Gyanvapi survey report in court

Next hearing on Dec 21

**Varanasi, Dec 18 (PTI):** The Archeological Survey of India (ASI) Monday submitted a survey report in a sealed cover on the Gyanvapi mosque complex in the district court, which scheduled the next hearing for December 21.

Advocate Madan Mohan Yadav, who is representing the Hindu petitioners, said, "The report in sealed cover was placed before the court by the ASI's standing counsel Amit Srivastava." The survey was ordered by the court after the petitioners claimed the 17th-century mosque was constructed over a pre-existing temple.



Four senior officials of the ASI were also present in the court when the report was submitted. The ASI was given multiple extensions to complete the survey. Yadav said, "The court has fixed December 21 to open the sealed report and submit its copies to the advocates of either side. The Muslim side made a plea

before the court to not make the survey report public. We countered this plea by requesting the court to make it public."

The ASI carried out the scientific survey of the Gyanvapi premises, located next to the Kashi Vishwanath temple, to determine whether the mosque was constructed over a pre-existing structure of a Hindu temple.

The survey was carried on the direction of the district court's July 21 order that mentioned the need to survey beneath the mosque's domes, the cellars and the western wall.

## SOOTHING TO EYES



A boat silhouetted against the setting sun on the River Ganga in Kolkata, Monday.

## Ten Naxalites, including deputy militia commander, arrested

Dantewada, Dec 18:

Ten Naxalites, including a "deputy militia commander", allegedly involved in setting ablaze vehicles engaged in construction work last month were arrested on Monday in Dantewada district, a police official said.

A total of 14 vehicles were set ablaze on November 26 in Bhansi area of the district, he said.

They were nabbed during a search operation carried out since Sunday night by a team comprising District Reserve Guard, Bastar Fighters and Central Reserve Police Force after inputs

were received about the presence of Naxalites in Bechupal, Hurrepal and Gahnar villages on the Dantewada-Bijapur border, he said.

He identified the ultras as Sunil Madvi, Moti Oyam, Karu Kadti, Chhotu Hemla, Rajesh Kadti, Somaru Oyam, Madka Lekam, Supa Madkam alias Ayatu, Koya Hemla and Bachlu Madkam.

"They were held from the forests of Hurrepal and Bechupal villages. Sunil Madvi is a deputy militia commander, while the other nine are part of the lower rungs of the outlawed organisation," the official added.

## NIA foils ISIS plot to carry out IED blasts, 8 held

**New Delhi, Dec 18 (PTI):** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested eight alleged ISIS operatives including a module head as it carried out raids at 19 locations in three states and Delhi on Monday, an official said.

The early morning crackdown against the terror group in Ballari and Bengaluru in Karnataka, Amaravati, Mumbai and Pune in Maharashtra, Jamshedpur and Bokaro in Jharkhand and Delhi, led to the foiling of a plan by the accused to carry out terror acts, especially Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blasts.

Besides the module head Minaj who was arrested along with Syed

Sameer from Ballari, the official said Anas Iqbal Shaikh was apprehended from Mumbai, Mohammad Muniruddin, Syid Samiullah alias Sami and Md Muzammil from Bengaluru, Shayan Rahman alias Hussain from Delhi and Md Shahbaz alias Zulfikar alias Guddu from Jamshedpur.

"The eight ISIS agents arrested during the raids were involved in actively promoting terror and terror-related acts and activities of ISIS, the proscribed organisation. They were operating under the leadership of Minaz alias Md Sulaiman," a spokesperson of the federal agency said. The official said the raids also led to the

seizure of explosive raw materials, such as sulphur, potassium nitrate, charcoal, gunpowder, sugar and ethanol, sharp-edged weapons, unaccounted cash and "incriminating" documents, along with smartphones and other digital devices.

According to initial investigations, the accused had planned to use the explosive raw materials for the fabrication of IEDs which were to be used for carrying out terror acts, the spokesperson said.

The official said investigations have further revealed that the accused, in pursuance of the path of violent Jihad, Khilafat and ISIS, were continuously in touch with one another via encrypted apps.

## 'India to become third largest economy in my third innings'

**Varanasi, Dec 18 (PTI):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday listed the "four castes" he wants to empower while repeating his "guarantee" to make the country the third largest economic superpower during his third innings in power.

Modi was addressing a rally in his parliamentary constituency, where he also made a reference to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, in which he will make his bid for the third consecutive term in office.

"For decades, the entire region of Purvanchal was lying neglected. With the blessings of Mahadev,



Modi is engaged in serving you," he said at the event where he launched development projects worth over Rs 19,000 crore.

"Some months from now, there will be elections in the entire country. And Modi has given a guarantee to the country that in his third innings, he will make Bharat the third largest economic superpower in the world," he said.

The prime minister said for a developed India, it is important to develop the country's women power, youth power, farmers and the poor.

The PM has been calling these four groups as the only "castes" that the government should be focusing on.

"For me, these four 'castes' are the biggest castes. If these four castes are empowered, then the entire country will be empowered," he said.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation stone and dedicated to the nation multiple development projects worth about Rs 19,150 crore.

### COVID CASES ON RISE

## Centre asks states to be vigilant

New Delhi, Dec 18 (PTI):

The Centre on Monday asked states and union territories to maintain constant vigil amid an uptick in COVID-19 cases and the detection of the first case of the new JN.1 variant in the country. In a letter to states and union territories, Union Health Secretary Sudhansh Pant underlined that "due to consistent and collaborative actions between the Centre and state governments, we have been able to sustain the (COVID-19) trajectory at sustainable low rates".

"However, as the COVID-19 virus continues to circulate and its epidemiology behaviour gets settled with Indian weather conditions and circulation of other usual pathogens, it is important to keep the momentum going to effectively deal with the challenges in public health," he said.

Recently, a few states like Kerala have reported a slight increase in the number of COVID-19 cases, Pant noted. India's first case of COVID-19 sub-variant JN.1 was detected in Kerala on December 8. Considering the upcoming festive season, he said, states should put in place requisite public health measures and other arrangements to minimise the risk of transmission of the disease.



# Drug peddler nabbed with brown sugar

Central Chronicle News

**Bhilai, Dec 18:** Police arrested a drug peddler and recovered sachets of brown sugar from his possession. 209 sachets of brown sugar worth Rs 62,700, Rs 600 cash and a motorcycle were seized from the accused.

Under the direction of SSP Ram Gopal Garg and supervision of ASP (City) Abhishek Jha and CSP Mani Shankar Chandra, the team of Mohan Nagar Police Station led by Inspector Vijay Yadav is conducting a Jio Khulkar campaign against the people involved in illegal drug trade and smuggling.

In this sequel, police received a tip off regarding a person, Montu Vishwakarma, resident of Shankar Nagar. He was roaming on a motorcycle



bearing registration number CG07 BL 9620 and was selling brown sugar to the addicts.

Acting on this tip off, a police team swung into action and the suspect was rounded up near Satnami Dabri in Katulbod. He tried to escape after spotting the cops but failed in

his attempt. The suspect was identified as Devendra Kumar Vishwakarma alias Montu (30) son of Rajesh Kumar Vishwakarma a resident of Shankar Nagar Durg.

The suspect was searched in front of witnesses. A total of 209 sachets of brown sugar

worth around Rs 62,700 and Rs 600 cash and a bike worth about Rs 20,000 were seized by the police in the presence of witnesses.

The act of the accused was a crime under section 21 (a) 27 (a) of the Narcotics Act. The accused was duly arrested under section 21 (a), 27 (a) of the Narcotics Act. He was produced before the court and sent to jail on judicial remand.

Inspector Vijay Yadav (SHO, Mohan Nagar), Sub Inspector Laxman Singh Thakur, Head Constable Ajay Vishwakarma, Manish Agnihotri, Javed Khan, Constable Sachin Singh, Abhishek Yadav, Om Prakash Deshmukh, Vedram Bande, Nasir Baksh, Kamlesh Yadav and Naveen Yadav played a vital role in arresting the accused.

# Youth arrested for abducting and raping minor girl

Central Chronicle News

**Bhilai, Dec 18:** Padmanabhpur Police Station arrested a youth on charges of abducting and raping a minor girl. The abducted minor girl was rescued from Nagpur. Police had received a complaint from the girl's father on October 15, 2023. The girl had left for school at 08:00 am on October 11 and did not return home.

Under the direction of Senior Superintendent of Police (Durg) Ramgopal Garg and supervision of Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Abhishek Jha and City Superintendent of Police (Durg) Mani Shankar Chandra, a team of Padmanabhpur Police



Station led by Inspector Anil Kumar Sahu launched investigation and made efforts to trace the victim and the unknown accused. On the basis of call details and mobile location of the suspect, the team of Padmanabhpur Police

Station left for Nagpur on December 16.

The team rescued the abducted girl from Nagpur and arrested the accused. The accused Irish Afridi Ansari (22) son of Haider Ali, a resident of Kelabadi Durg, had lured the victim to

flee with him on the promise of marriage.

The accused took her to Nagpur and stayed with her in a rented house. The accused raped her and threatened to kill her if she told anything to anyone. The victim was handed over to her family members. The accused was arrested and produced before the Court. He has been sent to the jail on judicial remand.

Inspector Anil Kumar Sahu, ASI Meera Verma, Head Constable Kishore Soni, Constable Bharthari Nishad, Constable Prasant Patankar and Constable Umadali Yadu played a vital role in rescuing the girl and arresting the accused.

# Labour leaders chalk out strategy for strike in BSP

Central Chronicle News

**Bhilai, Dec 18:** The trade unions have announced to go on strike on 29th and 30th January. They are agrieved with the delay in finalisation of wage settlement of regular employees and contract workers of SAIL. To make the strike successful, a meeting of the joint union leaders was held at the INTUC office. It was decided that the demonstrations will be held at all the gates. On December 19, they will stage a demonstration at Boria Gate from 8:00 am to 9:00 am. Joint union convenor Vansh Bahadur Singh informed that a meeting of the office bearers of INTUC, AITUC, CITU, HMS, AICTU, LOIEMU, Ispat Shramik Manch and Steel Workers Union was held in INTUC office.

Discussions were held to make the strike of 29th and 30th January successful. The joint union has de-



cidated demonstrations will be staged at all the gates of Bhilai Steel Plant. Union leaders will contact the employees and contract workers in every department and give them complete information about the losses being caused by the dictatorial attitude of SAIL management. The joint union will meet all the trade unions and various organizations of Bhilai and appeal to them to join and cooperate in the strike. It was also decided in the meeting that the office bearers of the joint union will also meet

Durg MP Vijay Baghel regarding the wage revision and stubbornness of the SAIL management. The joint union will stage a demonstration at Boria Gate on 19 December from 8:00 am to 9:00 am, demanding early completion of the wage revision. The joint union will appeal to the employees to join the strike on 29 and 30 January. The Joint Trade Union has appealed to all the employees of the plant to join this demonstration to express their anger against the dictatorship of SAIL management.

# Fraudster apprehended from Assam

Central Chronicle News

**Bhilai, Dec 18:** Police arrested a fraudster from Hojai of Assam. He had duped over Rs 13 lakh from a person on promise of doubling the investment within a short period. Mobile phone and bank account documents used in the incident were recovered. It was a joint action of ACCU and Police Station Bhilai Nagar.

On July 18, Bhilai Nagar Police Station received a complaint from one Gulab Sonkar. After watching an advertisement on Facebook of getting more profit by investing money in Daman Finance Company, Dholakhera Chandigarh, he contacted the mobile number given in the advertisement.

From January 04, 2023 to June 19, 2023, he transferred a total of Rs 13,00,447 online in the bank accounts of the accused. When the victim did not get the maturity amount against his investment, he approached the Police and lodged an FIR against the accused under section 420 of IPC.

Taking the incident into serious consideration, Senior Superintendent of Police (Durg) Ram Gopal Garg instructed his subordinates to trace the accused. Under the supervision of Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Abhishek Jha, Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Dr Anurag Jha and City Superintendent of Police (Bhilai Nagar) VD Tripathi, a joint team of



ACCU and Bhilai Nagar Police Station was formed. The team led by Inspector Naresh Patel (i/c ACCU), Inspector Santosh Mishra and Inspector Manoj Prajapati (SHO, Bhilai) launched an investigation and traced the digital footprints of the accused.

The team obtained detailed information about mobile numbers and bank

accounts related to the amount deposited for investment from the applicant Gulab Sonkar. The accused was identified by technical analysis of the concerned mobile number and bank account by the Cyber Cell Team.

Since the bank account and mobile number used in the incident were found to be from District Hojai, Assam, the team was sent to District Hojai, Assam to arrest the accused. The team camped in Hojai and arrested Parikshit Chakraborty, the person who possessed the mobile number used in the incident. The accused was interrogated in connection with the forgery.

The accused admitted to cheating Gulab Sonkar of Bhilai, Chhattisgarh in the pretext of doubling

the money invested in Daman Company. On checking the bank account of the arrested accused, it was found that he had committed fraud with some other people also.

The mobile phone, mobile SIM card and bank account passbook used in the incident have been seized from the possession of the accused. Further action is being taken against the accused from Bhilai Nagar Police Station.

Head Constable Pradeep Singh, Chandrashekhar Banjee, Constable Shaikat Hayat Khan, Jugnu Singh, Narendra Sahare, Javed Khan, Vikrant, Constable Aarti Singh and Sub-Inspector Mannu Lal Yadav played a vital role in arresting the accused.

# Safety Awareness Week concludes at Bhilai Steel Plant's SMS-III

Central Chronicle News

**Bhilai, Dec 18:** The Valedictory Ceremony of Safety Awareness Week was organised at SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant's Steel Melting Shop No 03 (SMS-III) on December 16, 2023. Sanjay Kumar Agrawal, GM I/c (SED) was the Chief Guest on this occasion.

Chief Guest Sanjay Kumar Agrawal inaugurated the newly constructed OHS Room in the WB-5 of SMS-III premises, which shall be utilized for the First Aid of SMS-III & BF-8 employees. The plant's hard-working employees, who work round the clock to ensure the safety of the department and the Plant, were also felicitated during the Valedictory Ceremony.

AB Srinivas, GM & HoD



(SMS-III) and Pushpa Ambrose, GM & DSO (SMS-III) were also present on this occasion, along with, T Baitha, DK Varshney, SK Mishra, General Managers of SMS-III, Ashok Mahor, Union Representatives, other Senior Officials and personnel of the department in large numbers.

Chief Guest Sanjay Kumar Agrawal, in his

address, said that we must remain committed to adhering to safety and cleanliness at our work and in all spheres of life. He applauded the enthusiasm of all team members including BSP and associate teams in creating a culture of safety culture in SMS-III Department. We should lead our lives by setting examples of good work,

which can inspire others as well, Agrawal said.

AB Srinivas in his address urged everyone present to follow SOP/SMP in their work. He also encouraged everyone to maintain the 5S Standard methodology for organizing the workplace.

The programme began with administering the Oath of Safety, followed by a Safety Song and a

brief Safety Quiz. At the outset Pushpa Ambrose, GM & DSO (SMS-III) gave the Welcome Address and thanked everyone on behalf of the SMS-III collective for their cooperation and for making the Safety Awareness Week a success.

Winners of various competitions held during the Safety Awareness Week were felicitated by the dignitary Guests. It is noteworthy that as many as 585 individuals took part in these competitions based on Safety Awareness, while M/s PGEPL won the trophy for maximum participation in various competitions. The Valedictory Function concluded with singing of National Anthem. The programme was compered by Archana Atika Singh, Assistant Mgr (SMS-III).

# One can file Belated & Revised returns of IT by Dec 31: CA Minesh Jain

● If there is a refund in the income tax return, this is the last opportunity to claim the refund

Central Chronicle News

**Bhilai, Dec 18:** Under Section 139 of Income Tax, the last date for filing income tax returns for the financial year 2022-23 is December 31, 2023. It may be noted that as per the amendment in Income Tax last year, now the last date for filing paid Income Tax Return for belated income tax return and any amendment in the previous return (revised return) is December 31. After that, income tax returns will not be filed in the normal manner, shared CA Minesh Jain.

Currently, if someone's income is less than Rs 5 lakh, the income tax return can be



CA Minesh Jain

filed with a fee of Rs 1000 and if the income is more than Rs 5 lakh, then the income tax return can be filed before December 31 with a fee of Rs 5000. If there is TDS or advance tax in your return for the year 2022-23 and if you want to claim a refund then this is the last opportunity, after that the refund cannot be claimed. If the return has to be filed after December 31, then under the special section of Income Tax and Form

ITR-U, you will be able to file it only after paying 25% to 50% penalty and interest and will not be able to get refund, Minesh explained further.

The last date for filing annual returns GSTR-9 and 9C for the year 2022-23 of GST is December 31, 2023. It is mandatory for all GST taxpayers whose annual turnover in the previous year is more than Rs 2 crore to file annual return in GST 9. If there is any mistake or amendment in the returns GSTR-1 and 3B submitted throughout the year, then it can be rectified through this annual return.

Also, it is mandatory for those whose annual turnover in the previous year is more than Rs 5 crore to submit a self-attested reconciliation statement through GSTR-9C. If you do not submit the above form on time, you will have to pay a late fee of Rs 200 per day.

# Annual function 'Utsav' celebrated with fervour at KPS Durg

Central Chronicle News

**Bhilai, Dec 18:** Krishna Public School, Durg celebrated its Annual Day 'Utsav' on December 16, 2023 amidst great splendour, mirth and zest. Vijay Baghel, Member of Parliament, Durg was the chief guest of the day. The program commenced with the lighting of ceremonial lamp by the chief guest and other dignitaries. The guest was then accorded a floral welcome by presenting a bouquet. The other dignitaries present on the occasion were MM Tripathi, President Krishna Education Society, Anand Tripathi, Vice President, Krishna Education Society and other Founder members of Krishna Education Society.

The cultural extravaganza was based on the theme "Utsav" which included a series of thematic performances ranging from devotion to family values, patriotism, unity in diversity, parental love, social issues and many more. The annual program



Utsav was meticulously planned. The main highlight of the day was Jai Shambhu and Chandrayan.

The Principal Iti Sharma accorded a formal welcome to the esteemed guest on the occasion. The director Mayank Sharma welcomed the guests and addressed the gathering. The students were

honoured with trophies and cash awards in Academics as well as co-curricular activities. The venue reverberated with thunderous applause on the program Har Har Gange which left a lasting impression on the minds of everyone present. It was indeed a spectacular display of talent and fervor.

# Carol Singing Competition 'Gloria 2023' organised

Central Chronicle News

**Bhilai, Dec 18:** The 'GLORIA' 2023 Carol Singing Competition, a harmonious celebration organised by MGM Group of institutions and hosted by Christian College of Engineering and Technology (CCET) and St Thomas College, Kailash Nagar, brought together a blend of festive spirit and musical talent. The evening commenced with a presidential address by Fr Dr Joshi Varghese, Education Officer of MGM Group and Administrator of St Thomas Colleges. His inspiring words set the tone for an evening not just of music but of unity, celebration, and the true spirit of Christmas. Dr Dipali Soren, the Principal of CCET, extended a warm welcome, emphasizing the significance of events that bring communities together. A touch of spirituality was added through the Bible reading by Lincy Mendonza, underscoring the significance of the season.



The MGOCSM Youth stole the spotlight with a captivating skit presentation, showcasing their creativity and adding a dynamic element to the competition. The esteemed panel of judges featured Fr Githin George OIC, Rev Jobin Easow Cherian, and Mers Thomas.

The Carol Song category saw spirited performances, with St John Mary Vianney Church, Risali, securing the 1st prize consisting of a cash award of Rs 15000 and memento. The

second position was secured by Christian Community Church Sec-6 and they won cash prize of Rs 10000/- and memento. St Joseph the worker Catholic Church, Sec-6 won the third prize of Rs 5000/- and memento. The coveted title of Best Santa Clause along with a cash prize of Rs 2000/- was bagged by St John Mary Vianney Church, Risali.

Dr Dipali Soren, the Principal of CCET, extended a gracious welcome, and blessings were

bestowed by Fr Jacob Thomas, Principal of MBVB, adding a spiritual depth to the celebration. The presence of Fr Aju K Varghese, Bursar of CCET, Fr Ramesh, Principal St Xaviers School, Shanti Nagar, Sr Christi, Principal Vishwadeep School, and Fr Dr John Xavier added grace to the occasion. Dr Mariam Jacob, Principal of St Thomas College Kailash Nagar gave the vote of thanks, in her address she thanked all the Churches and institutions for

their active participation.

The hosting duties were carried out by CCET students, Navya and Richa, who ensured a lively and engaging atmosphere. The collaborative effort, spearheaded by AD Vincent from CCET and Siji from St Thomas School as conveners, showcased the commitment of both institutions to creating memorable cultural events. Lincy Mendonza, the program coordinator, along with Anima Singh from CCET and Varidhi Pandey from St Thomas College, played pivotal roles in orchestrating the seamless flow of the event.

The first prize was officially awarded by Fr Dr Joshi Varghese, bringing the competition to a joyful close. The organizers expressed heartfelt thanks to both CCET and St Thomas College, Kailash Nagar for their collaborative efforts, ensuring the success of 'GLORIA' 2023 and leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of all attendees.



## Sai declares all-round development for STs as govt's top priority

**Govt delivers on promise: underprivileged families receive new housing**

**CM honors newly elected tribal MLAs at felicitation ceremony and general meeting**

**Traditional welcome for CM with 'Gajamala', Turban, and welcome song**



**Raipur, Dec 18:** Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai attended the felicitation ceremony and general meeting of the newly elected MLAs of the tribal community organized by the Anusuchit Janjati Shasakia Sevak Vikas Sangh at Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Auditorium in the capital, Raipur. Chief Minister commenced the function by lighting the lamp. During the event, the Chief Minister was accorded a traditional welcome by the Sarv Adivasi Samaj with a Gajamala and turban, accompanied by the singing of a traditional tribal welcome song. Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said "Today, on the 18th of December, we pay tribute to the most respected Baba

Guru Ghasidas Ji on his birth anniversary. He gave the message of "Mankhe Mankhe Ek Saman" to society. It is a moment of great prosperity for our society in Chhattisgarh, where nearly 32 per cent of the population belongs to the Scheduled Tribe community. There was a collective expectation that a tribal leader would assume the role of Chief Minister. The expectations of our tribal society have been realized under the effective leadership of the Prime Minister of our country, Narendra Modi."

He added that today, our nation is being recognized and honored globally, thanks to the dedicated efforts of our Prime Minister. Today, Droupadi Murmu Ji, a distinguished woman from our society, holds the highest position

as the President of the country. Chhattisgarh state was established under the leadership of our former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ji. The move aimed to ensure the proper development and economic progress of the Scheduled Tribe people in the region. With an aim to ensure overall development for the Scheduled Tribes, he established the Tribal Welfare Department for the first time in the Government of India. Our government is most committed to the welfare of the Scheduled Tribe community, he said.

Sai stated that it is our responsibility to fulfill every promise made to the people of Chhattisgarh under "Modi Guarantee". Announcements have been made for the benefit of

every section of society, including providing Rs 12,000 annually to the beneficiaries under Mahtari Vandan Yojana, and announcing the purchase of paddy at Rs 3100 per quintal to support farmers. Keeping our promise to provide homes for the poor in the very first cabinet meeting held on December 14, a day after the oath-taking ceremony, we decided to provide permanent houses to 18 lakh underprivileged families.

Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma, MLA Kedar Kashyap, MLA Kewasi Lakhma, and other MLAs of the tribal community, as well as the State President of the Anusuchit Janjati Shasakia Sevak Vikas Sangh RN Dhruv along with other dignitaries of the tribal community, were present.

## STAGE SET



Stage is set for the oath ceremony of the Ministers of CM Vishnu Deo Sai at city's indoor stadium likely tomorrow before the start of the State Assembly winter session.

### 10th, 12th practical exams from Jan 10

**Raipur, Dec 18:** Practical examinations for class 10th and 12th under Chhattisgarh Board of Secondary Education (CGBSE) will start from January 10. Guidelines have been issued by the Board of Secondary Education regarding this. The examinations will be conducted by January 31 in all the affiliated high schools and higher secondary schools of the state. Similarly, the theory examinations of class 10th-12th will start from the first week of March, the timetable for this will be released soon by CGBSE.

### Four-year graduation in 25 new colleges from next session

**Raipur, Dec 18:** A four-year undergraduate course was started last year as a pilot project in eight autonomous colleges of Chhattisgarh. With its beginning the course was surrounded by controversies after the results of the first semester examination were declared. After court's decision, preparations are now underway to conduct graduation studies in the same pattern in 25 new colleges in the state. The work of marking colleges

has started. Four-year undergraduate courses are likely to start in these colleges from the next session.

The government has not yet announced the implementation of National Education Policy (NEP) in the state, but the four-year course was started as a pilot project last year in eight autonomous colleges of the state including Science College, Chhattisgarh College and Degree Girls College of

the capital. Preparations are being made to implement this course in some new colleges.

Experts say that there are some special provisions in the four-year degree program, which are good for the students. For example it has a system of multi exit and multi entry. Under this, if students leave their studies midway due to any reason, they can complete the course again later. They will get an opportunity for this.

## Tributes paid to Guru Ghasidas in Legislative Assembly



**Raipur, Dec 18:** Tributes were paid to founder of "Satnam Panth" and great saint Guru Ghasidas ji on the occasion of his birth anniversary in Chhattisgarh Legislative

Assembly today. Assembly Secretary Dinesh Sharma paid floral tributes to oil painting of Guru Ghasidas installed in the Central Hall of Assembly complex. Senior officials

of the Legislative Assembly Secretariat also remembered the founder of "Satnam Panth" Guru Ghasidas ji by paying floral tributes to him on his birth anniversary.

## VBSY organized in different areas of Raipur

**Event organized in presence of LS MP Sunil Soni in village Chhatera and Bancharoda of Arang devp block**

**Raipur, Dec 18:** 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra', started with the aim of taking the public welfare schemes of the Central Government to the masses and communicating with the beneficiaries, was organized on Sunday in various areas of Raipur district. Stalls were also set up by various departments at the program venues to provide information about the public welfare schemes of the government to the

eral public. Detailed information regarding the schemes was given by the officials of the concerned department to the general public visiting the stalls. On this occasion, materials were also distributed to the beneficiaries of various public welfare schemes of the Central Government. The program was organized in Chhatera and Bancharoda villages of Arang development block. The program was organized in the presence of Parliamentarian Sunil Soni.

A program was organized in the presence of MLA Inderkumar Sahu in village Tila and Champaran of Abhanpur development block where KCC was distributed to the

farmers. Similarly, programs were also organized in Shankar Nagar and Pandri. Under Ayushman Bharat Scheme in Shankar Nagar, 134 beneficiaries were given information about Ayushman Card, out of which 31 people registered. Health checkup of 172 people was done in the health camp. As many as 328 beneficiaries took information under Ujjwala scheme. New registration of 02 beneficiaries was done under Kisan Samman Nidhi. Information about Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, PM Vishwakarma Yojana Aadar Camp etc. was also given. Raipur Lok Sabha MP Sunil Soni, Raipur North MLA Purandar Mishra, Sarpanch of the village

and a large number of villagers were present in the camp.

Similarly, in a program organized at Mandi Gate of Pandari, information about Ayushman Card was given to 146 beneficiaries under Ayushman Bharat Scheme. As many as 221 beneficiaries took information about Ujjwala scheme, out of which 40 people registered for the scheme. Health checkup of 109 people was also done in the program. Similarly, the beneficiaries got information about PM Swanidhi, Aadhaar Camp, PM Ujjwala Yojana, PM Vishwakarma Yojana. A large number of villagers including the Sarpanch were present in the program.

### Action on sale of meat anywhere other than designated place

**Raipur, Dec 18:** Strict action will now be taken against those selling meat and mutton anywhere in the capital. The Municipal Corporation has warned that action will be taken in case of sale of meat and mutton anywhere other than the designated places. It is important to keep meat and mutton covered, it said. The corporation administration said that complaints were being received about sale of meat and mutton anywhere which caused spread of dirt in the surrounding areas besides polluting the environment.

A place has been earmarked in the city for the sale of meat and mutton. If anyone is found selling it anywhere other than the designated place, action will be taken against them.

## Entrepreneur from Rajim to share his story on Web Series

**Devkar Saheb to be part of Mission Start Ab**

**Raipur, Dec 18:** Entrepreneur from Chhattisgarh Devkar Saheb would be part of the Mission Start Ab, a web series on Amazon Prime Videos, which would highlight the success stories as well as struggles of the entrepreneurs in India.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday afternoon, the noted entrepreneur Devkar Saheb who hails from Rajim area



of Chhattisgarh said that he would be sharing his experience and success story after he had laid foundation for Shree Chawan Ayurveda in the upcoming Mission Start Ab which would have 7

episodes. He said that he had laid the foundation for the Ayurveda with the objective of public welfare and health field. He said that the upcoming series would not only create awareness among upcoming entrepreneurs but would make them realize the reality check as nearly 90% start-ups in our country faces struggle in absence of adequate funding. He said that the series would be live from December 19 which would boost the confidence of the people across the country.

## Arham Technology Limited touches new milestone in its first anniversary

**With the trust of dealers and consumers Directors said that dealers have become the backbone to take the company to great heights**

**Raipur, Dec 18:** Arham Technology Limited completed 1 year of listing on the Emerge platform of the National Stock Exchange. The company was listed on December 15, 2022 and celebrated its first anniversary on December 15,

2023. In the very first year the investors of the company have got five times profit. The trust of the dealers and consumers has touched new milestone in the company's first anniversary itself. The directors of the company have wholeheartedly thanked all the shareholders and investors. They said that with everyone's cooperation, we will take the company to greater heights in the times to come.

The directors of the company said that at the time of IPO the share price of the company was Rs 42. The company's share price has increased 5 times in the first anniversary itself. In this, after taking feed-



back from the promoters of the company, he has thanked all the shareholders and investors. He has said that with everyone's cooperation and hard work, he will take the company to new heights.

The directors of the company said that we started with TV. The response to the company's main product TV was quite good. Now the company is launching Google TV in January

2024. The company sells its products in the market under the Star Sign brand name. Apart from this, washing machines, mixer grinders are also the products of the company. Along with this, the color will be brought for sale on a large scale in 2024. Better sales are expected than last time. To provide relief to everyone in the heat, there is enthusiasm among the dealers about the company's products, fans and coolers.

The directors said that the production of ceiling fans and BLDC ceiling fans has also been started in this year 2023. Due to this new product, the company is estimating better

growth than last time. The company had started the manufacturing of fans on the auspicious occasion of Navratri on October 15, 2023, taking the blessings of Mother Goddess.

The directors of the company said that the dealers have acted as the backbone of the company. It is only because of his contribution that the company is able to scale these heights. The directors have expressed heartfelt gratitude to all the dealers. Besides, the consumers have also been wholeheartedly thanked for having faith in the company. They said that this would not have been possible without the trust of consumers.

## 'Divya Darbar' of Dharendra Krishna Shastri at Kota

Central Chronicle News

**Raipur, Dec 18:** Pt Dharendra Krishna Shastri's 'Divya Darbar' will be organised at Kota. The organisers informed that date has not been finalised till now. Shri Bageshwar Dham Kath Organising Committee Basant Agrawal and Dinesh Mishra said that Pt Dharendra Krishna Shastri's discourse on Lord Hanuman will be organised in between January 23 to 27 at Kota. The 'Divya Darbar' will be organised in between January 23 to 27 in which the problems



of common public received through letters will be resolved. On the occasion Late Purshottam Agrawal Foundation will be organising mass marriage ceremony for girls

and Dinesh Mishra of Ex-Army Foundation will be felicitate the family members of 22 jawans who have sacrificed the life for the country. Lord Sri Ram temple

will be consecrated on Jan 22. On this occasion Sri Ram Janamustav will be celebrated in entire Chhattisgarh and at Hanuman Temple located at Shukrawari Bazar. Special pooja rituals of Lord Ram, Sita and Lakhman will be held. In this concern a meeting was held regarding preparations of Divya Darbar in which various committees were formed under the guidance of Bageshwar Dham Kath Organising Committee Basant Agrawal for organising the event successfully.

## Cong State Vice President Chunnilal Sahu resigns

**Raipur, Dec 18:** After the crushing defeat in the assembly elections in Chhattisgarh, the rift in Congress is showing no sign of ending. Meanwhile, the phase of resignation of senior leaders is also continuing. In this series, another former Congress MLA Chunnilal Sahu has resigned from the post. Chunnilal Sahu was the state vice-president of the party. Chunnilal Sahu has sent his message to State President Deepak Bajj. The former MLA has resigned from all the charges related to him including the State Vice President. He wrote in



a letter to the PCC Chief, for the last four years, I have tried to fulfill the responsibility given to me as the Vice President by the party. But I am deeply saddened by the party's defeat in the assembly elections.

Therefore I am resigning from my post. Congress leaders divided into groups after defeat in assembly elections.

Here, after the defeat in the assembly elections, Congress leaders are divided into groups. The allegations and counter-allegations on each other is increasing day by day. The discord in the party has reached Delhi.

Many former MLAs have returned to the state after camping in Delhi and expecting to meet the party high command. This situation is becoming challenging for Congress in terms of

Lok Sabha elections.

The challenge is because junior level office bearers have held many senior party office bearers responsible for the defeat in the assembly elections. Recently a delegation of 12 angry former Congress MLAs met party general secretary KC Venugopal in New Delhi.

In this meeting, the former MLAs have directly held responsible those senior office bearers of the State Congress Committee, who had canceled the tickets of 22 MLAs who had become MLAs in the 2018 elections. Some of MLAs seat have been changed.



## Baba Guru Ghasidasji gave the message of harmony to the world: Sai

**CM attended the birth anniversary celebration of Baba Guru Ghasidas**

**CMr honours victorious students in various competitions**

**CM inaugurated the blood donation camp on the university campus**



Ke Pravartak' edited by the Vice Chancellor. Sai also honoured the students who won in various competitions held at the university. ATEQ International President Dr. William Painter, Bilha MLA Mr. Dharamlal Kaushik, Bilaspur MLA Mr. Amar Agrawal, and Beltara MLA Mr. Sushant Shukla were present in the programme as special guests.

CM Sai extends greetings to Ch'garh residents on Baba Ghasidas' Birth Anniversary. In his inaugural visit to Guru Ghasidas University since assuming office, Sai commends the university management for orchestrating grand jubilee celebrations. Sai said that in the 18th century, social discrimination and untouchability were at their peak

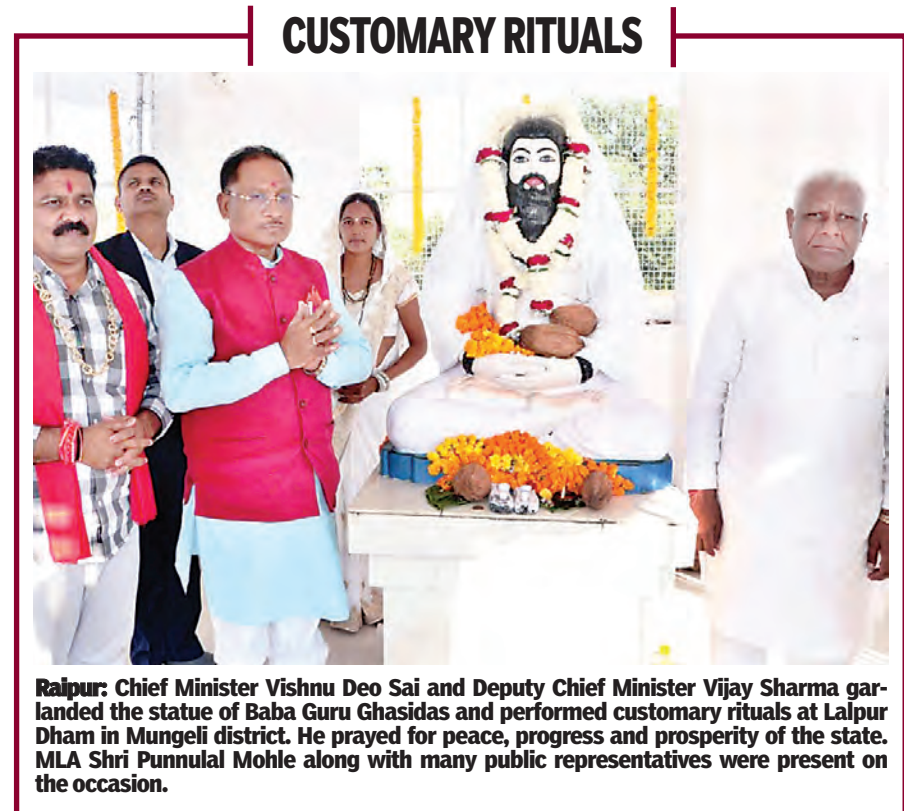
in the country. He opposed the prevalent situation and initiated preaching about social harmony and equality among all. He shared that Central University, the name of Baba Guru Ghasidas ji in Bilaspur, is the only-of-its-kind university in India. Chief Minister Sai expressed confidence in steering Chhattisgarh to greater prosperity through Baba's blessings and community cooperation. Emphasizing the state's fertile land and abundant mineral and forest resources, he envisions Chhattisgarh emerging as a leading state. Commending the university's efforts beyond education, he inaugurated a blood donation camp aiming for 200 units. He praised the university's Rs

build a prosperous Chhattisgarh as a true tribute to the revered figure.

Vice Chancellor Alok Kumar Chakrawal shared that Chief Minister Sai's first official visit to the university is a proud moment for them and highlighted the unprecedented message of unity and social harmony preached by Baba Ji. The message of Baba Ji's preaching is also incorporated into the Constitution. Dr. William Painter, President of ATEQ International and a special guest, commended Baba Ji's life message and the university's achievements. Professor Dr. T.R. Ratre shed light on Baba Ji's life philosophy, teachings, and message. University Registrar Mr. Manish Srivastava delivered the welcome address, marking the occasion with insightful perspectives on Babaji's profound influence.

CM paid tribute to Baba Guru Ghasidas by garlanding his statue

CM Vishnu Deo Sai paid tribute to Baba Guru Ghasidas by garlanding his statue at the Guru Ghasidas Central University campus in Bilaspur. He took the blessings of Baba Guru Ghasidas for the peace, progress, and prosperity of Chhattisgarh. Students welcomed the Chief Minister by performing a panthi dance.



**Raipur: Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma garlanded the statue of Baba Guru Ghasidas and performed customary rituals at Lalpur Dham in Mungeli district. He prayed for peace, progress and prosperity of the state. MLA Shri Punnul Mohle along with many public representatives were present on the occasion.**

## Governor, CM extend best wishes on Guru Ghasidas Jayanti

Central Chronicle News  
Guru Ghasidas, who united the society, is a symbol of peace and social harmony, Harichandan said, adding that Guru Ghasidas has an incomparable contribution in providing a new direction to the society and his teachings are relevant even today. Baba Guru Ghasidas, the founder of Satnam sect showed the world the path of truth, non-violence and social harmony through his teachings, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said. Guru Ghasidas gave the message that all human beings are equal with the inspiring sentence 'Mankhe-Mankhe Ek Samaan'. Apart from promoting education, he worked towards social harmony and upliftment of all, Sai said, adding that Baba Guru Ghasidas ji showed people the path to development of human qualities and reestablished moral values. Guru Ghasidas' life philosophy and values are beneficial for the entire human race and are exemplary, the Chief Minister added.

## Three-day discourse by IRC concludes in IIM

Raipur, Dec 18: IIM Raipur recently concluded a dynamic three-day discourse organized by its International Relations Committee (IRC), showcasing the institute's commitment to quality MBA pedagogy, setting the stage for a culminating session on "Emerging Trends in International Business, Adding Value to Your MBA Journey" on December 13, featuring Dr. Guillotin's distinguished talk. Dr. Navneet Bhatnagar, Chairperson of the IRC Committee, extended a warm welcome to the esteemed guest. During the session, Dr. Guillotin emphasized the importance of strategic planning and its impact on individual lives and global scenarios. Drawing on his extensive experiences, he shared insights from his MBA journey, highlighting the significance of making life-altering decisions by considering their broader implications. He encour-

aged the audience to embrace adaptability, learn from mistakes, and emphasized the value of making a positive global impact through dedicated efforts. In a reflective dialogue, Dr. Guillotin recounted his unconventional path, including a year in the military and a stint in the technology industry. Advising students to avoid stagnation, he underscored the significance of humility and the pursuit of excellence. The Q&A session that followed allowed students to engage with Dr. Guillotin, posing insightful questions that added depth to the dialogue. As a token of appreciation, Dr. Parthasarathi Banerjee presented Dr. Guillotin with a memento, symbolizing the gratitude and respect of the academic community for his valuable insights and contributions.

## Adivasi Congress congratulates Charan Das Mahant



**For the appointment of Leader of Opposition in Chh'garh Assembly**

Raipur, Dec 18: Members of the Adivasi City District Congress paid a courtesy visit to Dr. Charan Das Mahant, extending their hearty congratulations to him on his appointment as the Leader of the Opposition in the Chhattisgarh Assembly. The gathering, led by Bhavani Singh Markam, President of the Raipur City District Adivasi Congress, extended their heartfelt best wishes to Dr. Mahant at his residence. Bhavani Singh Markam gave this development in a press release. Prominent attendees included Yogendra Thakur, Ashish Sahu, Rajesh Das, Shyam Netam, Sanju Thakur, Manoj Nayak, Ashish Jogi, Anand Netam, Rupesh Tadi, Rajesh, Rupesh Yadav, and Uttam Markam, along with numerous Adivasi Congress members.

## Kshatriya Mahasabha honour newly elected MLA Kiran Dev



Jagdalpur, Dec 18: The meeting ceremony of All India Kshatriya Mahasabha (AIKM) was organized in Krishna Garden of the city. In which the newly elected MLA of Jagdalpur, Kiran Dev was honored by the members of the society. While giving the welcome speech, State President Awadhesh Singh Gautam said that it is a matter of great pride that today a member of our community, Kiran Dev, has been elected as the newly elected MLA of Jagdalpur. I wish him all the best on behalf of the entire society and expect him to make an important contribution to the progress of the society. Youth Division President Santosh Bhadauria along with all his young colleagues and Kshatriya warrior Mrs. Vandana Bhadauria (female president) and all the matriarchs together welcomed the newly elected MLA Kiran Dev. State General Secretary Kailash Chauhan said that today due to the tireless efforts of the society, land has been obtained from the government for the construction of a building of the society in Kumharpara Jagdalpur. For which heartfelt thanks are given to all the members who had direct/indirect cooperation and the work of construction of the building in the said land of the society is to be done as soon as possible. For which all members of the society should contribute financially. And a demand was also made to the newly elected MLA Kiran Dev that he should provide financial support from the government level in the construction of buildings of the society. The stage management of the program was done by JB Singh. At the end of the program, President of All India Kshatriya Mahasabha Jagdalpur, Shrawan Singh Chauhan expressed his gratitude and said that everyone will be with us in the progressive progress of the society.

## Sanjay Singh awarded PhD



Raipur, Dec 18: The National General Secretary of INTUC, Sanjay Kumar Singh, has been felicitated with the honorary degree of Doctorate of Philosophy by Maryland State University, USA, for his excellent work in the field of trade unions. Trade Union leader Sanjay Singh is a grass root level worker and has considerable influence over the INTUC unions in different PSUs in Chhattisgarh and nationwide. He is also the state president of INTUC Chhattisgarh branch and is continuously working for the upliftment of workers both in the organised and un-organised sector. His success has been hailed by the trade union leaders cutting across affiliations, informs Sameer Pandey veteran trade union leader and INTUC national working committee member.

## BALCO marks 2 years of its safety culture transformation prog Suraksha Sankalp

Balconagar, Dec 18:

Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO), India's leading aluminium producer and a unit of Vedanta Aluminium, celebrated the successful completion of two years of its flagship safety culture transformation program, 'Suraksha Sankalp.' Engaging employees and business across the organization, Suraksha Sankalp has been a resounding success in advocating and implementing stringent safety measures within the plant premises. Initiated in December 2021, BALCO's Suraksha Sankalp program aims at nurturing a safety culture rooted in coaching, counseling, monitoring, and providing immediate feedback. The comprehensive training sessions, held on the first day of every month, have played a pivotal role in inculcating a safety-first mindset among employees, to bring about a constructive transformation around the workplace. The 25th consecutive training saw participation from over 1500



employees and business partners, marking the successful completion of two remarkable years of commitment to safety under this initiative. The Suraksha Sankalp program covers a diverse range of themes designed to bolster the safety quotient in all areas of its operations. The company not only educates individuals on safety measures but also recognizes and rewards those who have shown unwavering commitment to championing safety awareness within their respective departments, motivating others to prioritize safety in the workplace. Talking about Suraksha Sankalp, Mr. Rajesh Kumar, CEO and Director, BALCO said, "At BALCO, the well-being of our people stands as an unwavering cornerstone of our organizational commitment. Suraksha Sankalp has played a pivotal role in nurturing a resilient safety culture that places the utmost priority on the health and safety of our workforce. This milestone attests to our united commitment to fostering a secure and nurturing working environment. Going forward, we remain steadfast in our dedication to upholding the highest safety standards in all facets of our operations and beyond." In addition, BALCO also organized safety awareness workshops at its coal mines

in the Chotia region during the observance of Annual Coal Mines Safety Fortnight 2023. These engaging and informative workshops included awareness activities on a wide range of crucial safety protocols and practices for people working at the mines, where over 200 participants pledged to build a robust safety culture at their work stations. BALCO actively sensitizes employees, their families, and local communities through several safety training workshops, including defensive driving courses, fire safety sessions, road safety awareness programs, and the establishment of retro-reflective safety signboards. BALCO also observes National Road Safety Month every year by organizing a series of safety-focused programs to raise awareness among its employees and community members. To build a robust safety culture, the company incorporates several cutting-edge technologies, such as: T-Pulse Health, Safety, Security, and Environment (HSSE) Monitoring System for ensuring the fulfillment of crucial safety protocols, through a network of cameras using the most comprehensive AI models, tracking ongoing activity inside the plant in real time. Augmented and Virtual Reality Training Centre, Video Analytics, Sustainability Mobile App, E-learning courses, and Digitalization of Workforce Connectivity to enhance leading indicators in safety practices. Centralized Security Operations Centre (CSOC) leverages digital intelligence and data insights for better decision-making in security, traffic & road safety, and supply chain security functions. Real-time data and trend monitoring, facilitating end-to-end digital dashboards through projects like the Hot Spot Detection System at the coal yard, using thermal inspection ensures strict safety. LED Logo projectors designed to illuminate safety signs on floors, ensuring clear and prominent display of safety messages in low-light conditions, especially in areas with dust accumulation and high vehicular traffic. Integration of cutting-edge AI technology - Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) and Driver Monitoring Systems (DMS) - in internal vehicular operations to elevate road safety amid the driving conditions within the plant. A testament to its safety-first culture, BALCO has received several accolades, including the Global Road Safety Award 2023 in the 'Gold Category' from The Energy and Environment Foundation. This recognition underscores BALCO's relentless pursuit of safety excellence, reinforced by regular safety training sessions and awareness programs. Additionally, the company achieved the status of 'Platinum Winner' at the 5th CII National Safety Practices Competition for its 'Suraksha Sankalp Kutumbh' project on safety digitalization.



RELIGIOUS EVENT



Devotees gather during the flag hoisting ceremony (Kodiyettam) of the annual festival at the Sreekanteshwaram Temple, in Thiruvananthapuram, Monday.

'PM or HM must make statement in Parl on security breach'

Bhubaneswar, Dec 18 (PTI):

Asserting that the INDIA alliance is determined to end BJP rule in the country, CPI general secretary D Raja on Monday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi or the Union Home Minister Amit Shah must make a statement in Parliament on the security breach. Raja, who is here to attend a two-day national executive meeting of the party, termed the incident as a "serious breach of security".

"The PM or the Union home minister must make a statement on the floor of Parliament. Tell the nation how serious it is. Outside the House, they keep making comments here and there. But, they do not take Parliament seriously," he said. A day before the INDIA



D Raja

alliance's crucial meeting on Tuesday, Raja said. "The election results of the five states have demonstrated that unity of secular and democratic forces is needed to defeat the anti-people, pro-corporate BJP government."

He said the success of the Congress and CPI combine in Telangana is encouraging. Noting that the CPI national executive has congratulated its Telangana unit and peo-

ple of the state for the success, Raja said, "Arrogance of the BJP leadership and their polarisation efforts are rising as 2024 Parliamentary election approaches."

The CPI, as part of the INDIA alliance, is determined to defeat the BJP and ensure the victory of democratic and secular forces by working towards the unity of all left, democratic and secular forces in the country.

Modi has claimed that he will come to power for the third time in 2024 and India will emerge as the third largest economy in the world, but the reality is different, he said.

"His policies have proved to be disastrous for the country. Only a handful of capitalists and corporate houses have benefited from the policies. On the other hand, the livelihood of common

people has been severely affected," he said.

Due to the faulty policies of the Modi government, atrocities against the dalits and tribals have been increasing, he alleged.

Despite claims made by Modi and his government, India is facing multiple crises. The economy is in bad shape, unemployment is unprecedented, inflation has increased and the value of the rupee is going down, he added. Raja said, "We need to understand why India has ranked 111th among 120 countries in the hunger index."

"The prime minister had promised to provide two crore jobs every year. In the last eight years, 18 crore jobs should have been provided. Where are the jobs? Modi should explain," the CPI leader said.

Maha Assly passes Lokayukta Bill; CM, ministers to be under ambit of ombudsman

Nagpur, Dec 18 (PTI):

The Maharashtra Assembly on Monday passed the Lokayukta Bill 2022, which brings the chief minister and his council of ministers under the ambit of the anti-corruption ombudsman. It was tabled in the House by industries minister Uday Samant. The Bill was passed by the Legislative Council on Friday. Maharashtra is the first state in the country to pass such a bill that covers the chief minister and his cabinet.

As per the Bill, the Lokayukta will have to seek the approval of the Vidhan Sabha before initiating any inquiry against the chief

minister, which would require bringing a motion in the House. Such a motion will have to be passed by not less than two-thirds of the total members of the Vidhan Sabha, as per the Bill. It also stipulates that the Lokayukta will not investigate cases involving allegations of corruption against the chief minister on matters related to internal security or public order.

"Any such inquiry shall be kept secret and if the Lokayukta comes to the conclusion that the complaint deserves to be dismissed, the records of the inquiry shall not be published or made available to anyone," reads the Bill. It also lays down

'Social harmony, peace priorities of new govt in Mizoram'

Aizawl, Dec 18 (PTI):

Peace and harmony in society was the priority of the new ZPM government in Mizoram, Home Minister K Sapdanga said on Monday, maintaining that it was also trying to ensure a comfortable life for the people of the state. Sapdanga made the statement during his maiden trip as the home minister. Accompanied by Excise Minister Lalngthlavoia Hmar, he visited Saitual and Khawzawl in the northeastern part of the state.

The new government was giving priority to harmony and peace in society, besides ensuring a comfortable life for the people, he said. He urged

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K Sapdanga

the people and the security forces to support the government in its efforts. He said Saitual, Khawzawl and Champhai districts were hotspots for illegal activities, especially drug trafficking, as they share borders with Myanmar.

PUBLIC NOTICE

UNDER SECTION 72 OF THE INDIAN PARTNERSHIP ACT, 1932 Be it known to all concerned that the following changes have taken place in the constitution of our partnership firm 'Beekey Engineering Corporation', Registration No. 368 of 1969-70 dated 11.6.69 having registered office at 45147, Industrial Estate, Bhilai, Dist Durg (C.G.)-490026.

शपथपत्र

मैं शपथकर्ता राकेश जितल उम्र 45 वर्ष निवासी धर्मोचंद निवासी गार्ड नं. 22, आदर्श नगर कैंम्प-1 भिलाई तहसील व जिला दुर्ग छ.ग. का निवासी हूँ जो कि निम्नलिखित कथन शपथपूर्वक पेश करता हूँ कि-

AFFIDAVIT

I Deponent B. Gopal Rao (ex-soldier) S/o Shri B. Ramanna, age-58 yrs, C/O Ramanna Niwas, Camp-1, Steel Nagar, Post-Supela, Bhilai, Tehsil and District Durg (C.G.) do hereby make the following statements:

PARL SECURITY BREACH

Delhi Police team visits Kolkata to get details of Jha's Bengal link

Kolkata, Dec 18 (PTI):

A three-member special team of the Delhi Police visited Kolkata on Monday and went to several places where the arrested mastermind of the Parliament security breach Lalit Mohan Jha had links during his stay here, an officer said. Members of the team along with a few officers of the Kolkata Police first went to Burrabazar where Jha and his family had stayed only a month ago.

"They spoke to the locals, a tea stall owner and noted down details of Jha who used to give tuition to students. They also went to a house on Rabindra Sarani where Jha used to stay on rent," a Kolkata Police officer said.

Unable to get inside the locked-up room where Jha and his family had stayed, the team of Delhi Police Special Cell went to the local police station and sought assistance to approach the person who had the keys," he said. The Delhi Police team is likely to visit a house in Baguihati near here where Jha and his family had also stayed on rent. The Special Task Force

(STF) unit of Kolkata police during an investigation found out that Jha and his family had stayed at two other addresses apart from Burrabazar, Girish Park and Baguiati. "All the three addresses are now locked and all of his family have moved to Bihar," an officer said. Delhi Police have arrested six people so far for their alleged involvement in the Parliament security breach case. They have been booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Two of them had jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during Zero Hour on December 13, released yellow smoke from canisters and shouted slogans before being overpowered by MPs.

Union Bank of India Baloda Bazar Branch Dist- Baloda Bazar (Chhattisgarh) POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule - 8 (1)] Whereas the Authorized Officers of Union Bank of India, Baloda Bazar Branch under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice of the following borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors calling upon them to repay the amount mentioned in the Notices within 60 days from the date of said Notices.

punjab national bank CIRCLE OFFICE- BILASPUR, RING ROAD NO.-2, GAURAV PATH, BILASPUR- 495001, (C.G) PH. No.-07752310118/19/32 POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Properties) Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Punjab National Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of Powers conferred under Sub-Section (12) of Section 13 read with rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002, issued Demand Notices as below mentioned calling upon the Borrower(s) & Guarantor(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the notices and Interest thereon within 60 days from the date of the receipt of the said notice.

प्रगति महिला नागरिक सहकारी बैंक मर्यादित मुख्य शाखा - भवन क्र.-11, ए-मार्केट, सेक्टर-2, भिलाई जिला-दुर्ग (छ.ग.)

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY AMENDMENT Tender No. SDYCMRWSSRTrans Matri2023, Closing Date & Time: 29.12.2023 at 15:00 Hrs. and Bid Starting Date: 15.12.2023 is now amended as Closing Date & Time: 08.01.2024 at 15:00 Hrs. and Bid Starting Date: 25.12.2023.

POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas, the authorized officer of Jana Small Finance Bank Limited (Formerly known as Janalakshmi Financial Services Limited), under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 issued demand notices to the borrower(s)/ Co-borrower(s) calling upon the borrowers to repay the amount mentioned against the respective names together with interest thereon at the applicable rates as mentioned in the said notices within 60 days from the receipt of the said notices, along with future interest as applicable incidental expenses, costs, charges etc. incurred till the date of payment and/or realisation.



## Child scientists meet Collector and inform about research

Rajim, Dec 18:

In the two-day state level National Children's Science Assembly, selected child scientists from the district met Collector Akash Chhikara and gave information about their research work. In the state level competition, guides from Government Rambishal Pandey Excellent English Medium School, under the leadership of teacher Samiksha Gaikwad, two participating teams, junior Devpriya Sahu and Kamalnayan Sahu and senior Devvrat Sonkar and Anushka Gupta took part.

Sharing information related to his research project, Dev Priya Sahu of the junior team told that the subject of her project work was to study the nutritional value of seeds and innovative techniques of food grain storage. She selected Piparchedi and Semhartara villages and studied the treatment and storage of seeds and grain storage by the farmers of both the villages.

By doing a comparative



study of the traditional techniques and modern techniques adopted by the villagers, information was collected about the problems arising in the storage of seeds and grain, after analyzing the data, solutions were found to solve the problems and after holding a symposium with the villagers, the problems were solved. The team prepared Beejamrit for organic seed treatment and using it, informed the villagers about its benefits.

Similarly, the innovative

technique of using cow dung and pots for seed storage was tested. The villagers fully supported the research project and greatly appreciated the efforts of the child scientists and similarly, the topic of research of the senior team was the study of mental and physical effects of fasting in different cultural and religious beliefs. Team member Devvrat Sonkar said that for the research project, they selected Rajim's Ward No. 8 Brahmin Para, Baniapara

and Ward No. 10 Govardhan Para and conducted a door-to-door survey and asked people through questionnaires about the mental and physical problems caused by fasting. They collected information about the physical benefits and problems caused by fasting, after analyzing these data through scientific method, information about various solutions to the problems caused by fasting was given to the people through seminars.

Encouragement was given by providing blessings and insignia for representing the district at the state level and for excellent performance. The children described the meeting with the Collector as inspiring and asked them to remain active in educational activities along with studies. Praising the efforts of the guiding teachers for the efficient guidance of the child scientists, they were also inspired to play a meaningful role in building the future of the children. District Education Officer Ramesh Kumar Nishad, District Nodal Gyanendra Sharma on the excellent performance of the children in the state level competition and the entire school family including school principal Sanjay Kumar Ekka, Sagar Sharma NCC officer, cluster coordinator Subhash Sharma, lecturer ML Sen, Kamal Sonkar, Madhu Gupta, teacher Shikha Mahadik, Neeta Yadav, Jitendra Sahu, Puneswar Sahu have sent their best wishes.

## BJP govt is turning away from the promises made: Jain

■ For the welfare of farmers



Jagdalpur, Dec 18: Ex-MLA Rekhchand Jain reached village Nangur and Bade Murma on Saturday and took information from Congressmen about the votes received in their polling centers in the assembly elections and also asked about the reason for Congress's defeat. After this, he along with his colleagues went to the paddy procurement center and discussed with the farmers. Rekhchand Jain said that the BJP government is not taking decisions in the interest of farmers. The BJP government is turning away from the promises made for the welfare of farmers in the name of Modi's guarantee before the assembly elections. A promise was made to buy paddy from farmers at Rs 3100 per quintal, whereas even now it is being purchased at the old rate of Rs 2183 per quintal. Not only this, paddy is being purchased from each farmer at the rate of 19 quintals per acre. Whereas BJP in its manifesto had

promised to buy 21 quintals of paddy per acre. Both these subjects were not brought up in the first meeting of the state cabinet. Whereas at present paddy is being purchased from farmers not only in Jagdalpur Bastar but in the entire state.

Jain has expressed regret that the BJP leaders who were announcing loan waiver of farmers before the elections are not taking proper initiative to implement it. There is deep disappointment and resentment among the farmers due to loan waiver, purchase of paddy at Rs 3100 per quintal and non-purchase of 21 quintal paddy per acre. Former MLA Rekhchand Jain reached the paddy procurement centers of Nangur and Bade Murma and dis-

cussed with the farmers who came to sell paddy and inspected the weighing, center in-charges regarding the quantity of additional paddy being taken from the farmers in the name of 'Sukhti' in the centres. Advice has also been given not to exploit in the name of 'Sukhti'. During this, along with Mr. Jain, Block Congress President Neeluram Baghel, Phoolings Sethia, Dhansing Baghel, Radha Mohan Das, Shankar Nag, Hari Bandhu, Lokesh Sethia, Dharam Baghel, Samnath Nag, Asha Ram, Rama Nag, Gangaram, Hiralal Dhruv, Vijay Baghel, Kamal Sethia, Harihar Sethia, senior Congress leader Paramjit Jaswal, Santosh Singh, social worker Nirmal Lodha etc. were present.

## Cleanliness campaign in the district for VBSY



Korea, Dec 18: Before the upcoming event of Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY), here in the region a cleanliness campaign was conducted at different places in all the districts of Korea and MCB and an oath of cleanliness was taken. Bharat Sankalp Yatra developed by the Government of India has been started, under which cleanliness campaign was started and cleanliness

campaign was conducted in different gram panchayats of Koriya district including Sonhat and Baikunthpur district panchayats, Manendragarh, Bharatpur and Khadgan district panchayats of MCB district, and a awareness rally was taken out by children and oath was administered. Giving detailed information in this regard, District Panchayat CEO Dr. Ashutosh

Chaturvedi said that during the Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra, under the direction of Collector Korea Vinay Kumar Langhe and MCB Collector Narendra Kumar Dugga, cleanliness campaign was conducted in all the five District Panchayats of both the districts. In this context, a rally was also taken out by the children of Kharwat Vidyalaya of District

Panchayat Baikunthpur for public awareness among the villagers.

Apart from this, oath of cleanliness was administered to everyone by cleaning public areas in Gram Panchayat Jamgahna and Gram Panchayat Patna. In the presence of District Panchayat CEO at Gram Panchayat Sonhat, the headquarters of district Sonhat, the LED van program venue was cleaned with the help of labor donations and cleanliness oath was administered. The oath of cleanliness mission was also administered in the meeting room of Bharatpur District Panchayat in the presence of Tehsildar, District CEO and public representatives.

Dongargaon, Dec 18:

A group of conscious women of the city provided a direction to the youth by staging Antvardand street-play under the initiative of Chinchari. During this program organized on Friday, 15th December at the Basic Training Center of the city, motivational speaker Mrs. Baljeet Kaur gave guidance on Antvardand to make the youth aware.

Along with BTI staff, Lakshmi Nakhat, Sheetal Shukla, Aarti Jain and Varsha Pathak mainly participated in the program. Director Siddharth Jain, narrator Hrithik



Tiwari, Anushka Pathak, mother Khushi Jain, father Atishay Jain, sister Mani Shukla, teacher Parul Jain along with Suparsh Jain, Suyash Lodha, Anshul Nakhat, Ashish Jain presented the street drama Antvardand presented by the young men and

women of the city. During the programme, motivational speaker Baljeet Kaur said that due to lack of solution to the internal conflict in the minds of children, they end their lives by taking wrong decisions, hence a meaningful initiative was taken by Chinchari to

provide solution to their problems. Instead of going against your family and relatives, there is a solution to all the problems and through this group we are trying to remove the ongoing conflict among children and youth, she said.

## Vehicles running in VIP quota in Metabodli Mines

Dalli-Rajhara, Dec 18: A few years ago, when Niko Company started mining work in Metabodli, more than fifty farmers of Metabodli and Gidhali and surrounding eight villages had sold their land and property and bought trucks. Apart from these, the hopes of the local truck owners, who were engaged in the transportation business for their ancestors, were also raised and under the agreement between the Transport Union and the Mines Management, it was decided to give a chance to each registered truck or other heavy vehicle one by one in a certain order. But as per information, after a few months, the situation worsened when the leaders of the ruling Congress suddenly entered into the transport business with many trucks

and after a few days, at the behest of an influential Congress leader who described himself as close to the former Chief Minister, the VIP quota started being sold at Rs 3000 per truck. The era of VIP quota started from here and now, while the vehicles of big Congress leaders of the area are making several trips in a single day, the number of Transport Association members start (turn of a trip) come after a month wait.

For a long time, the officials of the Transport Association had also requested the former Chief Minister to intervene in the matter but he also ignored it. In the rally and general meeting of the Transport Association, there was a demand to stop overloading of trucks, besides installing queuing system in vehicles, increas-



ing the transport rate, stopping VIP vehicles. According to the Transport Association, the mines management is defrauding the rules and regulations and defrauding the government of lakhs by openly overloading them. 50 to 100 trucks of goods are transported daily and it should be known that these goods are loaded under the supervision of Mineral Department, and is being

loaded almost twice the prescribed quantity. According to the information received, there should be 25 tonnes of goods in a 10 wheeler vehicle and 16 tonnes in a 6 wheeler truck, but 45 tonnes is being loaded in a big vehicle and 30 tonnes in a small one. Now even if 50 vehicles are transported every day, then mineral royalty worth lakhs of rupees is being stolen every day and clearly the

Mineral Department is in collusion, or is unable to take action due to access to higher levels. Let it be known that the High Court also has a clear instruction regarding over loading that it should be stopped immediately and as vehicles have to go through three districts from Metabodli and Kachha to Siltara, the police, traffic and mineral officers of any district are not paying attention. It should also be known that at a distance of only 20 km from Kachha, there is Dalli Rajhara railway station from where iron ore is also sent to Bhilai Steel Plant. If initiative is taken, a compromise can be reached with the Railways, but there is no system of arbitrary loading in the Railways. Perhaps this is the reason that doing this will prevent theft of iron ore, hence neither the

mines management nor the state government has paid attention to this. State level spokesperson of Bharatiya Janata Party, Devlal Thakur said that in the last 5 years, the Congress government has given birth to corruption in Chhattisgarh state, and after the arrival of BJP government, corruption and VIP quota in the mines of the area will be curbed. The tribals of the area will be provided their rights and employment in mines.

**What transporters say:**  
"All vehicles running in VIP quota have been asked to be closed till the current date. Loading work will not be done on VIP quota vehicles."  
Neeraj Chopra, Chopra Transporters

## BJP's deception has started: Dewangan



Khairagarh, Dec 18: The people of Chhattisgarh are only disappointed by the decisions of the first cabinet meeting of Bharatiya Janata Party's Vishnudev Sai government. Congress leader Manrakhan Dewangan alleged that paddy procurement has started in the state, and BJP had promised Rs 3100 per 21 quintals per acre and also BJP had promised that lump sum cash payment will be made in the paddy procurement centers and in the village

itself. But as soon as the government is formed, after filling the forms from more than 70 lakh mothers and sisters, had to be given Rs.10000 as part of Mahtari Vandan, which also has not been started he further alleged. Dewangan further said that in the very first meeting, the BJP government has started preparing the ground for violating the promise and before the elections, they had promised to implement Modi's guarantee as soon as the government is formed; now they are saying that they will implement the guarantee in five years. The BJP government has set a great example of how a government will go back on its promise within 24 hours. Due to the indifference of the government in the first cabinet, farmers may not be able to get its benefits now, he said.

## Seven day special NSS camp concludes



Khairagarh, Dec 18: A seven-day special camp was concluded by the National Service Scheme Unit of Government New College, Thelkadhi. Through the camp, activities like cleanliness programme, public awareness rally, public contact campaign, street play, cultural program etc. were conducted by the college students. Along with this, various scholars also provided their presence for intellectual discussion. Students benefited from the lectures of Assistant Professor Deepak Verma, senior litterateur and retired Professor Thansingh Verma, Thelkadhi police station in-

charge Alok Sahu, and RASEO program officer Bhartendu Verma. Chief Guest at the closing ceremony of the program was Dr. K.L. Tandekar Principal, Government Digvijay Autonomous Post Graduate College, Rajnandgaon, and special guest was Dr. Suresh Patel, District Organizer RASEO Rajnandgaon. The program was also presided over by Principal A.K. Srivastava. In the successful conduct of this seven-day special camp, there was special support from RASEO Program Officer D.K. Sahu, Sarpanch Ashwani Tandon, all the professors of the college, RASEO volunteers and villagers.

## Satnami Samaj celebrates Guru Ghasidas' birth anniversary

■ Grand Satnam Sandesh Yatra conducted

Rajim, Dec 18: Rajim witnessed a magnificent display of devotion and unity on the 267th birth anniversary of Sant Baba Guru Ghasidas, as the Tehsil level Satnami Samaj circle Rajim orchestrated a grand Satnam Sandesh procession. This revered annual event, held on Saturday, December 16th, commenced from Satnam Gurudwara on Raipur Road Rajim, with Sant Baba Khub Lal Tandon, temple priest Panmeshwar Markandey, and community leaders presiding over the auspicious occasion.

The procession was a sight to behold, featuring seven flag bearers and captivating panthi dance groups that added to the festive spirit. The Yatra traversed through Gurudwara, Pandit Sunderlal Sharma Chowk, Gariaband Road, Satnami Para, Shivaji Chowk, and culminated at the Guru Ghasidas Temple. Before the procession, the newly elected MLA of Rajim Assembly, Rohit Sahu, along with his colleagues, humbly visited the temple to seek blessings and pay respects to Baba Guru Ghasidas. Addressing the Sant Samaj members, Rohit expressed his profound gratitude, saying, "As an MLA, it is an honour for me to be



part of this unforgettable event marking Baba Guru Ghasidas Jayanti. You, especially the Satnami community, have contributed immensely. I consider myself your son, not just a leader, and I promise unwavering support for the betterment of our society. You can count on me day or night; I will always be there for you." Continuing the tradition of unity and mutual respect, former



MLA Amitesh Shukla also made a heartfelt visit to the Guru Ghasidas temple to seek blessings. During his tenure, Shukla inaugurated the auditorium building funded by the MLA, cutting the ribbon as a symbol of communal progress. Addressing the Sant Samaj, Shukla shared, "I have cherished the love and support of the Satnami society since my father's time, Pandit

Shyamcharan Shukla. My family and I are deeply grateful for this love, and we will always stand by you in your journey towards progress. In elections, there are wins and losses, but our commitment to the society remains unshaken." The event was further enriched with Dr. Anand Matwale Guru delivering a warm welcome speech, paying tribute to

Gurubaba Ghasi Das. The program was skillfully conducted by Secretary Sugharmal Aade. Distinguished guests received honours in the form of shawls and Shripal, with the presence of Chandrashekhra Sahu, a District Panchayat member, and other dignitaries. The community leaders, including Raju Sahu, Manish Harit, Kishore Sahu, along with former MLA Amitesh Shukla, Dekshwar Thakur (DK), Ramkumar Goswami, Sunil Tiwari, and Ramnarayan Sahu, came together with hundreds of women, men, and children to celebrate this joyous occasion in a spirit of unity and shared purpose.



## Myanmar SC rejects ousted leader Suu Kyi's special appeal in bribery conviction

Bangkok, Dec 18 (AP)

Myanmar's Supreme Court rejected Monday a special appeal by the country's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi against her conviction in a case in which she was charged with corruption for allegedly receiving gold and thousands of dollars as a bribe from a former political colleague, a legal official said. Suu Kyi, 78, was arrested on February 1, 2021, when the military seized power from her elected government.

She is serving prison sentences totaling 27 years after being convicted of a string of criminal charges that her supporters and in-

dependent analysts say were concocted to discredit her and legitimise the military's seizure of power.

Monday's trial was closed to the media diplomats and spectators. Suu Kyi's lawyers were barred by a gag order from talking about it. A legal official relayed the court's decision to The Associated Press while insisting on anonymity for fear of being punished by the authorities.

Suu Kyi was convicted, in the special appeal case, of receiving USD 6,00,000 and seven gold bars in 2017-18 from Phyoo Min Thein, the former chief minister of Yangon, the

country's biggest city. He is also a former senior member of her political party.

She was sentenced to five years in prison in April last year after being found guilty of bribery. Her lawyers, before they were served with gag orders in late 2021, said she rejected all the corruption allegations against her as "absurd."

Special appeals are usually the final stage of the appeals process in Myanmar. However, they can be re-examined by the Special Appeals Tribunal or the Plenary Tribunal if the chief justice sees an aspect of public interest.

Initial appeals filed by

her lawyers in most of her cases have already been rejected at least once by the lower court. Appeals of her convictions on election fraud, breaching the country's official secrets act and five other corruption charges are still being processed, the legal official said.

Suu Kyi's legal team has faced several hurdles, including being unable to meet with her to receive her instructions.

They have applied at least six times for permission to meet with her since they last saw her in person in December 2022, but have not received any response, the legal official said.

## MILITARY BASE VISIT



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaks, during a visit to RAF Lossiemouth military base to praise members of the RAF, Army and Navy who will spend time away from their families this Christmas while on duty, in Moray, Scotland, Monday.

## Pakistan's Punjab province govt plans to establish 'Darshan Resort' at Kartarpur

Lahore, Dec 18 (PTI)

Pakistan's Punjab province government plans to establish a "Darshan Resort" close to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur to provide a view of the holy site to the Sikh pilgrims staying there.

Inaugurated in 2019, the Kartarpur corridor links Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan, where Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev lived and died at the start of the 16th century, to Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Punjab's Gurdaspur district. The 4 km-long corridor provides visa free access to Indian pilgrims to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib.

"The construction of a five-storey Darshan Resort will start next month with an estimated cost of PKR300 million," Punjab Secretary Tourism Raja Jahangir Anwar told PTI on Monday.

Anwar said the project has been envisaged to facilitate the Sikhs coming from across the globe.

About the project, he said it would be built just 500 meters away from the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib. "The ground breaking of the project will be held next month. And by the end of 2024, the resort will be completed," Anwar said, adding that the Punjab government will fund the whole project.

The provincial secretary further said that Darshan Resort will have at least 10 suite rooms on the top floor; mini theatre and gym.

He said the resort will also offer a perfect aerial view of the Karatarpur Sahib. "Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has already accorded approval to establish the 50-room Darshan Resort by the Punjab Tourism Department," Anwar said.

## Indian-origin undercover reporter finds exploitation of care workers in UK

London, Dec 18 (PTI)

A UK-based reporter from Kerala who went undercover as a care assistant in a care home for the elderly in north-east England discovered worrying levels of exploitation of staff, many of them recruited from overseas countries such as India.

Balakrishnan Balagopal's report for the BBC Panorama investigation, which will be telecast here on Monday evening, found carers being charged thousands of pounds by an Indian recruitment agency and nurses locked into lengthy contracts with a care home with financial penalties if they tried to leave jobs. According to official statistics for the past year, 140,000 visas were issued to overseas workers to come to the UK to meet staff shortages in the health and care industry and 39,000 of these went to people from India.

"As I delved deeper into

the lives of overseas caregivers, I heard a narrative of exploitation, debt, separation from family, and the constant fear of making mistakes," Balagopal said in a statement.

"The pursuit of a permanent visa became a tightrope walk, impacting the quality of care provided. The very individuals tasked with ensuring the happiness and well-being of residents found themselves entangled in a web of instability," he said.

Nurses and care workers from overseas eligible for a skilled worker visa need to be sponsored by an employer. In theory, they can switch jobs but within a limited timeframe, which can give employers a certain exploitative hold over them.

The Care Workers Under Pressure investigation for the BBC comes soon after the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), the independent body advising the UK government on immigration,

warned of exploitation in the country's social care sector in its annual report released last week.

"Underfunding and consequential low pay contributes to the exploitation of workers in the social care sector. Migrants in the sector on the H&CW (Health & Care Worker) visa are even more susceptible to exploitation as their right to reside in the UK is directly linked to their employer, creating a power imbalance," the MAC report notes.

It issued a series of recommendations for the government to crack down on the exploitation of workers in the social care sector. "Government could consider greater support for migrants when they enter employment and when experiencing exploitation in the UK such as creating a portal specifically for the care sector where vacancies that would allow migrants to switch employer are posted," it said.

## Car plows into parked vehicle in motorcade

Wilmington (US), Dec 18 (AP)

A car plowed into a parked SUV that was guarding President Joe Biden's motorcade Sunday night while the president was leaving a visit to his campaign headquarters. The president and first lady Jill Biden were unharmed.

While Biden was walking from the campaign office to his waiting armored SUV, a sedan hit a US Secret Service vehicle that was being used to close off intersections near the headquarters for the president's departure. The sedan then tried to continue into a closed-off intersection, before Secret Service personnel surrounded the vehicle with weapons drawn and instructed the driver to put his hands up.

Biden paused and looked over toward the sound, surprised, before he was ushered into the vehicle, where his wife was already seated, before being driven swiftly back to their home.

## Several feared dead as a massive fuel depot explosion rocks Guinea's capital

Konakry (Guinea), Dec 18 (AP)

An explosion and inferno at Guinea's main fuel depot in the capital of Conakry left several people dead or injured, authorities and local media reported Monday, as emergency services battled to put out the fire.

The fire broke out at the Guinean Petroleum Company depot shortly after a massive explosion past midnight Sunday, Guinea's presidency said in a statement. The area in the heart of the Kaloum administrative district is home to most government offices.

It was not immediately clear what caused the fire at the depot that supplies most of the fuel in Guinea, raising fears of a major supply disruption.

Officials have not confirmed any casualty figures though local media reported dozens of people were hurt, most of them

hospitalized with serious injuries. At least four dead were confirmed at the Ignace Deen hospital, Conakry-based Le Courrier de Conakry news platform reported.

Communications Minister Aminata Kaba said that damage was significant.

The fire razed several offices and buildings within the area that was covered with thick smoke. Many residents fled their homes.

"I was sleeping when I heard a whistle, then a deafening explosion," said Mounatou Bald, who lives in Kaloum.

Authorities shut down schools and public places in the capital as emergency services raced to put out the fire, which caused a major blockade in the area. Access to the district was shut except for essentials services. The presidency asked people to stay at home.

## FLOODWATERS



Stranded residents stand on a road, a large section of which has washed away, in the suburb of Holloways Beach in Cairns, Australia, Monday. Officials say more than 300 people have been rescued from floodwaters in northeast Australia, with dozens of residents clinging to roofs.

## Pak's top poll body reserves verdict in organisational polls in Imran Khan's party

Islamabad, Dec 18 (PTI)

Pakistan's top election body on Monday reserved its judgment in a case challenging the controversial organisational elections in the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party founded by the now-incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan.

A five-member panel of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) concluded the hearing of multiple petitions filed by members of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) against the election held on December 2 in Peshawar.

Several petitioners led by PTI's estranged former

leader Akbar S Ahmad challenged the election in the ECP by blaming the party for carrying out a selection process in the name of party election, aiming at throwing out party workers to give the reins to a few lawyers ahead of general elections on February 8.

The ECP panel, led by the Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, reserved the verdict after hearing arguments by the rival parties. Earlier, following an order by the ECP to hold the polls within the party to retain the cricket bat as a party symbol, the PTI organised its party polls, electing Barrister Gohar

Khan, a nominee of Imran Khan, as the new chairman.

Both Akbar S Ahmad and Gohar Khan attended the hearing.

Khan, who is in jail, had decided to stay away from party elections as it would have invited a legal challenge by his opponents since he was disqualified by the ECP in the Toshakhana corruption case.

Geo News reported that PTI's counsel Barrister Ali Zafar presented his arguments, "The chairman is elected for five years while the panel is for three years. Voting is not required where there is an uncontested election."

## Sri Lanka arrests 14 Indian fishermen for allegedly poaching in its waters

Colombo, Dec 18 (PTI)

The Sri Lanka Navy has arrested 14 Indian fishermen and seized their trawler for allegedly poaching in the island nation's waters, taking the total number of arrests this year to nearly 240.

These fishermen were arrested on Sunday off the coast of Karainagar in the northern Jaffna peninsula, the Navy said in a release on Monday. So far this year, some 240 Indian fishermen, along with 35 trawlers, have been arrested for illegal fishing. Earlier on December 6, at least 21 Indian fishermen were similarly arrested with their

four trawlers seized in the northeastern waters off Mannar and Kovilan.

Last week, referring to the recurring problem of "Indian fishermen doing illegal fishing" in Sri Lankan waters, Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda told Parliament that it needs a top-level diplomatic solution between the two nations. The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters.

## 16 killed in Christmas-season shootings in central Mexico

Mexico City, Dec 18 (AP)

Gunmen attacked a Christmas season party early Sunday, killing a dozen people in the town of Salvatierra in Mexico's north-central state of Guanajuato, prosecutors said. State prosecutors also reported that four other people died in a shooting in the city of Salamanca, but did not describe the circumstances of that attack. Local media said the victims in Salvatierra were leaving an event hall following a Christmas party known as a "posada" when they were gunned down. Guanajuato has been the scene of

bloody turf battles between the Jalisco cartel and local gangs backed by the Sinaloa cartel. The state has long had the highest number of homicides in Mexico. Meanwhile, in the Caribbean coast resort of Tulum, three men were shot to death and four people were wounded in an attack at a bar Sunday, authorities said. Quintana Roo state prosecutors said a preliminary investigation indicated the shooting "may have been a dispute involving retail drug sales, and for that reason the safety of the public and that of our visitors, was never at risk."

## 5 people including 3 young children die in house fire

Bullhead City (US), Dec 18 (AP)

Five people, including three young children, have died in a house fire in northwestern Arizona, authorities said on Sunday, adding it appeared no adults were home at the time.

Bullhead City police said the fire broke out around 5 p.m. on Saturday and the victims did not make it out of the two-story duplex in that community near the Colorado River. A city fire department spokesman said the five victims were ages 2, 4, 5, 11 and 13. Their names weren't immediately released on Sunday.

## Berlin Zoo sends the first giant pandas born in Germany to China

Berlin, Dec 18 (AP)

The Berlin Zoo has sent the first giant pandas born in Germany to China, dispatching the 4-year-olds on a journey that was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pit and Paule, who also are known by the Chinese names Meng Xiang and Meng Yuan, departed from Berlin on Saturday aboard an Air China cargo jet and have now arrived at their new home, the Chengdu Panda Base, the zoo said Monday. "Pit and Paule coped well with the flight," said Andreas Pauly, the zoo's head of animal health, who accompanied

the panda brothers to China. "When the bamboo is right, pandas are usually very relaxed. It was the same on the flight."

The pair will now spend 30 days in quarantine at the panda base.

The young pandas were a star attraction in Berlin since their birth in 2019, but their return to China was contractually agreed from the start.

While China gifted friendly nations with its unofficial mascot for decades as part of a policy of "panda diplomacy," the country now loans pandas to zoos on commercial terms.

## 15 suspected drug smugglers killed in clash with Thai soldiers

Bangkok, Dec 18 (AP)

Fifteen suspected drug smugglers were killed and about 2 million methamphetamine tablets seized in northern Thailand near the Myanmar border after a shootout with Thai soldiers, Thai officials said.

The clash, which occurred Saturday night, came after the local army received a tip that there would be smuggling activity near the border in Chiang Rai province, said Phanurat Lukboon, acting secretary-general of the Office of the Narcotics Control Board. Officers

found a group of about 20 people carrying backpacks in the area, Phanurat said on Sunday. After the officers identified themselves and asked to inspect the bags, the group began shooting at them, he added. The clash lasted around 15 minutes and the Thai officers were all safe, Phanurat said while on a visit to the site where the incident occurred. He thanked the officers for their help in "preventing these awful things from entering our country and destroying our youth."

Seventeen backpacks made from fertilizer sacks

were found with the suspected smugglers and more than 2 million methamphetamine pills were inside the bags, officials said.

No arrests were made and officials were still working to identify the 15 people killed in the clash and the origin of the drugs, according to the Office of the Narcotics Control Board. On Wednesday, Thailand announced it had seized 50 million methamphetamine tablets in the western province of Kanchanaburi, also near the Myanmar border.





# CENTRAL Chronicle

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## Global Collaboration

### The Way Forward for AI Governance

In an era where the world is increasingly interconnected through the vast web of the Internet, it becomes imperative for nations to recognize the futility of framing stringent regulations in isolation. Union Minister for State for Electronics and Information Technology, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, recently emphasized the importance of a global understanding of various facets of the Internet. In a world where cybercrime knows no boundaries, where perpetrators reside in one jurisdiction, victims in another, and the actual crime occurs elsewhere, the adoption of strict regulations by a single nation, such as India, serves little purpose if other nations fail to follow suit. The New Delhi Declaration, forged at the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) summit, stands as a beacon of hope in the quest for international cooperation and collaboration. This declaration not only seeks to establish an international framework focused on AI trust and safety but also extends its reach into crucial sectors like healthcare and agriculture. Notably, these agreements are meticulously designed to consider the unique needs of the Global South. While China may not be a part of this multilateral endeavor, GPAI is positioned to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of artificial intelligence on a global scale. The breakneck pace at which AI systems are advancing has raised legitimate concerns regarding the dominance of Big Tech and the alarming lack of transparency in the field. The New Delhi Declaration wisely emphasizes the inherent risks associated with AI, particularly the proliferation of misinformation, disinformation, and the grave threats posed to personal data and human rights. In response to these challenges, it calls for the development of a comprehensive governance framework for AI while championing equitable access to critical resources for innovation. For India, aspiring to disseminate its model of digital public infrastructure across the globe and emerge as a frontrunner in the realm of global AI, the establishment of such an inclusive mechanism is nothing short of imperative. The ascent of generative AI platforms like ChatGPT and Google Bard has ignited fervent debates on artificial intelligence within mainstream discourse. Both public and private entities find themselves wrestling with the dual conundrum of harnessing the immense benefits of AI technology while effectively mitigating the attendant risks. As instances of AI misuse continue to proliferate, the clamor for stringent regulatory controls, including restrictions on usage, grows louder. However, as Minister Chandrasekhar astutely points out, the formulation of such decisions necessitates a global approach. In an era where the digital landscape transcends borders, the consequences of unilateral AI regulations can be far-reaching and, often, counterproductive. The nature of AI technology inherently defies national boundaries, making it a global concern that transcends the scope of any one nation's regulations. While it is undoubtedly crucial for individual countries to implement AI regulations that safeguard their interests and security, a broader, more cooperative approach is imperative to effectively address the multifaceted challenges posed by artificial intelligence. The New Delhi Declaration, in essence, underscores the need for a harmonious symphony of efforts on the global stage. It recognizes that the digital future belongs to no single nation but to all of humanity. By fostering international collaboration, this declaration paves the way for a collective response to the challenges of AI, one that leverages the strengths and expertise of nations around the world. One of the most pressing concerns that AI governance must address is the pervasive issue of misinformation and disinformation. With AI-driven technologies becoming increasingly adept at generating convincing fake content, the potential for malicious actors to manipulate public opinion, sow discord, and disrupt societies is a growing threat. Such threats do not respect borders; they exploit the interconnectedness of the digital realm to amplify their impact. A global approach to combatting misinformation is not just beneficial; it is essential. Moreover, the protection of personal data and human rights in the age of AI is of paramount importance. As AI systems amass vast amounts of data, the potential for misuse and abuse of this information becomes all too real. Ensuring that AI is harnessed responsibly and ethically is a shared responsibility that transcends national interests. The New Delhi Declaration's emphasis on developing a governance framework for AI that upholds human rights and privacy is a step in the right direction. Equitable access to critical AI resources is another fundamental tenet of responsible AI governance. It is imperative that all nations, regardless of their economic standing, have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the advancements in AI technology. The declaration's commitment to promoting such equitable access ensures that AI does not become a tool of exclusion, but rather a force for global progress.

## Parliamentary Chaos

### A Crisis of Democracy

The suspension of 78 Members of Parliament, including both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members, has thrown our parliamentary proceedings into disarray. This extraordinary development comes on the heels of 14 MPs being suspended last week for demanding a statement from Union Home Minister Amit Shah regarding the security breach in Parliament. In total, 92 MPs have now been suspended in this session alone. In Lok Sabha, 30 MPs have been suspended for the remainder of the session, while three face suspension until the privileges committee submits a report on their conduct. Meanwhile, in Rajya Sabha, 35 members have been suspended for the rest of the session, with 11 facing suspension until a report by the privileges panel is received. The gravity of the situation is evident, and it raises questions about the health of our democracy. Among the suspended Lok Sabha MPs are prominent figures such as Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Congress's leader in Lok Sabha, and Gaurav Gogoi, the deputy leader of the party in the House. Additionally, Trinamool MPs Kalyan Banerjee, Kakoli Ghosh Dasgupta, Saugata Ray, and Satabdi Roy, along with DMK members A Raja and Dayanidhi Maran, find themselves on the suspension list. In Rajya Sabha, Congress's Jairam Ramesh and Randeep Singh Surjewala, DMK's Kanimozhi, and RJD's Manoj Kumar Jha are among those suspended. The reasons behind this dramatic suspension are rooted in the demand for accountability and transparency. The MPs in question sought a statement from the Union Home Minister Amit Shah regarding the security breach in Parliament. Their demand is not unwarranted, given the gravity of the incident and the need for public clarification on the matter. The security of our highest legislative body is paramount, and it is the right of the elected representatives to seek answers when such breaches occur. The suspended MPs have expressed their frustration with the government's handling of the situation. Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, for instance, accused the government of behaving dictatorially and treating Parliament as a partisan headquarters. He emphasized that the Opposition had been cooperative throughout the session but felt that the government was unwilling to engage in meaningful dialogue within the parliamentary setting. Gaurav Gogoi echoed these sentiments, asserting that the BJP government was bulldozing the Opposition and suggested that the Home Minister was reluctant to take responsibility for the security breach. He further stated that the protest outside Lok Sabha would continue, indicating the MPs' determination to seek accountability. The chaos witnessed in Rajya Sabha, where members deliberately ignored the bench and the House was unable to function, highlights the severity of the situation. This disruption only serves to further undermine the effectiveness of our parliamentary democracy. With a significant number of Opposition MPs suspended, there is a genuine concern that the government may have a free hand in passing legislation without adequate debate and scrutiny. This situation threatens to stifle dissent, which is an integral part of a healthy democracy. It is essential to remember that democracy thrives on the exchange of ideas, debate, and accountability. The Prime Minister, in his first remarks on the security breach, acknowledged its seriousness and called for a detailed investigation. However, the demand for a statement from the Home Minister, which is seen as a legitimate and straightforward request, remains unfulfilled. It is crucial to recognize that security within Parliament is a matter under the purview of the secretariat, and it is vital to uphold the separation of powers. However, this does not absolve the government of its responsibility to provide clear and transparent information to the public and to the elected representatives of the nation.

Central Chronicle invites articles, write-ups, and comments on a wide range of issues for our editorial page. Submissions should be between 800-900 words in length. In addition, we welcome letters to the editor for this page. While letters may be edited for clarity, we aim to preserve the integrity of the original message, and ask that they be kept to around 50-60 words. Submissions can be sent via [email@editorcentralchronicle@gmail.com](mailto:email@editorcentralchronicle@gmail.com).

## RAIN HAVOC



People shift to safe places from a flood-hit area following heavy rains, in Thoothukudi, Monday, Dec. 18.

## Dreams of developed India



### DR SATYAVAN SAURABH



"At midnight, when the world sleeps, India will awaken to life and freedom". This "Tryst with Destiny" speech of Jawaharlal Nehru was a symbol of the dream that our freedom fighters had fulfilled. It also gave us, the vision of the next dream to be followed by the people of India. Gandhi's vision of India was to promote domestic industrialization for the self-reliant development of our country. His view was that rural India was the backbone of India's development. If India has to develop, there should be equal development of rural areas also. He also wanted India to be free from all social evils like poverty, unemployment, discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, religion, and most importantly to end untouchability against the lower castes (Dalits) whom he called 'Harijan'.

These philosophies reflect the social level of the contemporary Indian society. Even after 75 years of independence we still find these social issues persisting in India. The Preamble of our Constitution specifies India as a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic and republic country. Let us see how we have fulfilled our dream as citizens of India to make this definition true. After 100 years of freedom struggle we have been able to realize this dream. Even during the Cold War era when the two superpowers America and the Soviet Union were forming alliances to counter each other, we chose non-alignment not to join any alliance to maintain our sovereignty. Although colonialism is banned by the United Nations, something similar to neo-colonialism is

taking root in the international world. Neocolonialism is defined as indirect control over the policies of states by other states. Recently we have seen pressure by India and other underdeveloped countries such as the US in the United Nations to introduce genetically modified (GM) seeds and to liberalize the market for agricultural imports from developed countries. GM seeds privatize agriculture and thus pose a huge threat to the soil quality as well as the social condition of the farmers of India. India has been consistently targeted by the US at international forums over research into development of seeds adapted to Indian soils.

Another example of threat to India's sovereignty is through global terrorism. India has been witness to 26/11 and Pathankot attacks by militants. India also faces insurgent activities from Naxalites and extremists in the Northeast, from the Assam separatist movement demanding Bodoland. These activities lead to loss of innocent lives and damage to government properties which hinders the development of the country. To keep this dream alive we have to show unity against these activities. The example of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) decision against Facebook for monopolizing the Internet was met with strong unanimous rejection by the people of India.

Our first Prime Minister was of the opinion of the important role of government in the planning and development of the country. Liberalization of industries happened only after 1991, the license raj

ended. Recently we saw inflow of money through Foreign Direct Investment into India. If we look closely we have not opened 100% FDI in maximum sectors of India. Privatization of the market undoubtedly provides the best competition in the society with quality products. But if we adopt this, the market will supply only those products which are in demand and from which they can make profits while ignoring other essential supplies. Also the objective of socialist society is to achieve equal results for every citizen, provide equal opportunities in jobs, provide minimum wages and provide basic needs like food, education, health etc. Presently India is the country with the largest number of underprivileged suffering from poverty, ill health, unemployment, abuse due to discrimination, lack of awareness due to poor education etc. We as citizens of India should be active in honestly implementing the policies made by the government by actively forming organizations to curb these social issues.

India finds its unity in diversity. After the communal riots that took place after independence, India understood that by taking sides of any religion, India has to suffer losses in the long run. But even today we find religious hatred in the society. Over the years, we have seen communal riots in the form of 1984 Sikh riots, 2002 Godhra riots, 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots, demolition of Babri Masjid and many others. Religious politics has taken root in Indian politics. The recent ban on beef consumption and movements like 'Ghar Wapsi', 'Love Jihad' etc. are against the core values of secularism. Awareness should be spread not to blindly believe what is said in the name of religion and to follow conscience. We are far from reaching this dream but we must not give up. The society should protest against the unreasonable cuts imposed by these religious institutions. In this regard we can see that democracy has taken root in Indian society. Active formation of unions, increased participation in election processes, peaceful resolution of disputed scenarios are actively seen even in remote parts of the country. The recent scenario regarding intolerance

has once again raised speculations about our democratic confidence. We have been continuously seeing such a situation where we find that fatwa is issued by the religion against the writing of the author's views. People are being put in jail because of posts on Facebook. Also we see caste based politics, religion based politics in our country. National parties are continuously doing dirty politics, showing the ugly face of democracy.

Democracy is a power that has been achieved after a long historical struggle. We should not let the ignorance of the society take away the best gift we have got in the form of freedom. As citizens of Republic India, we believe in the supremacy of our Constitution. Our Constitution faced a challenge during the Emergency of 1976. It has been amended extensively by the authority for their personal future interest. But soon the government saw the strong opposition from the citizens of the country and realized the power inherent in the Constitution. After so many years, we have amended the Constitution 105 times. Many of the powers vested in the authorities have been re-examined and many new provisions of governance have been added, for example Panchayati Raj etc. The balanced power vested in the judiciary, executive, legislature and independent bodies has helped citizens contribute effectively to governance. This feeling of justice provided by the Constitution should never be forgotten. One must have confidence in the effective processing of this machinery. We have seen our dreams shattered on many occasions but still we come out strong and full of confidence from every troublesome situation. We must understand the importance of Swaraj and start aggressively pursuing these dreams so that we can provide a better future to our coming generations. I would like to end on the best quotes of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam "Dreams are not what you see in sleep, but what do not let you sleep".

(Writer is Research scholar, poet, independent journalist and columnist, All India Radio and TV panelist).

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Dominant Victory

India's women's cricket team achieved a remarkable Test match victory against England, winning by 347 runs, one of the largest margins ever recorded in women's Test cricket. Deepthi Sharma's outstanding performance, taking 9 wickets in just 13.3 overs, highlighted India's near perfect display. The team appears well-balanced, especially in terms of bowling, with seamers Renuka Singh Thakur and Pooja Vastrakar, complemented by spinners Deepthi, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, and Sneha Rana, with Shafali Verma as backup. England, in their 100th Test, faced a formidable Indian side. India's timely win sets them as favorites for their upcoming Test against Australia. Kudos to India! **Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee, Faridabad**

### Tackling Insecurity and Unemployment

The central government must acknowledge its lapse in Parliament security while addressing rising unemployment and inflation, the core grievances of the agitators. Rahul Gandhi rightly attributes the breach to these issues. Security improvements are essential, but so is providing social security. Immediate actions, such as unemployment allowances, job security for gig workers and contract employees, and accessible higher education and healthcare, must be implemented to combat the growing despair among our youth. It's time to ensure the well-being of all citizens.

Sujit De, Kolkata

### Farmer Suicides

Between January and October this year, Maharashtra has witnessed a distressing surge in farmer suicides, totaling 2,366 deaths, with Amravati division reporting the highest at 951. This alarming trend exposes the callousness of politicians who neglect these tragedies and omit them from their manifestos. The reluctance of political parties to address farmers' core issues highlights a lack of urgency. Swift, compassionate action is essential to tackle the underlying problems driving these suicides. Farmers are the backbone of our nation, and this crisis demands immediate attention through an emergency meeting to find a viable solution.

Jahangir Shaikh, Mumbai

### Unemployment Unrest

Rahul Gandhi asserts that unemployment and rising prices drove the security breach in Parliament, where protesters now face terrorism charges. While addressing vital issues like unemployment and inflation is crucial, resorting to such actions is deemed a grave crime. While these concerns are timely, the method of drawing attention remains inappropriate.

TKR.Noori, Mumbai

## Global Road Safety And India's Challenge



### SHIVANSHU K SRIVASTAVA

In the ever-evolving landscape of road safety, the recently released World Health Organization (WHO) Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023 serves as both a beacon of progress and a stark reminder of persistent challenges. While the overall global trend indicates a promising 5% decrease in annual road traffic fatalities from 2010 to 2021, India emerges as a disconcerting outlier, experiencing a troubling 15% increase in road traffic deaths during the same period. The WHO report presents a comprehensive examination of the state of road safety worldwide, revealing that India has witnessed a rise in road traffic fatalities from 1.34 lakh (134,000) in 2010 to 1.54 lakh (154,000) in 2021. This concerning surge stands in sharp

contrast to the positive trajectory reported by 108 UN member nations, which collectively demonstrated a decrease in road traffic deaths. The dissonance in these trends prompts an urgent need for introspection and targeted interventions to address the multifaceted challenges that contribute to the perilous nature of Indian roads.

India's road safety challenges are complex and multifactorial, rooted in a combination of rapid urbanization, a surge in vehicular density, inadequate infrastructure, and lax enforcement of traffic regulations. As cities expand and more vehicles take to the roads, the infrastructure struggles to keep pace, resulting in congestion, compromised safety, and an increased risk of accidents. The need for a holistic approach that encompasses infrastructure development, public awareness campaigns, and stringent law enforcement becomes evident in addressing this critical issue.

The surge in road traffic fatalities in India is not just a statistical anomaly but a reflection of the intricate interplay of factors contributing to the nation's road safety challenges. Urban planning that prioritizes pedestrian safety, well-designed roads, and efficient traffic management systems are essential components of the solution. Equally critical is the need for robust law enforcement to ensure compli-

ance with traffic regulations, deterring reckless driving, and holding violators accountable.

The WHO report, however, goes beyond the borders of any single nation, spotlighting a broader global issue. It underscores a disturbing reality - the risk of death on the roads is three times higher in low-income countries compared to high-income countries, accounting for only 1% of the world's motor vehicles. Shockingly, nine out of 10 road traffic deaths globally occur in low- and middle-income countries, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the disparities in road safety.

Low-income countries face unique challenges that contribute to the elevated risk of road traffic fatalities. Insufficient investment in road infrastructure, limited emergency medical services, and a lack of awareness regarding safe road usage are among the key contributors. Bridging the gap in road safety standards between high- and low-income countries requires concerted efforts in the form of financial investment, educational initiatives, and robust regulatory frameworks.

Improving road safety is not merely a matter of reducing fatalities; it is an integral aspect of achieving broader sustainable development goals. As the global community strives towards cre-

ating safer and more inclusive societies, road safety must occupy a central place in policy discussions. This involves not only addressing immediate challenges but also fostering a culture of responsible driving, improving emergency response capabilities, and implementing sustainable urban planning practices.

In low-income countries, the disparities in road safety outcomes are often exacerbated by limited resources and competing priorities. Insufficient investment in road infrastructure, coupled with a lack of proper maintenance, creates hazardous conditions for road users. In emergencies, inadequate emergency medical services contribute to delayed responses and increased fatality rates. Addressing these issues requires not only financial investment but also a concerted effort to educate the public on road safety practices and enforce regulations that prioritize the well-being of road users.

The WHO report serves as a wake-up call, prompting a reevaluation of priorities and a redoubling of efforts to address the root causes of road traffic fatalities in India. Policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and the public must come together to identify specific strategies for improving road safety. This may include investing in infrastructure upgrades, increasing law enforcement presence, and launching public awareness campaigns to instill

a sense of responsibility among road users.

The global decrease in road traffic deaths is indeed encouraging, but the concerning rise in fatalities in India underscores the need for immediate and focused action. The WHO report emphasizes that road safety is not a luxury but a necessity, particularly in low-income countries where the burden of fatalities is disproportionately high. It is a call to action for the international community to recognize the importance of road safety as an integral part of sustainable development, ensuring that roads become safer for everyone, regardless of their location or economic status.

In conclusion, the intersection of global road safety trends and India's specific challenges calls for a nuanced and comprehensive approach. The WHO report provides a roadmap for addressing the disparities in road safety outcomes, urging governments, organizations, and individuals to prioritize and invest in measures that can save lives. As the world navigates the complex crossroads of urbanization, technology, and societal needs, ensuring the safety of road users must be a shared responsibility, transcending borders and economic divides.

Writer, poet and advocate, pursuing Master of Laws (LL.M.) from Banaras Hindu University (BHU).



**BRIEF**

**DA hike**



**Chandigarh:** Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Monday announced a 4 per cent hike in dearness allowance of government employees with effect from the ongoing month. Following the hike, the DA will increase to 38 per cent, Punjab State Ministerial Services Union (PSMSU) President Amrith Singh said. A decision in this regard was taken following a meeting with the representatives of the PSMSU here. During the meeting, Mann discussed various demands of the employees. "Had a meeting with the representatives of Punjab State Ministerial Service Union today and discussed their issues in detail."

**New flight**

**Hyderabad:** GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (GHIAL) on Monday announced the commencement of new flight services from Hyderabad to Muscat from December 17 with Oman's Salam Air. The flight to Muscat OV732 will depart from Hyderabad at 0355 hours and arrive in Muscat at 0600 hours. The return flight OV731 will depart from Muscat at 2215 hours and arrive in Hyderabad at 0255 hours, a release from GHIAL said here.

**Additional responsibility**



**New Delhi:** Technology and services provider Bosch India on Monday announced a realignment of its global mobility segment with Sandeep Nelamangala being given the additional responsibility to steer the business with effect from January 1, 2024. Nelamangala is currently Joint Managing Director of Bosch Ltd and Executive Vice President - sales, Mobility Solutions, Bosch India, the company said in a statement. He will steer the mobility business in India, in addition to his current responsibilities and will also oversee the realigned structure now, handling the technology and strategic developments for the region, it added.

**Investment**

**New Delhi:** Ambuja Cements Ltd, owned by Adani Group, on Monday said it will invest Rs 6,000 crore in 1,000 MW renewable power projects by FY26. The transformative investment, funded through Internal accruals, encompasses a diverse portfolio of solar and wind power projects strategically positioned across Gujarat and Rajasthan, Ambuja Cements Ltd (ACL) said.

## Google has removed 2,500 fraudulent loan apps from its Play Store: FM

New Delhi, Dec 18:



The government on Monday informed Parliament that Google has suspended or removed over 2,500 fraudulent loan apps from its Play Store between April 2021 and July 2022. The government is constantly engaged with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and other regulators and stakeholders concerned to control fraudulent loan apps, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha. The matter is also regularly discussed and monitored in the meetings of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC), an inter-regulatory forum under the chairpersonship of the Finance Minister.

The objective is to remain proactive, maintain cyber security preparedness with constant vigilance, and take appropriate and timely action to mitigate any such vulnerabilities in the Indian financial system, she said. As part of steps taken to control fraudulent loan apps, she said, the RBI has shared a 'whitelist' of legal apps with the government of India, and this list was shared by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) with Google, whose app store is the primary source of distribution of digital lending apps.

Google has updated its policy regarding enforcement of loan lending apps on the Play Store and has also deployed additional policy requirements with strict enforcement actions for lending apps in India, she added. As per their revised policy, only those apps are allowed on the Play Store which are published by Regulated Entities (REs) or those working in partnership with REs. "Between April 2021 and July 2022, Google also reviewed approximately 3,500 to 4,000 loan lending apps and suspended or removed over 2,500 fraudulent loan apps from its Play Store," she said. The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has been regularly analysing the digital lending apps proactively.

## FOUNDATION STONE LAYING



Union Minister and Apna Dal (Sonela) National President Anupriya Patel addresses during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's virtual foundation stone laying program of India's largest Indian Oil Terminal in Dagmagpur, in Mirzapur, Monday, Dec. 18.

## EV bus penetration set to double next fiscal: Report India needs 1,000 scrapping centres, 400 fitness test points: Gadkari

**Mumbai, Dec 18:** Despite the lingering counterparty risks and poor availability of charging stations, the share of electric buses (e-buses) is set to double to 8 per cent next fiscal, driven by supportive policy measures and favourable ownership costs, says a report. Citing the government focus on overall decarbonisation with the primary thrust being public transport as the main enabler along with favourable total cost of ownership, a Crisil Ratings report on Monday said this will drive the sales of e-buses in overall bus sales which is on course to hit 8 per cent of the new sales next fiscal from around 4 per cent this fiscal. Concerted efforts are underway to deploy e-buses via tenders already awarded under the faster adoption and manufacturing of (hybrid and) electric vehicles or the Fame scheme and the national electric bus programme (NEBP).

When it comes to favourable total cost of ownership of an e-bus compared to internal combustion engine and compressed natural gas buses, the report credits the same to the lower operating cost and reducing initial acquisition cost. Under the Fame and NEBP programmes, launched in 2015 and 2022, respectively, state transportation undertakings have initiated e-bus procurements through two models: gross cost contracts and outright purchases. As many as 5,760 of these e-buses have been delivered till date, and 10,000 will be deployed in this and the next fiscal. Favourable contracting terms under the GCC model, such as assured rentals, fee revision linked to inflation, and absence of traffic risk have aided the e-bus adoption thus far. According to Sushant Sarode, a director

with the agency, growth in e-buses is also supported by favourable ownership economics, which is estimated at 15-20 per cent lower than petrol/diesel or CNG buses, over an estimated life span of 15 years with breakeven in six-seven years (on an average run rate of 250 km/day for 330 days a year with a battery range of 250-260 kWh). Though the initial acquisition cost of an e-bus is twice that of an ICE or CNG bus, it is expected to reduce on account of improving the operational efficiency of original equipment manufacturers with increasing scale and localisation and decreasing battery costs, he said. However, a few adoption-related challenges loom. The first is a high counterparty risks as the financial flexibility of state transport undertakings remains constrained, leading to elongated

debtor cycle that turns lenders wary of financing e-bus projects. The second is inadequate battery charging infrastructure, which is critical in intercity bus operations. According to Pallavi Singh, a team leader at the agency, the recently announced PM-e-bus5 sewa scheme aims to address issues related to payment security mechanism, including setting up a payment security fund that will facilitate timely payments to the operators in case of delays by state transport undertakings and creating battery charging infrastructure, and should give a fillip to e-bus adoption. According to the proposed scheme, the government is working on the modalities of setting up a PSM to facilitate receivables' security to OEMs in case a state transport undertaking is delayed or fails to make timely payments.

**New Delhi, Dec 18:** Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Monday said the country needs 1,000 vehicle scrapping centres and 400 automated fitness test centres. Launching DigiELV, Gadkari said the road ministry has so far approved 85 vehicle scrapping facilities across the country. "We need 1,000 vehicle scrapping centres in the country and at least 400 automated fitness test centres," he said. DigiELV is a trading platform for End of Life Vehicle Certificate of Deposit. Anyone who currently owns a Certificate of Deposit (CD) can sell the CD through the platform. A CD is issued when a user submits a vehicle for scrapping



at an RVSE. Noting that the National Vehicle Scrapage Policy is a win-win for all stakeholders, the minister said that India can be a scrapping hub in South Asia. "Circular economy is very important and it is going to create jobs in the country," Gadkari said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the National Vehicle Scrapage Policy in August 2021 and said it would help phase out unfit and polluting vehicles and also promote a circular economy. Under the new policy, the Centre had said the states and Union Territories (UTs) will provide up to 25 per cent tax rebate on road tax for vehicles that are purchased after scrapping old vehicles. The vehicle scrapping policy has come into effect from April 1, 2022. Announced in the Union Budget 2021-22, the policy provides for fitness tests after 20 years for personal vehicles, while commercial vehicles will require it after the completion of 15 years.

## Over 7.40 cr persons filed ITRs in FY23, 5.16 cr showed zero tax liability: FinMin

**New Delhi, Dec 18:** Over 7.40 crore persons filed income tax returns in the 2022-23 fiscal, of which 5.16 crore showed zero tax liability, the Finance Ministry said on Monday. Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary informed the Lok Sabha there has been an increase in the number of returns filed in the last five years. The number of persons filing ITRs increased from 6.28 crore in fiscal 2018-19, to 6.47 crore in 2019-20, to 6.72 crore in 2020-21. The number of ITRs filed in the 2021-22 fiscal rose to over 6.94 crore and further to over 7.40 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal. The number of persons whose I-T returns amount to zero tax liability during the last four years increased from 2.90 crore in fiscal 2019-20 to 5.16 crore in 2022-23. "There may not be proportionate increase



in direct tax collection and number of income tax returns filed because the direct tax collection is dependent upon multiple factors which include tax rate applicable for relevant assessment year, admissible deductions/ exemptions under the law, overall economic growth in various sectors in economy, etc," Chaudhary said. Direct tax collection increased from about Rs 11.38 lakh crore in 2018-17, to over Rs 16.63 lakh crore in 2022-23, he said.

## Govt likely to achieve 5.9 pc fiscal deficit target in current financial year: Karad

New Delhi, Dec 18:

The government on Monday said it is likely to achieve the fiscal deficit target of 5.9 per cent of the GDP in the current financial year. So far in the current fiscal, the government has realised about Rs 10,050 crore through disinvestment in various Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad said in the Lok Sabha. To a question on how the delay in privatisation is likely to impact the government's fiscal deficit target in the current year, Karad said fiscal deficit depends upon many factors such as total expenditure, total non-



debt receipts and GDP (Gross Domestic Product) etc. for the financial year. "Tax and non-tax receipts constitute major proportion of the government's total non-debt receipts. The government is likely to achieve the fiscal deficit target of 5.9 per cent of the GDP in the current financial year 2023-24," Karad said in a written reply. The

budget had pegged disinvestment receipts in the current fiscal at Rs 51,000 crore. Karad said the budget estimate for disinvestment receipts in the current FY 2023-24 was fixed based on the probability of completion of the transactions. However, disinvestment is an ongoing process, and execution of disinvestment transactions depends upon administrative feasibility, market conditions, domestic and global economic outlook, and investor interest, he added. "In view of this, it is difficult to anticipate the quantum of actual proceeds from disinvestment during the current FY 2023-24," Karad said.

## Icra revises upwards FY24 GDP growth forecast to 6.5 pc

Mumbai, Dec 18:

Domestic rating agency Icra on Monday revised its FY24 GDP growth forecast to 6.5 per cent from 6.2 per cent earlier. However, the revised forecast is still much lower than the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) 7 per cent real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth estimate for the ongoing fiscal. Earlier this month, the RBI had revised upwards its GDP estimate to 7 per cent from 6.5 per cent, calling the revised number a "conservative" one. The rating agency did not specify reasons for the lower growth estimate made in its business activity monitor. The revision is being done because Icra feels the deflation in commodity prices will be sustained and there are expectation of better growth in the October-December period than previous estimates, it said.

"The festive-led uptick in volume growth in high frequency non-agri indicators as evinced by ICRA Business Activity Monitor in October-November 2023 (11.3 per cent versus the 9.5 per cent in Q2FY24) leads us to believe that the GDP growth is likely to fare better in Q3 FY2024 than what we had penciled in," it said. It added that the global commodity prices have remained benign in the ongoing quarter, partly owing to growing demand concerns from China, adequate supplies for commodities like crude oil, and normalisation of supply chains. While October and November have seen higher activity, the early trends for December are mixed, the agency said, pointing to a moderation in electricity demand growth, a rise in daily vehicle registrations, and a contraction in diesel sales.

## Govt, WB to work on project to promote mfg, supply of affordable cooling devices: DPIIT Secy

New Delhi, Dec 18:



The government and the World Bank will work on a "comprehensive" project, entailing "significant" investments to promote manufacturing and availability of affordable cooling devices in the domestic market, a top official said on Monday. Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Rajesh Kumar Singh said that the objective of the proposed project would be to cater to both the demand and supply side of the sector. The project will cover areas such as capacity building, introducing or

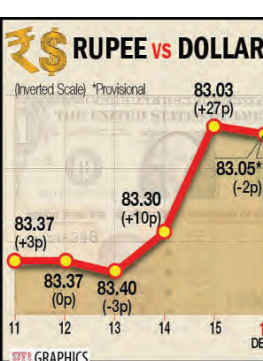
disseminating better technologies for supper efficient air-conditioners, he said. Demand for these products is going to increase multi-fold in the country in the coming years on account of the increasing intensity and frequency of severe heat waves in India. "We will

upload the DPR (detailed project report) very soon for a project with the World Bank, with significant investments both from the World Bank side as concessional lending and an equal amount from the Government of India," Singh said here at a workshop on alleviating heat stress by enhancing production of affordable cooling devices here. He asked the industry to give feedback on the kinds of interventions required, both from the demand and supply side, for the sector. "We are about to start work on a project which will hopefully come with some of those supply and demand side measures ... in bringing about tangible

investments and interventions in this area, not only in the private sector manufacturing but also in areas like R&D, capacity building etc. This will be a comprehensive project that we will start working on," Singh added. He said that the super-efficient ACs are 30-40 per cent better than the 5-star ACs available in the market. Heat waves are going to be a big problem for the world and there is a need to start addressing it right away, Singh said adding AC penetration in India is 5 per cent and going forward if it reaches the global average of 30-per cent, the demand for cooling devices will explode.

Mumbai, Dec 18:

The rupee surrendered all its initial gains to settle 2 paise lower at 83.05 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, in line with a lacklustre trend in domestic equity markets. However, a weak greenback against major currencies overseas and sustained buying by foreign investors supported the local currency, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened strong at 82.97 against the greenback and traded in a range of 82.90-83.06. It finally settled at 83.05 (provisional), a decline of 2 paise over its previous close. On Friday,



the domestic currency settled at 83.03 against the dollar. "The minor weakness observed in capital markets and profit booking after a rapid rally from 83.30 to 82.90 contributed to this downward movement. "Despite this, the

short-term trend for the rupee looks positive, with the dollar index showing broad weakness and a positive money flow into Indian capital markets. The anticipated rupee range is between 82.75 and 83.25," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities, said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.10 per cent lower at 102.07. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.57 per cent to USD 76.121 per barrel. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 168.66 points or 0.24 per cent lower at 71,315.09.



## Crowd of beneficiaries getting benefits of VBSY

Central Chronicle News

**Bilaspur, Dec 18:** Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY) has been started with the aim of taking the benefits of public welfare schemes of the Central Government to the needy people and in order to take the schemes to the masses, camps were organized for the second day today at two different places in Bilaspur city.

The first camp was organized from 9 am to 1 pm at Tribal Hostel Jarhabhata and the second camp was organized at Government Multipurpose School Dayalband, in which 5047 citizens reached the camp, and took information about the scheme.

Under the Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra, a camp was also organized in village



Kharkena of Takhatpur block and village Manikpur and Dhuma of Bilha block in which thousands of villagers were benefited.

Bilaspur MLA Amar Aggarwal, who was the chief guest of both the camps organized in the city, said that when Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister for the first time, he had said that my gov-

ernment will help the poor of the country and today, crores of poor families of the country have houses, women have been freed from smoke by giving them gas through Ujjwala scheme, street vendors who suffered losses during the Corona period are being raised again through PM Swanidhi.

Crores of people are getting free treatment under the Ayushman scheme. On



this occasion, Amar Aggarwal inspected the stalls set up in the camp and also discussed with the beneficiaries.

A total of 587 people in the camp under Prime Minister Swanidhi scheme, 617 for Ayushman card, 480 for Aadhar card, 427 people for Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala scheme, and 1123 people got their health checked in the camp and 23 beneficiaries

benefited from various schemes shared their experiences under Meri Kahani Meri Jubani.

Gayatri of Om Nagar got gas connection under Ujjwala scheme and Suresh Sonwani, Rukhmadi Yadav, Ravindra Gadhwani and Prakash Sonwani got the gift of house under PM Awas Yojana, apart from many other such beneficiaries.

## Adani Natural Resources launches 'Pragati'

● An initiative for Mining Sirdar Competency Certificate exam preparation for eligible candidates

Central Chronicle News

**Raigarh, Dec 18:** Adani Natural Resources is gearing up to facilitate free preparation for the Mining Sirdar Competency Certificate Exam in the Tannar development block of the district. This initiative, named 'Pragati,' aims to empower eligible candidates for a crucial role in coal mines.

The official launch of the program is scheduled for Wednesday, December 20, 2023, at the vocational training center of Gare Palma - III Colliery Limited (GP-III

CL) mining company.

The primary focus of the 'Pragati' program is to enhance the employability and responsibility levels of capable youth from project-affected villages. The inaugural batch consists of eligible candidates who have completed their 12th grade and have gained practical experience working in mines in Milupara, Khamaria, Karwahi, Bajarmura, and Dholnara villages over the past three years.

These candidates will undergo comprehensive training, guided by skilled professionals, to prepare for the Mining Sirdar Competency Certificate Exam. The Directorate General of Mine Safety, Dhanbad, conducts the competency certificate exam annually in

December for Mining Sirdar positions in coal mines. This position holds significant responsibility within any coal mining company, offering promising salary packages and growth opportunities for qualified employees.

Adani Natural Resources, operating the Gare Palma III Colliery Limited under the Chhattisgarh State Power Generation Corporation Limited, is committed to fostering a better future for communities and employees. 'Pragati' mirrors similar successful initiatives in Suliari, Singrauli district of Madhya Pradesh, and Paras East Kanta Basin mine in Sarguja district, Chhattisgarh, receiving positive responses from local communities.

## No bus stand in the major religious city of the country

Central Chronicle News

**Rajim, Dec 18:** Even after 76 years of independence, a well-organized bus stand has not been built in Rajim, the king of pilgrimages and Prayagraj of Chhattisgarh, due to which passengers keep standing on the roadside waiting for the bus. There is no organized place to wait for the bus, and this also has been a reason of accidents in the past.

From the city, one can go to district headquarters Gariaband, Mainpur, Devbhog, Magarlod, Kurud, Dhantari, Nagari, Sihawa, Kanker of Orissa and Dhantari district and then further to Telangana via this road and in the rainy season, passengers get wet and in the summer, they wait for the buses in the scorching sun.

Presently in the cold,



many men women and children suffer owing to the seasonal chill and unorganized state of the place. A large number of devotees come every day for immersion of the ashes of their ancestors, Pind Daan, bath etc, but they also miss a well-maintained bus stand.

As per information, the then government had given approval of Rs 2 crore for the bus stand and on the demand of the then Urban Administration Minister Shiv Dahria Nagar Panchayat President Rekha

Sonkar, Rs 2 crore was immediately approved for a well-maintained bus stand.

Whether this money came or not and even if it did come, nobody knows, but not even a single brick was laid for the bus stand. Lately the public representatives of the city met the District Collector and also informed about the place for the bus stand and also demanded for its construction soon, but till date the wait continues without a bus stand for the commuters

## Stalled construction of PMAY to gain momentum

450 beneficiaries in Municipality and 44 hundred beneficiaries in Ghajanpad

Central Chronicle News

**Khairagarh, Dec 18:** After the formation of the new government in the state, the stalled Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana work will gain momentum, such indications have been received in recent days regarding administrative action.

It may be noted that 48 hundred beneficiaries of Khairagarh development block will get the benefit of the approval of the housing scheme after the formation of the new government in the state. In the municipality consisting of 20 wards of Sangeet Nagari Khairagarh, about 242 applications are pending at the government level and 200 applications for housing scheme at the municipality level.

About 450 beneficiaries under the municipality area will very soon get the benefits of the Pradhan



Mantri Awas Yojana and till now, a total of 242 applications have been examined by the municipality and sent to the government for approval. However, the work of 238 Prime Minister's residences is

going on in the city and there is a wavering attitude in the Janpad Panchayat area regarding the Prime Minister's residence. Before the Code of Conduct, applications for accommodation at the governance

level were invited on a regular basis but were not accepted. Due to the imposition of the code of conduct, the whole matter got stuck and now, since PM Awas is the priority of the new government, it is hoped that

the beneficiaries of the housing scheme will get its benefits soon.

At the district panchayat level, approval for about 44 hundred houses in 114 panchayats of the block had been sent to the government before the code of conduct, but its approval has not been received from the government. At the Panchayat level, action on about 44 hundred housing applications is stuck.

Even before the code of conduct, applications for housing scheme were submitted in a hurry, but due to imposition of code of conduct at the last moment, the entire process got stuck.

Vishnu Deo government of the state has approved the approval of 18 lakh houses of the housing scheme in its first meeting itself, and after this, the hope of beneficiaries getting the benefits of the housing scheme soon has increased.

## Illegal liquor sale continues in villages

Central Chronicle News

**Dongargaon, Dec 18:** After the change of government in Chhattisgarh, the administration took immediate action against encroachments near liquor shops including tasting shops, but as per information the scenario remains unchanged in villages of the region, where illegal liquor sale is going unabated.

During the elections, there was a lot of anger among the rural women regarding the sale of liquor and after the change of government, it was expected that the sale of liquor through coaches in every village and street would be controlled to some extent. According to experts, the figures of retail sales in liquor shops in Dongargaon city and Arjuni are much less as compared to the bulk



goods given to the coaches.

To make liquor available in every street of rural areas, the liquor mafia has spread a network in the entire area and the entire racket is

going on right under the nose of the officials.

According to the information, only in Rajnandgaon district, 18 shops of country liquor and 23 shops of foreign

liquor are operated by the government, but many times more than this, there are coaches attached to these shops, who easily take the goods from these shops and openly supply liquor in the rural areas.

Many suppliers are active in Dongargaon liquor shop alone, who deliver goods to the coaches in rural areas, who sell liquor to liquor lovers at double the price.

Liquor is easily available to the liquor lovers in the villages around Dongargaon as well as in the villages of remote areas, which is being sold at arbitrary prices. Here, due to easy availability of alcohol in rural areas, it is directly affecting women and children and alcohol, which is easily available from children to old people, is also a major reason for the increasing accidents in the area.

## NSS special camp in Atal Bihari Bajpai Govt College

Central Chronicle News

**Pandariya, Dec 18:** A seven-day special camp of National Service Scheme Unit was organized from December 12 to 18 in village Andhiyar Kho. The theme of this camp was "Youth for a drug-free society". The first day was of the inaugural session and on the second day, the message of cleanliness was given by cleaning the area around Gram Panchayat and Pre-Secondary School.

On the third, fourth and fifth days, a village tour was conducted after intellectual discussion in the afternoon. An entertainment and cultural program was also organized in the night, thereafter, a cultural program was organized on the sixth day, in which all the respected citizens of the village and the Sarpanch representative as the chief guest and the



citizens of the village participated in the program.

Sachin Gupta, present as a special guest, said that the National Service Scheme works in the society with the aim of social service and social service through education. In this sequence, ABVP's state secretary Tushar

Chandravanshi said that he has been a volunteer of RASEO since his school days, and this is a platform which helps in enhancing the hidden talent of the students.

Works and the National Service Scheme have an important place on many issues related to cleanli-

ness in villages and health of general public, he added in his address. Birendra Kumar, Birendra Singh, Anand Patel, Yogesh, Pratap, Mamta and Nitya, Bhagwati, and all the volunteers along with Ugesh worked to make the camp a success.

## Commissioner Rly Safety inspects electrified fourth railway line

● From Sakti to Jharadih station

Central Chronicle News

**Bilaspur, Dec 18:** Commissioner of Railway Safety B.K. Mishra conducted a comprehensive inspection of the newly electrified fourth railway line between Sakti and Jharadih stations. The inspection marks a crucial step towards improving train operations and safety.

As part of the ongoing efforts to enhance railway infrastructure and streamline train operations, a 206 km electrified fourth railway line is under construction between Bilaspur and Jharsuguda stations in the South East Central Railway Bilaspur Division. Under this work, 9.7 km new electrified fourth line work has been com-



pleted between Sakti-Jharadih stations.

After laying the line and completing the entire work including interlocking, this fourth new line was inspected by B.K. Mishra, Commissioner of Railway Safety, SE Circle.

Mishra, along with an inspection team, visited Sakti station and meticulously ex-

amined various aspects of the project, including the station facilities, panel room, and yard. After this, motor trolley inspection of this fourth new line was done from Sakti station to Jharadih station.

During the inspection, he thoroughly studied and inspected the panel room, interlocking, crossing, point, OHE

line, signaling equipment as well as all aspects related to operation and safety and also discussed with the officials and gave necessary guidelines.

After this, speed trial was conducted in observation car from Jharadih to Sakti station. Following the successful inspection, the Commissioner of Railway Safety will grant permission for uninterrupted passenger and goods train operations on the new fourth line. This development is expected to inject dynamism into railway operations, benefitting both commuters and the transportation of goods.

The inspection team accompanying Commissioner B.K. Mishra included key railway officials, including the Chief Administrative Officer (Construction) and the Divisional Railway Manager Bilaspur.

● Christians are busy preparing for X'mas

Central Chronicle News

**Korba, Dec 18:** As the month of December approaches, a different enthusiasm is seen in the Christian community. As soon as the month of December arrives, painting work starts in the homes and churches of Christian people, while on the other hand, churches are also being decorated like brides.

Kosabadi Roman Catholic Church, the commercial heart and administrative square of Korba city, the Mennonite Church situated in the British-era mission compound of Korba is grandly



decorated, apart from this, SECL Mennonite Church, Church of Christ at Niharika, Krishna Nagar Roman Catholic Church. Apart from the Prarthana Bhawan Church located in Rampur ITI Chowk, the Christmas celebrations have started in the suburban areas of Balco, Deepka, Bankimogra, Kusmunda, Pali,

Katghora, Podi-Upora Pass. In the Christian community, from the 10th of December onwards, young men, women and elderly children from every church go to everyone's homes and pray by singing Christian songs for carol singing. Camp fires are also organized in many churches in the month of December.

Shepherd group came out even after the cold increased

Despite the increase in chill after the sudden rain, a different kind of excitement and enthusiasm is being seen among the soldiers and children. From Korba itself, soldiers of many churches have come out for the shepherd group in Deepka, Gevra. A special joy is seen in Christian homes to welcome these shepherd groups; they eagerly wait for the arrival of the shepherd groups in the evening. People prepare cakes and different sweets in their respective homes to welcome them and the houses are also decorated in their own style. In many homes, people are welcomed by bursting crackers.



## Hardik will bring fresh thinking in MI: Gavaskar

New Delhi, Dec 18 (PTI):

Legendary India cricketer Sunil Gavaskar reckons that Hardik Pandya, as the new leader, will bring in "fresh thinking" in the Mumbai Indians camp as Rohit Sharma appeared fatigued and has not contributed enough with the bat in the last few years.

The India T20 skipper was traded to Mumbai Indians ahead of the 2024 IPL auction, scheduled to take place in Dubai on Tuesday. Rohit and Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni are the most successful captains in the IPL, guiding their teams to five titles each in the lucrative league. However, Mumbai Indians have gone without a title since 2021, finishing last in the 2022 edition.

Gavaskar said that it could be because Rohit is "fatigued" since he has been playing continuously not only as IPL team skipper but also as the India captain. "See, we don't have to look at it (decision) as right or wrong. The decision they (MI)



have taken has been for the benefit of the team. We can say that the contribution of Rohit, even with the bat, has become slightly lesser," Gavaskar told Star Sports.

"Earlier, there used to be a lot of contribution (with bat) from Rohit, but in the last few years, they have finished at number 9 or 10. And last year they qualified for the playoffs, but the 'josh' (enthusiasm) of Mumbai Indians was not there to be seen as we have seen in the past.

"Maybe because he has played cricket continuously he must have been fatigued, constantly captaining the Indian side and

they have made him captain. Because sometimes you need that fresh thinking, and he can bring that fresh thinking and I think the decision that has been taken, Mumbai Indians can benefit from it and won't damage them," he added. Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan said the biggest challenge for Hardik at Mumbai Indians would be to manage senior players like Rohit, Suryakumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah, all of whom are leaders themselves. "Now that this decision about Hardik Pandya has been taken, I think Suryakumar Yadav was involved in this discussion, Bumrah was in it as well, so for Hardik Pandya, the biggest challenge will be with all these people — Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, who are leaders themselves, they have been captains of the Indian team in the past.

"Hardik will have to learn to manage these guys and it will be his biggest challenge. And this won't be easy for him," said Pathan.

## 2nd ODI: Patidar or Rinku set for debut

Gqeberha (South Africa), Dec 18 (PTI): Immensely gifted Rajat Patidar will be pitted against the flamboyant Rinku Singh for the lone available batting slot when a determined Indian team gears up for the final kill against a lacklustre South Africa in the second ODI here on Tuesday.

After young pacers Arshdeep Singh and Avesh Khan produced a near flawless performance in the opening game that India won by eight wickets, KL Rahul wouldn't like to take his foot off the pedal and aim to heal the scars of 0-3 defeat here under his leadership back in 2022.

India will handover a debut ODI cap to one of its reserve batters as Shreyas Iyer has linked up with the Test squad after Sunday's game with an eye on the two-match series, starting on 'Boxing Day'.

The world wants to watch more of Rinku, the left-hander, who is earning new fans by thousands with every passing match. The diminutive left-hander has shown that he has the technique and temperament to succeed on South African tracks that offer way more bounce compared to the sub-continent pitches. However, the Indore-based



right-hander Patidar had made it to Indian ODI team back in 2022 itself but in the past one year had to struggle and underwent a heel surgery earlier this year.

The Indian team management has very specific roles for players and while Rinku is being looked upon as a finisher at No. 6, the 30-year-old Patidar is more of a specialist No. 4 when he bats for his state

team Madhya Pradesh.

Hence, with Iyer, a right-hander vacating a slot in the playing XI, his like-for-like replacement is Patidar.

In case of Rinku, the No.6 slot currently has been given to Sanju Samson, who is playing as a specialist batter behind skipper KL Rahul, who is donning the big gloves. As has been the template of national team managements, they

would like to give Samson, who is senior to Rinku, a fair go at that slot before turning to the southpaw.

However Rinku's brilliant List A record (near 50 average) will force the team management to give him a go.

In fact, both Rinku and Patidar could get a go but in that case, Tilak Varma, who got to face just a couple of deliveries in the opening game, will have to be dropped from the playing eleven. That doesn't seem very logical at the moment.

The opening game witnessed the debut of young left-handed opener B Sai Sudharsan, whose silken half-century held a lot of promise going into the future.

For the hosts, this series is a massive white ball test for its batters in the post Quinton de Kock era. De Kock's exhilarating strokeplay at the top, allowed the Rassie van der Dussens, Heinrich Klaasens and David Millers to accelerate.

But in slightly helpful bowling conditions, India's fringe pacers exposed their shortcomings and they will have to put up a way better show in the second game, which will be a day/night affair.

## Mansi-Murugesan win gold at Para Badminton International

New Delhi, Dec 18 (PTI):

Mansi Joshi and Thulasimathi Murugesan emerged champions in women's doubles, while Tokyo Paralympic champion Pramod Bhagat signed off with two silver medals at the 5th Fazza Dubai Para Badminton International 2023 here.

The event was held in UAE from December 11 to December 17. Mansi and Murugesan, ranked second in World Para-Badminton, outwitted the Indonesian pair of Leani Ratri Oktilla and Khalimatuz Sadiyah 15-21 14-21 to secure the gold in women's doubles SL3-

SU5 category. Bhagat, also a Para Asian gold medalist, went down 17-21 18-21 to England's Daniel Bethell in the SL3 final to finish second best.

In mixed doubles SL3-SU5 category, Bhagat and Manisha Ramdass went down to Indonesia's Hikmat Ramdani and Leani Ratri Oktilla 14-21 11-21 in the final. Team India also secured bronze medal in mixed doubles SL3 and SU5 with Kumar Nitesh and Thulasimathi Murugesan. In the men's SL 4 category, Tokyo silver medalist Suhaz Yathiraj secured silver, while Sukant Kadam and Tarun won bronze medals.

## 'Getting more bowling options to support Siraj real priority'

New Delhi, Dec 18 (PTI):

Acquiring more bowling options to support pace spearhead Mohammad Siraj will be Royal Challengers Bangalore's top priority at the upcoming IPL auctions, team's Director of Cricket Mo Bobat said on Monday.

RCB have retained 18 players, including star batter Virat Kohli, skipper Faf du Plessis, Glenn Maxwell and Siraj, and released 11 players.

Those who have been released include the trio of medium pacer Harshal Patel, Sri Lanka leg spinner Wanindu Hasaranga and Australian quick Josh Hazlewood, depleting the team's bowling resources.

"Mohammad Siraj is a core part of what we do so



supporting Siraj with some more bowling options including overseas bowling options is going to be a real priority for us moving forward," Bobat was quoted as saying in a media release.

"Then we have got a core of local spinners, which I think is quite strong. Some of them got some opportunities over

the last year or two and they might play more leading roles moving forward," he added.

A top heavy side, RCB traded Australia all-rounder Cameron Green for Rs 17.5 crore from Mumbai Indians, to strengthen their middle order.

"We have got a strong core of retaining players, and we have got a very

powerful top order. Part of the decision-making that we had around our player release decisions was to try and strengthen the middle order and bringing Cameron Green was a fantastic move."

RCB have a purse of Rs 40.75 crore with a total of seven slots available to sign players.

Bobat also underscored the significance of fostering the right performance environment and culture for players to showcase their capabilities.

"I am committed to a long-term project here. We have a fantastic captain in Faf, and an excellent group of senior players with the experience of Virat, Maxi (Maxwell), and DK (Dinesh Karthik).

## Man City gets Copenhagen and Napoli drawn against Barcelona in Champions League's round of 16

Nyon (Switzerland), Dec 18 (AP)

Defending champion Manchester City was handed the most benign draw for the round of 16 in the Champions League after being picked to play Copenhagen, the Danish champion making its first appearance at this stage since 2011.

The draw was made Monday at UEFA's headquarters, with the stand-out matchup being Napoli vs. Barcelona.

Paris Saint-Germain wasn't punished as hard as it could be for finishing second in its group, with the French team facing a Real Sociedad team playing in its first Champions

League season in a decade.

Real Madrid, seeking a record-extending 15th European Cup title, will play Leipzig while Inter Milan, last season's beaten finalist, plays Atletico Madrid.

It's also Porto vs. Arsenal, PSV Eindhoven vs. Borussia Dortmund and Lazio vs. Bayern Munich.

In the last 16, teams cannot play an opponent from their own country or a team they already faced in the group stage. There's no country protection after that.

The two-legged round-of-16 matchups will be played from Feb. 13-14.

## AIFF to approach 24 PIO players for India selection: Chaubey

New Delhi, Dec 18 (PTI):

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) is exploring the possibility of selecting Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) for the national duty and will approach 24 such players soon, president Kalyan Chaubey said.

The inclusion of PIO and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) players in the national team has been a topic of debate for a long time. National team head coach Igor Stimac has already advocated the need to select PIO players for the Indian team. But it is easier said than done as the Indian law does not allow dual citizenship. If PIO players want to play for

India, they have to take up Indian citizenship. A person must also stay in India for 12 months before applying for citizenship.

"We are looking to approach 24 PIO players who are playing across the world. But you know there is the issue of dual citizenship (not being permitted to play for India). So, we have to see how this can be done within the framework of Central Government's rules," Chaubey told PTI in an interview, without revealing the names of the players.

"We are having internal discussions on the matter and will come out with more details once more clarity is established."

According to the draft

minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of November 9, a sub-committee of the AIFF under Punjab Football Association president Samir Thapar "will collate data and information on the subject" to enable the national federation to arrive at a decision.

"Following pleas from many fronts on the inclusion of PIOs and OCIs (Overseas Citizens of India), the president (Chaubey) discussed with Thapar (during a visit to Punjab) and offered him to head a sub-committee," according to the draft minutes of the executive committee meeting. "Thapar agreed and the sub-committee will collate data and

info on the subject to enable the AIFF to pursue an informed decision on the matter."

When Englishman Bob Houghton was the head coach of the national team from 2006 to 2011, there were some efforts to approach Michael Chopra, who had played for England age group teams and for clubs like Newcastle United and Nottingham Forest, if he wants to play for India.

But a 2008 government rule dashed all hopes of PIO players as they required to become Indian citizens if they aspire to play for the country. The government made PIO and OCI card holders ineligible to represent India unless

they give up their foreign citizenships and get Indian passports. Chaubey said India needs to play matches against higher-ranked countries but the gap (in FIFA rankings) should not be very large. "The realistic approach would be to play against countries ranked from 76 to 100, that would enhance the confidence of our team. Once we are in the top 75-80 we should look to play European sides" he said. India is currently ranked 102 in FIFA charts.

The AIFF President said the national team has been doing consistently well in the run-up to the upcoming AFC Asian Cup, beginning in Doha, Qatar on January 12.

## Mbapp scores but PSG concedes late equalizer in a 1-1 draw

Paris, Dec 18 (AP):

French league leader Paris Saint-Germain missed the chance to move seven points clear after conceding a sloppy stoppage-time equalizer in a 1-1 draw at Lille on Sunday.

Star striker Kylian Mbapp's penalty gave PSG the lead in the 66th minute before Canada striker Jonathan David levelled four minutes into injury time.

Still, with Monaco and Nice losing their games, PSG is five points ahead with one round of matches left on Wednesday before the mid-season winter break.

PSG substitute Marco Asensio's poor pass was intercepted by Remy Cabella, whose deflected shot was well saved by goalkeeper Arnau Tenas.

But the alert David got ahead of central defender Marquinhos to head in the goal that ensured Lille stays in fourth place after 16 matches.

Mbapp was kept quiet until a penalty was awarded when defender Bafod Diakit impeded defender Lucas Hernandez. Goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier guessed the right way but was beaten by Mbapp's power and precision.

It took Mbapp's league-leading goal tally this season to 16 and it was also the 17th goal he has been involved in against Lille during his career 11 goals and six assists. But as so often in recent seasons, Mbapp's goals paper over cracks in the PSG team, notably when it comes to defending a lead and coping under pressure.

## Naveen-ul-Haq banned for 20 months from ILT20 due to breach of contract

Dubai, Dec 18 (PTI):

Afghanistan pacer Naveen-ul-Haq was on Monday handed a 20-month ban from participating in the International League T20 for breaching his Player Agreement with Sharjah Warriors.

Naveen had signed up for the Warriors for the opening season of the tournament. He was offered another year's extension but refused to sign the retention notice for Season 2.

Sharjah Warriors approached the ILT20 to intervene in this dispute. The ILT20 first initiated a mediation process

through an independent third-party mediator. However, the mediation failed.

The ILT20's three-member Disciplinary Committee, which includes the league's Chief Executive Officer David White, Head of Security and Anti-Corruption Col. Azam and Member Emirates Cricket Board Zayed Abbas, separately heard both the parties and on examining the evidence before them conveyed its final verdict of a 20-month ban on Naveen.

"We do not take pride in making this announcement but all parties are expected to com-

ply with their contractual commitments and recognise that non-compliance can cause damage to the other party," CEO DP World ILT20 David White said in a release.

"Unfortunately, Naveen-ul-Haq failed to honour his contractual obligations with the Sharjah Warriors and as such the league had no option but to impose this 20-month ban on him.

"The disciplinary proceedings against Naveen were conducted in a transparent manner and both parties involved were given opportunities to prepare and present their submissions."

## Kane scores twice to end brief goal drought as Bayern keeps pace with Leverkusen

Berlin, Dec 18 (AP):

Harry Kane ended his three-game goal drought on Sunday by scoring twice as Bayern Munich stayed on Bundesliga leader Bayer Leverkusen's heels with a 3-0 win over Stuttgart.

Bayern was under pressure going into the late game following Leverkusen's 3-0 win over Eintracht Frankfurt the team that routed Bayern 5-1 the weekend before.

But the 11-time defending champion stayed four points behind Leverkusen the only unbeaten team left in the



league despite having to contend with the absences of Joshua Kimmich, Leon Goretzka and goalkeeper Sven Ulreich at short notice because of flu.

Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel only had 15 outfield players available to

face Stuttgart, which drew with Leverkusen 1-1 last weekend. But one of those players was Kane, who already had 18 goals in 13 Bundesliga games, albeit without scoring in his last three appearances, including two Champions League matches. "It felt like forever since I scored," Kane said. Bayern fans restrained their early support to continue a weekend of protest against the German soccer league's plan to bring in an outside investor, but they couldn't help celebrating when Kane scored in the second minute.



## 'India declared freedom from slave mentality'

Varanasi (UP), Dec 18 (PTI):

Inaugurating the world's largest meditation centre Swarved Mahamandir here on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the country has declared freedom from the slave mentality and is taking pride in its heritage.

"In the era of slavery, the oppressors who made an effort to weaken India first targeted our symbols. After Independence, rebuilding of these cultural symbols was essential," he said.

Modi said that after India gained Independence, "there was an opposition to the rebuilding of the Somnath temple and this thought process remained dominant for decades." The result of this was that the country slipped into the pit of an inferiority complex and forgot to feel proud of its heritage, he said.

"After seven decades of Independence, the wheel of time has turned once again. The country has declared from the Red Fort freedom from a slave men-



PM Modi addresses during the inauguration of Swarved Mahamandir, in Varanasi, Monday.

tality and is taking pride in its heritage," he said.

"The work which started from Somnath has now become a campaign. Today, the grandeur of Vishwanath is singing the tales of India's indestructible glory, Kedarnath is touching new heights of development and Mahakaal Mahalok is giving proof of immortality," the prime minister said.

He said by developing the Buddha circuit, India has invited the world to visit the sites of Lord Buddha's meditation. "The development of the Ram circuit is going at a fast pace. In the next few

weeks, the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya will be completed." "We can take the step forward towards holistic development only when the country assimilates its social truths and cultural identity. Our places of pilgrimage are being developed and India is making new records in infrastructure. Today, Varanasi alone gives you a glance at the speed of development in the country." The prime minister said two years since the development of the Kashi Vishwanath Dhaam, employment, trade and business gained momentum

in Varanasi.

"Now, Varanasi means cleanliness and transformation. Now Varanasi means development and modern facilities along with faith. Today, Varanasi is moving ahead on the unparalleled path of development," he said.

Modi said Varanasi has witnessed historic work in the last nine years to increase connectivity and mentioned works done to increase road and rail connectivity from the city.

The prime minister also mentioned the renovation of the Ganga ghats, the introduction of a cruise on the river, modern hospitals and natural farming along the Ganga river. "Our government is leaving no stone unturned for the development of the place. Training institutes have been opened here for the skill development of the youth. I am mentioning modern development here because the biggest problem in our spiritual journeys is lack of infrastructure," Modi said.

## RELIEF MATERIAL



Rescue workers provide water and other relief material to flood-hit people in Kanyakumari, Monday.

## Telangana Congress urges Sonia Gandhi to contest from state

Hyderabad, Dec 18 (PTI):

The Telangana Congress in its Political Affairs Committee meeting held on Monday passed a resolution requesting AICC former president Sonia Gandhi to contest the Lok Sabha elections from the state.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy attended

the meeting held at Gandhi Bhawan, Telangana Congress headquarters.

Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka explained to the PAC members about the financial situation of the state.

Addressing a press conference after the meeting, former minister Shabbir Ali said the PAC also

passed a resolution thanking the senior leadership who campaigned for the party during the recent assembly polls.

"The PAC unanimously passed a resolution requesting Sonia Gandhi to contest Lok Sabha elections from Telangana. We are going to write a letter to her and also to AICC president Mallikarjun

Kharge. Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi also contested from Medak earlier. We want her (Sonia) to repeat it (contesting from Telangana)," Ali said.

Each state minister will be appointed as in-charge of a Lok Sabha constituency for next year's general elections, he said.

## SC restrains Pune civic body from felling trees

For widening road in city

New Delhi, Dec 18 (PTI):

The Supreme Court has restrained the Pune civic body from felling trees till December 21 for widening one of the roads in the city to enable a litigant to move the Bombay High Court with the grievance.

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has decided to widen the Ganeshkhind Road stretch from the Savitribai Phule Pune University junction to Sancheti Chowk from the existing 36 metres to 45 metres.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwla and Manoj

Misra took note of the submissions of senior lawyer Najmi Waziri appearing for the petitioner, and ordered that till Thursday no tree will be cut for widening the road.

"In order to enable the appellants to have a reasonable time to approach the High Court, we direct that no further felling of trees shall take place between the date of this order (from December 15) and till 5 pm of 21 December 2023 for the widening of Ganeshkhind Road," the bench ordered.

While disposing of the plea filed by one Ameet Gurucharan Singh, the top court said since it was leaving the matter to the high court to take an appropriate decision, its order "shall not be construed as any expres-

sion of opinion on merits".

It noted a PIL was filed before the Bombay High Court by an organisation Parisar Sanrakshan Sanwardhan Sanstha' in October this year pertaining to the procedure adopted by the Pune Municipal Corporation in granting permission for felling trees to facilitate widening of the Ganeshkhind Road.

The PIL was disposed of with certain observations and directions including that the Tree Authority, which is the final authority empowered to take a decision in the matter, needed to consider not only the report and recommendations submitted by the Tree Officer but also the objections and suggestions that may be filed by the general public.

"We, thus, find that the Tree Authority while issuing the impugned Notification dated 18th September 2023, hardly had any time either to consider the report and recommendations made by the Tree Officer or to take into consideration the objections and suggestions, which he might have received through the Tree Officer, from the members of the general public..." the high court had said.

The high court had directed that the Tree Officer shall publish a fresh public notice giving a period of at least seven days for furnishing the objections and suggestions, in view of the permissions sought for felling of trees.

## Chennai-based researchers find novel treatment option

For nicotine addiction

Chennai, Dec 18 (PTI):

Researchers at the Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (SRIHER), here, found a novel approach to tackle nicotine addiction and its associated health risks by recirculating bioavailable nicotine metabolite using ascorbic acid.

Converting cotinine (a metabolite of nicotine) back into nicotine using a suitable reducing agent, such as ascorbic acid, could be a practical approach, the team of researchers from the Faculty of Pharmacy, SRIHER, found.

This conversion would allow cotinine to be neutralised for its central nervous system effects before its eventual elimination from the body, a release here said on Monday.

The study led by Dr Murugesan Arumugam, Dr Raman Lakshmi

Sundaram, Dr Jerad A Suresh, Dr Sathesh Kumar Kesavan, Vishal Jayajothi and Manish Arul, could bring about major changes in nicotine cessation strategies, the release said.

The study conclusively proved that the oxidative metabolite of nicotine, such as cotinine, was converted back to nicotine in smoker plasma in the presence of a specified concentration of ascorbic acid after 10 minutes of incubation.

"This conversion did not occur in water or in the absence of ascorbic acid, indicating the involvement of enzymes. This approach has not been previously studied and may have the potential to help people addicted to nicotine," the study published in the Indexed Journal Advances in Redox Research, said.

It, however, favoured further studies with larger sample populations and subsequent behavioral studies to confirm the findings.

New Delhi, Dec 18 (PTI):

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday said the INDIA bloc's prime ministerial candidate will be decided after the 2024 general elections, expressing confidence that the alliance will iron out all issues including over seat-sharing and defeat the BJP.

She also dismissed suggestions that the alliance has lost time in putting things in order, saying "it is better late than never". She expressed confidence that a three-way alliance is very much possible in West Bengal between her TMC, Congress and the Left. "The BJP is not strong, we are weak. We need to work together to overcome it," Banerjee told reporters here in reply to a question on the BJP's rising influence, especially in the Hindi belt.

She also said she doesn't discriminate between the Hindi belt and other regions. On the suspension on opposition MPs in Lok

Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Banerjee said it shows the BJP is afraid. "Do you think they (the BJP) became so arrogant because they won two states... They're afraid so they suspended".



Mamata Banerjee

"Even with such majority, they're scared... The voice of people has been choked. They can suspend the whole House. They have no moral ground to run the House... It is mockery of democracy," she said. The TMC boss asserted her full support to expelled party MP Mahua Moitra, and said the parliamentary party will decide on her Krishnanagar seat.

## 'Use of technology should be for promoting social justice and equality'

Kharagpur (WB), Dec 18 (PTI):

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday emphasised the use of technology for promoting social justice and equality rather than increasing differences in society.

During her address at the 69th convocation of IIT Kharagpur on Monday, Murmu said everyone should possess the right to access technology and it should be used to promote social justice and equality rather than exacerbating differences.

"We believe that everyone should have the right to access technology. The use of technology must be for promoting social justice and equality, rather than increasing disparities in society," the President said.

She cited the example of digital payment systems, highlighting how technology has simplified life, even benefiting small traders.

Murmu said the IITs have a global reputation.

"IITs are considered incubation centres of talent and technology. IIT Kharagpur has the distinction of being the first such institute of the country. This institution has nurtured great talents in its journey of almost 73 years and its contribution to the development of the country is unmatched," she said.

The President was happy to note that in line with the government of India's policy of internationalisation and globalisation of IITs, IIT Kharagpur is working on alliances and col-



President Droupadi Murmu during the 69th convocation of IIT Kharagpur, Monday.

laborations with other global institutions.

She said the move will not only help in establishing IIT Kharagpur at the international level, but will also be a big step towards giving global recognition to the Indian education system.

In this context, the President observed that not even a single educational institution of such a vast country with the world's oldest knowledge tradition is among the top 50 educational institutions of the world.

"The race for ranking is not more important than good education. But good ranking not only attracts students and good faculty from all over the world but also enhances the reputation of the country."

She said IIT Kharagpur should make efforts in this direction. "Institutions like IIT

Kharagpur will have to play an important role through innovation and technology. They will have to make revolutionary efforts to develop technology and implement it," she added.

The President said today India is scaling new heights, setting new standards and emerging as a major world power.

"We look forward to finding solutions to the challenges facing the world in the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. In this Amrit Kaal of India, the golden age will come only by churning through technology," she added.

"Computerization, solar energy, genomics and large language models are some of the experiments that have the potential to bring revolutionary changes in social life. Diseases that seemed incurable 150 years ago are now

treated almost free of cost. People's standard of living is getting better. The role of technology is important in making this world better and inclusive," Murmu said.

She urged all to develop a growth-oriented, futuristic and curious mindset. She said along with this, they should have a feeling of gratitude towards the nation and society for their wonderful present.

Pointing out that 21 per cent of the students having received degrees on the occasion were women, Murmu said, "More women should come forward to study science and technology."

Director VK Tewari said by 2030, IIT Kharagpur will be among the top 10 higher educational institutions in the world.

Tiwari said over 3,200 students were awarded degrees during the convocation.

He informed the institute has initiated several national mission projects, collaborations with institutions like ISRO, DRDO, ONGC among others.

This year the premier institution conferred DSc Honoris Causa to Google CEO Sundar Pichai (in absentia), reputed Sanskrit scholar Mahamahopadhyaya Bhadrashdas Swami, electrical engineering entrepreneur Ravinder Nath Khanna and entrepreneur Ajit Jain.

The Lifetime Achievement Award was bestowed upon Prof Ramchandra Prabhakar Gokam.

## SC dismisses Rohingya girl's plea against detention

New Delhi, Dec 18 (PTI):

The Supreme Court has dismissed a plea by a 19-year-old Rohingya girl seeking release from alleged detention, noting that restriction on her movement cannot be termed as illegal confinement.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Dipankar Datta was hearing a petition that claimed the girl was detained illegally by the Foreigners Regional Registration Office without any offence having been lodged against her.

"It is not in dispute that the movements of the petitioner are restricted to Sarai Rohila and for that purpose an appropriate order under Section 3(2) of the Foreigners Act, 1946 read with the provisions contained in the Foreigners Order, 1948 has been passed on 9th June, 2022.

"That being so, the restriction on movements of the petitioner cannot be termed or declared as illegal confinement. No effective direction therefore can be issued.

The writ petition is

dismissed," the bench said.

The top court noted that the petitioner is admittedly an illegal immigrant and her arrival in India is not traceable.

The Centre told the apex court that the petitioner will be required to be deported to her home country (Myanmar) as per the procedure established by law after verification of nationality.

Till such time, her movements have been restricted to ensure that she remains available for deportation, as and when required, the Centre said.

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