



BRIEF



PM Modi interacts with students from Jammu and Kashmir, in New Delhi, Sunday.

Interact

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday interacted with around 250 underprivileged students from almost every district of Jammu and Kashmir who have been touring the country as part of the "Watan Ko Jano-Youth Exchange" programme. An official statement said the interaction at Modi's residence was freewheeling and informal. These students are visiting Jaipur, Ajmer and New Delhi under the Central government's programme.

Greet

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday greeted citizens on the eve of Christmas and hoped that everyone rekindles the spirit of mercy and compassion. The festival of Christmas gives the message of love and compassion, she said. "This festival also inspires us for selfless service to the humanity. The teachings of Jesus Christ are always relevant to maintain peace and harmony in the society," Murmu said.

Booked

Thane: An offence has been registered against seven college students for allegedly assaulting and injuring a 17-year-old boy over a dispute in Maharashtra's Thane city, police said on Sunday. Based on a complaint, the police on Saturday registered a case under section 307 (attempt to murder) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and Maharashtra police Act against the alleged accused, an official said.

Mishap

Noida: Two siblings aged five and three years died after the ceiling of their house collapsed on them in Greater Noida on Sunday, police said. Four people, including construction workers, also suffered injuries in the incident at Samadhipur village in Dadri police station area, they said. A police spokesperson said repair work was underway at the house of Lal Singh and bricks were being laid on the second floor of the building.

Firing

Mumbai: One person was killed and three injured when a man opened fire in a locality in the eastern suburb of Kurla here on Sunday, police said. The incident occurred in the Azad Galli locality in Chunarbhathi around 3.15 pm, an official said. A man opened fire at residents of the locality, killing one Sumit Yerunkar, the official from Chunarbhathi police station said.

Centre suspends newly-elected WFI

For not following rules

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

The Sports Ministry on Sunday suspended the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) till further orders after the newly-elected body made a "hasty announcement" of organising the U-15 and U-20 nationals "without following due procedure and not giving sufficient notice to wrestlers" for preparations. The ministry has written to the IOA to form the panel at the earliest. "... Taking note of the compelling current situation arising out of the influence and control of the WFI's former office bearers, serious concerns have arisen about the governance and integrity of the WFI," said the letter signed by Tarun Pareek, under secretary to the Government of India.

The ministry also said the new body was working under the "complete control of former (WFI) office-bearers", which was not in conformity with the National Sports Code.

The WFI elections were held on December 21 with former president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's loyalist, Sanjay Singh, and his panel winning the polls by big margins.

"The new body has not followed the WFI constitution. The Federation stands suspended till further orders. WFI will not be taking care of day to day activities of wrestling. They need to follow the due process and the rules," a sports ministry official told PTI.

Top wrestler Bajrang Punia, who along with Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik, had led the agitation

'IOA urged to take control'

Soon after suspending the newly-elected Wrestling Federation of India, the Sports Ministry on Sunday asked the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to constitute an ad-hoc body to control and manage the affairs of WFI.

The ministry on Sunday suspended the WFI until further orders after the newly-elected body made a "hasty announcement" of organising the U-15 and U-20 nationals "without following due procedure and not giving sufficient notice to wrestlers" for preparations. The ministry has written to the IOA to form the panel at the earliest. "... Taking note of the compelling current situation arising out of the influence and control of the WFI's former office bearers, serious concerns have arisen about the governance and integrity of the WFI," said the letter signed by Tarun Pareek, under secretary to the Government of India.

'Will seek revocation of suspension'

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) will seek revocation of its suspension by explaining to the government that it has not flouted any rules while taking decisions and if the issue is not resolved, it may explore legal options, its President Sanjay Singh told PTI. "We are seeking time from the sports minister and request that the suspension be lifted. If the issue is not resolved through dialogue, we could explore legal options," Sanjay Singh told PTI. "We will explain that we have followed rules in taking decisions. We will present the proofs. Whatever decisions were taken, were taken by consensus. It was not my personal decision. 24 state associations had given affidavits and we have got e-mails, we have everything in writing," the sports administrator added. Meanwhile, Sakshi Malik, one of the prominent faces of the agitation against former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, welcomed the WFI's suspension. "It is the first step towards something good happening. I hope the government understands more for what cause we were fighting," said Sakshi Malik. "If a woman federation president is there, it will be better for the safety of women wrestlers. It was a fight for sisters and daughters of the country," she added.

'I'm done with wrestling'

Former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh on Sunday said he is "done" with the sport and the newly-elected body will now take care of it as he has many more responsibilities to look into, including next year's Lok Sabha elections. Brij Bhushan's comments came soon after the Sports Ministry suspended the WFI till further orders after the new body made a "hasty announcement" of organising the U-15 and U-20 nationals "without following due procedure and not giving sufficient notice to wrestlers" for preparations. "Whatever has to be done with regards to wrestling in India, it has to be done by the new elected body," Brij Bhushan told PTI. "I have nothing to do with the sport now. I have other responsibilities to focus now. I will be away from politics of this sport," he added.



Brij Bhushan

against Brij Bhushan had returned his Padma Shri award to the government on Friday in protest over Sanjay Singh, who is a Brij Bhushan loyalist, becoming WFI President. This was a day after Sakshi Malik quit wrestling for the same reason.

The source further explained the reasons for WFI suspension.

"Sanjay Kumar Singh, newly-elected president of WFI announced on December 21, the day he was elected as president, that U-15 and U-20 nationals

the constitution of WFI," said the source. "As per clause 3 (e) of preamble of constitution of WFI, object of the WFI, among others, is to arrange holding of Senior, Junior and Sub Junior National Championships as per UWW Rules at places selected by the Executive Committee," said the source. The source added that the new body had started functioning in the same premises (Brij Bhushan's official bungalow) from where the previous office-bearers operated wherein allegedly sexual harassment of the players have been alleged.

"Newly-elected body appears to be in complete control of former office-bearers in complete disregard to the Sports Code. The culprits then dumped the body on a road, the official said. After being alerted, a police team rushed to the spot on Sunday morning and sent the body for postmortem.

for Wrestling will take place in Nandini Nagar, Gonda (UP) before the end of this year.

"This announcement is hasty, without giving sufficient notice to wrestlers who are to take part in the said nationals and without following the provisions of



Sanjay Singh

140 private universities set up in India in last 5 years

Maximum in Gujarat

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

A total of 140 private universities have been established across the country during the last five years with a maximum of them being set up in Gujarat followed by Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh, according to data accessed by PTI, 28 private

universities have been established in Gujarat during the last five years while 15 universities were set up in Maharashtra.

Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka welcomed 14 and 10 universities respectively during the period.

"Private University is established by an Act passed by the concerned state legislature and Notification issued by the concerned state government," a senior education ministry of

Covid: WHO asks countries to beef up surveillance

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has urged countries in South-East Asia to strengthen surveillance in view of the increasing cases of respiratory diseases, including due to COVID-19 and its new sub-variant JN.1, and influenza.

The WHO also urged people to take protective measures.

"The COVID-19 virus continues to evolve, change, and circulate in all countries globally. While current evidence suggests

ly increasing globally. Considering the limited available evidence, the additional public health risk posed by JN.1 is currently evaluated as low at the global level, Singh said.

It is anticipated that this variant may cause an increase in COVID-19 cases amid surge of infections of other viral and bacterial infections, especially in countries entering the winter season.

"As people travel and gather for festivities during the holiday season, spending a lot of time to get indoors where poor

ventilation facilitates transmission of viruses that cause respiratory diseases, they must take protective measures and seek timely clinical care when unwell," said Dr Khetrpal Singh.

The regional director also emphasised on the importance of vaccination against COVID-19 and influenza, especially for people at high risk.

"All WHO-approved COVID-19 vaccines continue to protect against severe diseases and deaths from all variants including JN.1," she said.

Commercial oil tanker MV Sai Baba with Indian crew comes under attack

In Red Sea

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

A Gabon-flagged commercial crude oil tanker with 25 Indian crew members reportedly came under a drone attack in the Southern Red Sea but no one was injured, Indian officials and the US military said on Sunday.

The US Central Command said the vessel, MV Sai Baba, was targeted by a drone launched by Houthi militants in the Southern Red Sea on Saturday. The US mili-

tary's statement on the attack came a day after merchant vessel MV Chem Pluto, with around 20 Indian crew members, was hit by a suspected drone about 217 nautical miles off the Porbandar coast in the Arabian sea.

"All 25 crew members of MV Sai Baba are learnt to be Indians," said an Indian military official. There were no reports of any casualties. The official said MV Sai Baba is a Gabon-flagged vessel and it had received a certification from the Indian register of shipping.



People light candles at the Sacred Heart Cathedral Church on the eve of Christmas, in New Delhi, Sunday.

Terrorists murder ex-SP inside mosque

While giving call for 'azaan'

Srinagar, Dec 24 (PTI):

A 72-year-old retired police officer, who was the local "muezzin", was shot dead by terrorists while he was giving the call for "azaan" from a mosque in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district on Sunday, police said.

Recalling the moments before Mohammad Shafi Mir was killed, his cousin Mohammad Mustafa, who was at home, said the call for the pre-dawn prayers was being given by a loud-



People offer funeral prayers for retired police officer who was killed by unknown militants at Gantamulla area of Baramulla district of North Kashmir, Sunday.

speaker and suddenly it stopped. His last words were "reham (mercy)", he said. The "azaan" had stopped at "Ashhadu Anna Mohammadu Rasool-Allah (I bear witness that Mohammad is the messenger of Allah)", he said. Police said Mir retired

Missile destroyer INS Imphal to be commissioned

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

INS Imphal, the indigenously-built stealth guided missile destroyer equipped with BrahMos surface-to-surface missiles, will be commissioned into the Indian Navy on Tuesday in a boost to its maritime capability amid China's increasing forays into the Indian Ocean region.

It is the first warship to have been named after a city from the Northeastern region, the approval for which was accorded by the President in April 2019. The warship will be commissioned at a

ceremony in the naval dockyard in Mumbai in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, officials said.

The naming of the ship after the capital city of Manipur underlines the importance of the Northeastern region for national security and prosperity, they said. A guided missile destroyer with a displacement of 7,400 tonnes and overall length of 164 meters, Imphal is a potent and versatile platform equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, including surface-to-air missiles, anti-ship missiles and torpedoes.

Paddy bonus of Rs 3.7k cr to be disbursed today

Was pending for 2 years

Raipur, Dec 24:

The BJP government in Chhattisgarh will disburse paddy bonus of Rs 3716.38 crore pending for two years to farmers on Monday on the occasion of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birthday, which is observed nationwide as Good Governance Day.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai will be the chief guest at the function, which will be held at 1pm at Bendri village in Raipur district, while others who will attend include Deputy

CMs Arun Sao and Vijay Sharma. "The state government has begun procurement of 21 quintals of paddy per acre at Rs. 3,100 per quintal besides distributing tokens for it. Farmers who have sold their paddy in societies as per the pre-determined quantity have also been given the facility to sell the difference of the newly prescribed quantity of paddy," an official said.

"Last year, the state government had procured 15 quintals paddy per acre. The state government has to procure about 130 lakh tonnes of paddy for the Kharif marketing year 2023-24," the official added.

Three Naxalites killed in encounter

Dantewada, Dec 24:

At least three Naxalites were killed in a gun battle with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Sunday, a senior officer said. The face-off occurred on a hill near Dabbakunna village under Katakalyan police station limits when a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-naxal operation at around 5:30 pm, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P told PTI. The personnel belonging to the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Bastar Fighters, both units of the state police, had launched the operation from Turnakpal police camp towards Dabbakunna along the Dantewada-Sukma inter-district border, he said.

Weather
High 27 Low 13



हमने बनाया है, हम ही संवारेंगे

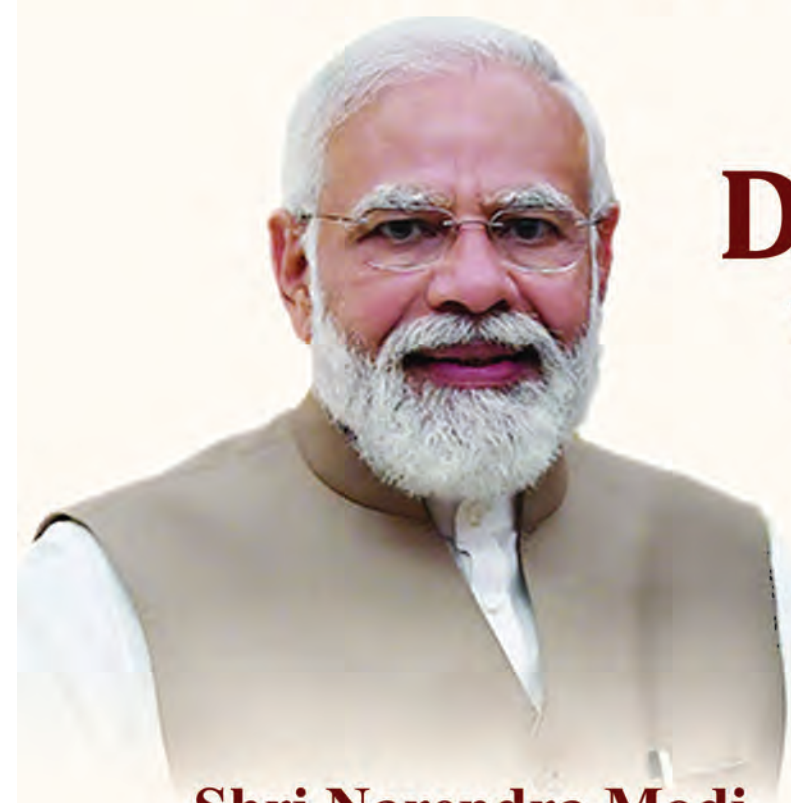
Saluting

The Architect of Chhattisgarh
Former Prime Minister,
Bharat Ratna

Late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee
on his
Birth Anniversary



Good Governance Day



Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister
India

Dhaan Bonus Rashi Vitaran Samaroh

25 December 2023
Time-1.00 PM
Village-Bendri, Abhanpur
Raipur (C.G.)



Shri Vishnu Deo Sai
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Chhattisgarh

Chief Guest
Shri Vishnu Deo Sai
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Chhattisgarh

Special Guests
Shri Vijay Sharma
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister
Chhattisgarh



Farmers
will Receive
Bonus of

₹ **3716**
Crore

- Pradhan Mantri Awas approved for over 18 lakh eligible beneficiaries.
- Procurement of 21 quintals of paddy per acre.
- Paddy Procurement at the rate of Rs 3100 per quintal.

सबका साथ, सबका विकास - सबका विश्वास और सबका प्रयास





Tribute to the Bravery and Sacrifice of Sahibzaade



Date
26 December 2023

Time
10:30 AM

Venue : **Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi**

Various events across the country

March-past by children

Rendition of Shabad Kirtan by Sikh children

Martial Arts demonstration by children

Interactive quiz on MYBharat platform and MyGov portal

Digital exhibitions and special gatherings in schools and childcare organisations (CCI) all over India

In the august presence of

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister



“The saga and the life's message of our Sahibzaadas should reach every child of the country. They should take inspiration from them and become dedicated citizens of the country.”

VEER BAAL —DIWAS

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Trade & Bulk Inquiry: Cell: 98494 98325, 9845673108

Farmers to get Rs 17.77 crore as paddy bonus today

Bhilai, Dec 24: The two years paddy bonus is going to be distributed on December 25. Money will be distributed to farmers in the three development blocks Durg, Dhamdha and Patan. The outstanding paddy bonus amount of about Rs 17 crore 772 lakh will be given to the farmers in the district. The birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Late Atal Bihari Vajpayee will be celebrated as National Good Governance Day on 25 December. On this occasion, as per the guarantee of the Prime Minister, the

outstanding bonus amount of two years of paddy will be paid to the farmers of the district on December 25. The state government has decided to pay the outstanding paddy production bonus amount of previous years at the rate of Rs 300 per quintal on the paddy procured from the farmers at the fixed minimum support price.

The distribution of the amount of Paddy Production Incentive Scheme in the district will be organized in the office premises of District Cooperative Central Bank

Limited Durg. Along with this, the distribution program of Paddy Production Incentive Scheme money will also be organized in Patan and Dhamdha development blocks. Farmers will be given an outstanding paddy bonus amount of about Rs 17 crore 772 lakh for the two years 2014-15 and 2015-16. During this, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai will communicate with the beneficiary farmers through video conferencing. Certificates related to paddy production incentive will be distributed to eligible beneficiary

farmers in the district by the public representatives at the development block level. Bonus distribution certificates will be distributed at District Cooperative Central Bank Limited Durg Development Block Patan, Marketing Cooperative Society Dhamdha. Necessary arrangements of LED screen, projector and mic will be made at the venue. Hridesh Sharma has been appointed as the nodal officer for organizing the programme.

Collector instructs for quick disposal of revenue cases

Bhilai, Dec 24: Collector Pushpendra Kumar Meena has instructed to organise Gram Panchayat level revenue camps in rural areas for quick resolution of revenue cases. Tehsildar / Naib Tehsildar have been asked to remain present in the camp along with the revenue employee, Patwari and RI to resolve the issues. Instructions were given in this regard. All SDMs will be the nodal officers of the revenue camps. Also, in urban areas, revenue camps will be organized in various wards and their roster would be released.

During a virtual meeting, the Collector gave instructions to take action against illegal mining and illegal transportation. Revenue staff should con-



tinuously monitor and take action as per the law. All commissioners, CMOs and CEOs were directed to take timely action to ensure that beneficiaries get benefits under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in rural areas as well as the urban bodies. On the occasion of Good

Governance Day on 25 December 2023, the SDMs were asked to take action as per the instructions of the government and do the work of bonus distribution under their own supervision. All Janpad CEOs including District CEO have been instructed to provide work to the

maximum number of workers as the NREGA work is slow. Emphasis was laid on all urban bodies to work on cleanliness. District Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Ashwani Dewangan along with other officers were present in the meeting.

Over 400 citizens getting free dialysis in district hospital

Bhilai, Dec 24: Another initiative was taken in the District Hospital Durg with the aim of helping economically weaker patients. In District Hospital Durg, 15 to 17 patients come for dialysis every day and according to monthly figures, about 350 to 400 patients visit for dialysis in a month. After undergoing dialysis, reports of CBT, RFT, LFT and viral markers (HCV, HBsAg, HIV etc) are seen. Thousands of rupees are charged on getting these tests and dialysis done in private hospitals, which is an additional burden for the financially weak person and family.



With the initiative of the district administration, free testing and dialysis facilities are being provided to those patients who are suffering from kidney failure and are financially weak. At present, a total of 5 beds are available along with necessary equipment for dialysis. Patients who have kidney failure are advised to get free dialysis done in the district hospital instead of going to private hospitals.

Beneficiary Atmaram Sahu, resident of Arjun Nagar Bhilai, said that earlier he used to get dialysis of his blind son Rakesh Sahu done in a private hospital. Where they had to spend Rs 4 - 4.5 thousand, but now they have been given this service free of cost in the district hospital. Atmaram said that everything from tests to medicines is free in the hospital and other facilities of the hospital are also

968 people seek benefits of different schemes at VBSY camp



Bhilai, Dec 24: On the third day of Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra Camp in Bhilai Municipal Corporation limits, 968 citizens reached the camp site and submitted applications under different schemes. Mayor Neeraj Pal, Speaker Girwar Bunt Sahu, MIC member Lalchand Verma, Corporator Mahesh Verma, Commissioner Rohit Vyas and Additional Commissioner Ashok Dwivedi lit the lamp and inaugurated the camp at Mangal Bazar Kohka and Hara Maidan

Contractor Colony Supela. More than 5000 citizens visited the camps on Sunday to take advantage of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra and to get aware about the government schemes. A great enthusiasm was seen among the people. Citizens are reaching the camps and filling the forms of public welfare schemes run by the government. Doctors of the District Health Department are holding free medical camps where people are getting themselves tested and are get-



ting free medicines. Beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana - Godavari Verma and Pankaj Singh; Swanidhi Yojana beneficiaries Shailesh Kumari; Sudhir Chaudhary, Surekha Bai, P Bhaskar Rao, Kanak Lata; PM Awas beneficiaries Govardhan Verma, Raju Verma and Saroj Sahu shared their experiences at the camp and how they got the benefit of the gov-

ernment scheme. Ujjwala Gas Kit and Swanidhi certificate were distributed at the camps. Under the baby shower scheme of the Women and Child Development Department, the guests presented kits to Lakshmi Dewangan, Yamini, Pramila Sahu, Aarti Verma, Madhu Verma and nutrition certificates to small children Harshit Verma, Kushal Nishad, Saransh, Lakshya Verma

for healthy babies. The public representatives, citizens and officers and employees present at the camp site took pledge to make India a developed and prosperous nation. Boys and girls of government school presented a Chhattisgarhi cultural program. Former Corporator Rajesh Pradhan, Anita Verma and a large number of locals were present in the camp.

'Run For Farmers' organised on National Farmers Day



Bhilai, Dec 24: To mark the occasion of National Farmers Day, an event "Run for Farmers" was organised on December 23, 2023 in the city. This 5 kms. cross-township run was organized by Dhavala Foundation with the basic objective to create awareness among the general public about the need to help the most deserving

members of our society - marginal farmers. This was the 1st edition of this ambitious event - Run for Farmers. The 5 kms. cross-township run to support farmers was flagged off by Ram Gopal Garg, SSP Durg at 07:00 hrs from Kreedha Parisar, Opposite Bhilai Niwas, Civic Centre. The race marched to Rail

Chowk, then to Civic Centre Triangle, moved from Shaheed Udyan to Jawahar Udyan Chowk, then to DPS Risali Chowk and concluded back at Kreedha Parisar. The Run was divided in 4 categories of runners, further divided into male & female groups - category - A: 12 to 15 years, category - B: 16 to 25 years, category - C:



26 to 50 years and category - D: 50+ years. Total 274 runners participated in all groups & categories. Winners were awarded gold, silver and bronze medals, while all runners have been given certificate for participation. Total 23 participants have received the medals. The major highlighted was participation of

two very senior runners - SP Singh, aged 82 years and Shyam Singh, aged 72 years, who successfully finished the run. Both of them have been awarded special medals & certificates. Devendra Yadav, MLA, Bhilai Nagar, was the Guest of Honour. Narendra Kumar Banchhor, President of Officers Association,

BSP, Satish Thakur, DSP, Traffic Police, and the Surpanch of villages Manikchouri and Dargaon were the other distinguished guests. Devendra Yadav in his address said that this is the first of its kind in the support of farmers, which is very special. Anita Jha, ED & CEO read the message sent by Kailash Chaudhary, Minister of State for Agriculture & Farmer Welfare, Government of India, on this occasion to Dhavala Foundation. Vijay Dhavala, MD & Group CEO proposed the vote of thanks to the guests, runners, event partners and other participants. BSP Town Administration, Durg Yatayati Police, BSP Officers Association, Ashishwari Jainco, BM Shah Hospital and Akash Neer for their valuable support for the event.

CCET witnesses Homecoming of its Alumni



Bhilai, Dec 24: CCET alongwith its distinguished alumni celebrates its 25 years of existence in its alumni meet held on December 23, 2023. Many esteemed alumni from all over the world attended the meet. Principal Dr Dipali Soren gave a warm welcome to everyone and Executive vice chairman Fr Dr PS Varghese set the tone for the event. They shared their beautiful college days memories with their juniors and batch-mates. The current stu-

dents gave beautiful performances. The alumni relived their college days by taking the tour of every corner of the their alma mater. The program ended with a business session in which many important decisions were taken regarding the future plans and also the election of office bearers. They also interacted with the current students and guided them about the current trends in the market. The program was coordinated by the coordinators Lincy & Prashant Bawaney.

SPSB Inter-Steel Plant Chess Championship-2023 concludes at Bhilai Niwas

Bhilai, Dec 24: SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant hosted the Inter-Steel Plants (Steel Plants Sports Board-SPSB) Chess Championship-2023 from December 21 to December 23, 2023. The Valedictory Ceremony of this 3-day Chess Championship organized by Plant's Sports, Cultural & Civic Amenities (SCCA) Department was held at Multipurpose Hall, Bhilai Niwas on December 23, 2023. Anirban Dasgupta, Director I/c (BSP) was the Chief Guest on this occasion. The team from Rourkela Steel Plant won the Championship, while Tata Steel Plant's team was the runner-up. Pawan Kumar, ED (P&A), Sandip Mathur, CGM (Pers), NK Banchhor, President (OA & BSP Chess



Club), Suraj Kumar Soni, GM (Pers-NW & Mines), were also present on this occasion, along with Saheer Ram Jakhar, DGM (SCCA), Parvinder Singh, Gen Sec (OA), and other Senior Officials and personnel from BSP's SCCA Department. Congratulating the participants, Chief Guest

Anirban Dasgupta, in his address, said that although Chess is classified as an indoor game, it is an intellectual game in the true sense. Chess is a game of concentration, and we can utilize such concentration in our workplace. Dasgupta appreciated the collective for organizing such Sports Championships from time

to time. The Winners and participants, along with the judges of the three-day championship were felicitated by the Chief Guest. Anees Ansari and Mithlesh Banjare were the judges of this Championship. A total of 8 teams from various steel plants including DSP, IISCO, ISP, SSP, RINL, RSP, and TATA Steel Plant, along with the Chess team from Bhilai Steel Plant, competed in this three-day tournament held in seven rounds, as per the rules and regulations laid down by the Chess Federation of India. Saheer Ram Jakhar, DGM (SCCA) gave the Welcome Address, while Supriyo Sen from SCCA Department compered the Valedictory Function.

Works of Extended Parking Facility inaugurated at JLN Hospital & RC

Bhilai, Dec 24: SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant's Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital and Research Centre took a significant stride towards environmental sustainability with the inauguration of the construction works of a new parking facility on December 23, 2023. The parking stand, covering an expansive area of over one lakh square feet, shall utilize innovative paver blocks manufactured from waste products by SAIL Green Tiles Plant (SGTP) of Bhilai Steel Plant. Anjani Kumar, ED (Works) of Bhilai Steel Plant, inaugurated the project by laying the first paver block ceremonially, marking the official commencement of the sustainable parking initiative. Among the distinguished guests present on this occasion included Dr Ravindranath M, CMO I/c (M&HS), Tapas Dasgupta, CGM I/c (Iron),



Sushil Kumar, CGM (MRD), Dr Vineeta Dwivedi, CMO (M&HS), Dr Sourabh Mukherjee, Dinesh Kumar Agrawal, GM (MRD), and Dr Rajeev Pal, Former CMO (M&HS). Shahid Ahmed, GM (Maintenance-M&HS), and Balbir Singh and the team who executed the project were also present on this occasion along with Hospital staff members. Dr Ravindranath M, highlighted the features of the project, emphasizing that the new parking facility shall accommodate over 400 vehi-

cles. Patients, their families, and hospital visitors will benefit from enhanced facilities and convenient parking arrangements, particularly during adverse weather conditions. Shahid Ahmed emphasized the environmental-friendly approach adopted during construction as suggested by the MRD Team. LD slag powder, an unsaleable waste product supplied by BSP's MRD, shall be used, as the base material for levelling the land, replacing

conventional sand, along with as many as 1.5 Lakh High-quality paver blocks from SAIL Green Tiles Plant (SGTP), represents a significant step towards sustainable waste management. SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant, a unit of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), is a leading producer of quality steel products, committed to environmental sustainability and community development. Under the guidance of Tapas Dasgupta, CGM I/c (Iron), SAIL Green Tiles Plant (SGTP) plays a pivotal role in producing eco-friendly paver blocks from waste generated within the Bhilai Steel Plant. As part of the holistic environmental initiative, tree plantation will also complement the parking facility, aligning with the hospital management's commitment to green practices.

Congmen demonstrate against the suspension of 146 MPs

Birthday of prodigious genius Ramanujan celebrated

Central Chronicle News

Jagdalpur, Dec 24: On the call of Chhattisgarh Pradesh Congress Committee, Bastar District Congress Committee Urban/Rural opened a protest against the suspension of 146 MPs from both the Houses of Parliament by the Central Government. Congressmen said that a one-day state-wide protest is being held at Sirhasar Chowk to protest against killing the principles of democracy.

DCC President (urban) of Bastar DCC Sushil Maurya said that the ruckus has been going on in the winter session of Parliament for the last few days. The opposition is continuously raising questions from the central government on security after people suddenly entered the Parliament.

Instead of answering this question, the Central Government has suspended about 146 opposition MPs from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. He said that the youth forced by unemployment, by



jumping from the audience gallery, entering the Parliament and leaving smoke, have tried to tell and wake up the Modi government to protest against killing the principles of democracy.

The Central Government has turned Parliament into a graveyard of democracy by suspending 146 MPs from both the Houses of Parliament and killing the principles of our democracy. He said that only Godi media is discussing the mimicry done by the opposition MP and the video made by Rahul Gandhi, which the Congress Party strongly opposes.

Former Jagdalpur MLA Rekhachad Jain said that today the dictatorial BJP government is trying to use vari-

ous tactics to suppress the entire incident. Also, efforts are being made to suppress the entire matter by giving air to the mimicry of Vice President Jagdish Dhankar. While this has been done by the ruling party in the House before, no one ever created any ruckus in it.

Today BJP, under the influence of power, is leaving no stone unturned in adopting a dictatorial attitude. In fact, about 146 opposition MPs were expelled from both the Houses of Parliament out of spite, which is highly condemnable.

Recently, the colored smoke used by two youths by jumping from the audience gallery in the Parliament House falls somewhere in the category of security lapse.

Opposition MPs were opposing it, due to which he was suspended. But taking action against the opposition MPs without taking any action till date against BJP MP Pratap Sinha, who issued the passes to those youths, is highly condemnable. The Congress Party strongly opposes this dictatorial attitude.

During this, Bastar DCC District President (urban) President Sushil Maurya, Bastar DCC President (rural) Balram Maurya, Assembly in-charge Fateh Singh Parihar, Umashankar Shukla, former MLA Rekhchand Jain, Jatin Jaiswal, Mayor Safira Sahu, Corporation President Kavita Sahu, Ram Shankar and party workers in large number were present.

Central Chronicle News

Rajim, Dec 24: National Mathematics Day 2023 was celebrated with great pomp by organizing various inter-college and inter-college competitions at Government Rajiv Lochan Postgraduate College, Rajim. The three-day program sponsored by Chhattisgarh Science and Technology Council, Chhattisgarh and NCSTC, Government of India, was inaugurated on 20th December under the chief hospitality of Dr. Govind Prasad Sahu, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla University, Raipur.

On the first day of Mathematics Day programme, inter-university quiz, essay and Rangoli competition was organised. School and college students participated enthusiastically in these competitions. In an interesting and informative display, mathematical concepts and works of Ramanujan were displayed, in which Saraswati Shishu Mandir got the first position



and Harihar School got the second position in the inter-school quiz competition.

Dr. Govind Prasad Sahu, the chief guest and keynote speaker of the inaugural session of the program, gave a special lecture on the application of mathematics in computers. The main speaker of the second day was Dr. Ajay Sharma, Assistant Professor Mathematics, Seth Poochhand Mahavidyalaya, Navapara Rajim.

In his lecture, while giving a live illustration of Ramanujan's personality, works and important notable works through power point, he said that the

personality of the magician of mathematics was simple and gentle and it is a matter of pride to have a mathematician like Ramanujan in the world. On the third day of National Mathematics Day, a speech competition was organized on Ramanujan and mathematical concepts, in which the students of Shishu Saraswati Mandir, Rajim won the first, second and third positions.

In the lecture programme of the last day, Dr. Govardhan Yadu gave the example of Ramanujan's work and the events happening on the physical plane and said that black hole, partition function con-

cept, Ramanujan's Mach theta function and infinite series can be obtained only from them. Programme Prof. ML Verma, who was presiding over the programme, while congratulating him for organizing Mathematics Day, said that Ramanujan was the first person to understand infinity. Vani Chandrakar, Vasudev Dhiwar, Neha Soni, Rahul Sonkar, Khublal had important contributions in the successful conduct of the program. College students, school students, school teachers and all the officers and employees of the college were present.

Two accused nabbed with 12.755 kg ganja

Seven day NNS camp inaugurated in Tekaparakala

Veer Bal Diwas to be celebrated on Dec 26



Ghafoor, resident of Jharkhand and Shaheed Sheikh, S/o of Sheikh Farid, R/o Jharkhand were arrested from village Dhanpunji Forest Naka.

A total of 12.755 kg of

Central Chronicle News

Jagdalpur, Dec 24: Nagarnar police of the district had received information from an informer that two persons coming towards Jagdalpur in a bus from Odisha are carrying illegal drug Ganja.

On information, accused Mohammad Nisar Ahmed, father of Abdul

intoxicant ganja and one mobile phone were seized from their possession. Since the accused were found to have committed an offense under the NDPS Act, the crime was registered against them by arresting them.

After proceedings at Nagarnar police station, both the accused were presented before the court on judicial remand.



Central Chronicle News

Khairagarh, Dec 24: Under the National Service Scheme (NSS), a seven-day special camp was held on the occasion of the inauguration of Village Tekapar in the hospitality of Ghamman Sahu, Chairman District Panchayat Rajnandgaon and special guest Gyan

Das Banjare Advocate, Gorelal Verma Social Worker.

The camp will run from Dec 21-27r and the camp has been organized under the joint aegis of District Education and Training Institute Khairagarh and Government Higher Secondary School Madrakuhi.

Chief Guest Ghamman

Sahu said that the National Service Scheme teaches students the art of discipline and a balanced life and NSS routine is conducted from 5:00 am to 10:00 pm with various activities and volunteers also work to spread awareness about various national programs like de-addiction, cleanliness in the village.

Along with this, it provides a platform to the volunteers for their personal development through NSS and due to this, all the volunteers will be able to decide a path for their future life by participating in the camp through NSS. On this occasion, NNS program in-charge KK Verma along with villagers, teachers and volunteer students were present.



Central Chronicle News

Korea, Dec 24: Veer Bal Diwas will be celebrated on 26th December, as per the information shared by Chief Minister Vishnu Dev Sai via video conferencing. He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that 26th December will be celebrated as 'Veer Bal Diwas' to pay tribute to the courage of 'Sahibzade', the four sons of the last Sikh Guru Gobind Singh as these four children were martyred at the hands of the Mughals and to com-

memorate this, it was decided to celebrate Veer Bal Diwas.

In the district Veer Bal Diwas will be celebrated from 22 to 26 December 2023 under the instructions of Collector Vinay Kumar Langeh and in coordination with the Women and Child Development Department, under which, painting, reading, singing, poetry, essay activities are to be organized on the topic of bravery in schools, kindergartens and colleges.

Also painting, reading, singing, poetry and essay

competitions were organized at Swami Atmanand English Medium School, Baikunthpur, Girls Higher Secondary School, Baikunthpur and Children's Home (Boys) Baikunthpur. The objective of these activities is to establish and strengthen among the youth and adolescents the values of contribution towards countrymen, women and nation building, especially to share the experiences of freedom fighters and former winners of the Prime Minister's National Children's Award.

Beneficiaries should get compensation soon: Jaiswal

Union organizations irked over Chandrakar not getting ministerial berth

Central Chronicle News

Chirmiri, Dec 24: During the Assembly session, Regional MLA Shyam Bihari Jaiswal submitted a letter for land acquisition and release of state share amounting to Rs 120 crore 50 lakh for the construction of Chirmiri Nagpur Halt Railway Line. The Chief Minister understood the project closely, and said that land acquisition can start soon and the amount of state share can be released in the upcoming budget.

As per information, Regional MLA Shyam Bihari Jaiswal met State Chief Minister Vishnudev Sai on the second day after taking oath on the first day of the 3-day assembly session and handed over the demand letter regarding the construction of Chirmiri Nagpur Halt Rail Line, the much awaited demand of lakhs of people of rural area



proved railway line has not been done till date by the state government and due to non-provision of state share amount of Rs 120 crore 50 lakh, there has been a lot of delay in the completion of this important project.

MLA Jaiswal told the CM that with the completion of this project, lakhs of people of Chirmiri Manendragarh Khadgawan will be able to get the benefit of all the passenger express trains running from Ambikapur, along with this, Nagpur Passenger Halt station will also get the status of full station and passenger facilities there will be expanded. The CM spoke to his OSD P Dayanand and asked for all the information about the progress report so far in this important railway line.

Khadgawan including Chirmiri Manendragarh. It is known that in 2018, the Chief Minister was provided complete information about the problems being faced in the construction of Chirmiri Nagpur Halt Rail Line, which was approved under the MOU between the Railway Board and the then BJP government at a cost of Rs 241 crore with 50-50 percent expenditure. He said that the process of land acquisition for this ap-

proved railway line has not been done till date by the state government and due to non-provision of state share amount of Rs 120 crore 50 lakh, there has been a lot of delay in the completion of this important project.

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● Chandrakar broke the myth by registering a hat-trick victory

Central Chronicle News

Kurud, Dec 24: The people of Kurud have handed over the command of the area for the fifth time to senior MLA Ajay Chandrakar, who has been leading the area since 1998, but Chandrakar, who is known not only for his erudition, deep political thinking and knowledge, but also for his understanding of the role of a strong opposition and the public welfare schemes of the government and the issues of public interest, not

been included in the cabinet of the BJP government of Vishnu Deo Sai of Chhattisgarh, has irked social organisations party workers and other leaders of cultural, religious and social organizations.

It may be noted that for the first time in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly in 1998, Kurud MLA Ajay Chandrakar, who was elected by the public as a youth leader has fought continuously for the interests of Kurud assembly constituency and also, as Panchayat Minister and Higher Education Minister, he proved his efficiency by handing over many schemes in the entire state. Beyond all this,

even in the form of a strong opposition, they fiercely attacked the Congress-led Bhupesh Baghel government of 2018 and was also the chief executive of the charge sheet committee formed by the BJP before the elections.

Till date no one has been elected MLA five times from not only Kurud but also from adjacent Dhamatri district and Mahasamund Lok Sabha seats. Though the new CM gave truth to the BJP's slogan of 'Haath Sabke Saath' by implementing all the election announcements ranging from providing 18 lakh houses to the state, payment of bonus for two

years, and purchase of paddy at 21 quintals per acre, but not giving any place to an experienced leader like Ajay

Chandrakar in the cabinet, has clearly made rounds of displeasure among party workers and leaders of the region.

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा Bank of Baroda क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा दुर्ग: प्रथम तल, जौनल मार्केट सेक्टर-10, भिलाई (छत्तीसगढ़)-490006

छत्तीसगढ़ राज्य के वेमेत्रा, राजनांदगाँव और कवर्धा जिले में व्यवसाय प्रतिनिधि पर्यवेक्षक की नियुक्ति हेतु विज्ञापन advertisement for Appointment of Business Correspondent Supervisor in Bemetara, Rajnandgaon and Kawardha, Districts of Chhattisgarh State

महत्वपूर्ण: विज्ञापन की तारीख: 25/12/2023 आवेदन पत्र भरने की अंतिम तिथि: 08/01/2024

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा, छत्तीसगढ़ के वेमेत्रा, राजनांदगाँव और कवर्धा जिले में व्यवसाय प्रतिनिधि पर्यवेक्षक की नियुक्ति हेतु अनुबंध के आधार पर ऑफलाइन आवेदन आमंत्रित करता है। उम्मीदवारों को प्राथमिकता दी जायेगी जहाँ रिक्त घोषित की गई है और स्थानीय भाषा में कुशल होना चाहिए। (नियुक्ति के संबंध में विस्तृत विवरण नीचे दिया गया है:-)

पदनाम: कार्यालय सहायक - रिक्तियों की संख्या 4

| आयु | दिनांक 01/01/2024 को-21 वर्ष से 45 वर्ष तक (अन्य उम्मीदवारों के लिए) |
|---------|--|
| योग्यता | सेवानिवृत्ति कर्मचारियों के लिए:- • सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंक से मुख्य प्रबन्धक स्तर तक के सेवा निवृत्त अधिकारी (स्वेडिच सेवा निवृत्ति सहित) • बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा से संतोषजनक आचरण के साथ सेवानिवृत्त लिपिक कर्मचारी जो JAIB परीक्षा उत्तीर्ण है। • स्थानीय भाषा में उत्कृष्ट संचार कौशल आवश्यक • अंग्रेजी और हिंदी भाषा का ज्ञान आवश्यक है। अन्य उम्मीदवारों के लिए:- • किसी भी संकाय में स्नातक तथा कम्प्यूटर ज्ञान (MS Office, email, internet etc) • हालांकि एमएससी उत्तीर्ण आवेदकों को वरीयता दी जाएगी। • स्थानीय भाषा में उत्कृष्ट संचार कौशल आवश्यक • अंग्रेजी और हिंदी भाषा का ज्ञान आवश्यक है। |

पारिश्रमिक मासिक पारिश्रमिक में निश्चित और परिवर्तनीय दोनों घटक शामिल होंगे

| निश्चित घटक | परिवर्तनीय घटक |
|-------------|----------------|
| 15000 | 10000 |

पूर्ण विवरण के लिए, बैंक की वेबसाइट: www.bankofbaroda.in पर जाएं। आवेदन एक सीलबद्ध लिफाफे में दिया जाना है, जिस पर स्पष्ट रूप से लिखा होना चाहिए " बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा के दुर्ग क्षेत्र में व्यवसाय प्रतिनिधि पर्यवेक्षक" के पद के लिए आवेदन सभी प्रकार से पूर्ण आवेदन पत्र इस पते पर भेजे जाएं: बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय दुर्ग, प्रथम तल, जौनल मार्केट, सेक्टर-10, भिलाई-490006

Naxalites create havoc during resistance week

● Wheels of buses stopped

Central Chronicle News

Jagdalpur, Dec 24: Naxalites had called for Bharat Bandh on Dec 22 along with the announcement of celebrating resistance week from Dec 16 to 22. Two days before Dec 22, to make their presence felt, Naxalites set fire to passenger vehicles in the interior areas of Naxal-affected Sukma, Dantewada, Narayanpur, Bijapur districts. Due to the shivering cold in Bastar division, passengers are in trouble. It is only after completion of

have cut trees, cut roads, blocked roads and created havoc. After which, keeping in mind the safety of passengers, passenger vehicles have been completely stopped in Naxal affected areas.

On Friday, the problems of passengers have increased due to complete stoppage of movement of passenger vehicles in Naxal affected Sukma, Dantewada, Narayanpur, Bijapur districts. Due to the shivering cold in Bastar division, passengers are in trouble. It is only after completion of



this protest that this the operation of passenger vehicles is said to be normal. It is noteworthy that in the last two days of Naxalite Resistance Week, Naxalites set vehicles on

fire. They were successful in showing the impact of their presence by digging potholes and putting up banners and posters on the route. In this sequence, Naxalites set fire to Royal

Travels and Kushwaha Travels passenger buses near Dugaiguda late Thursday evening. Four vehicles, including a passenger bus, two trucks and a Matador of Telangana State Transport, were set on fire in Sukma district. The road has been blocked by cutting trees on NH near village Belchar in Bijapur district.

Similarly, near village Dodra, 06 km from here, Naxalites also vandalized several small vehicles including the vehicle of a BJP leader. Naxalites set a

pickup vehicle on fire near Kumarguda under Jagargunda police station area. In Abujhmad area also, Naxalites have blocked the road at many places by cutting trees and digging the road.

Also, the announcement of Bharat Bandh on 22nd December by putting up banners and posters on a large scale has created a lot of uproar. After which brakes have been installed on the wheels of all types of vehicles including passenger vehicles in Naxal affected areas.

One day workshop organized for tackling drug abuse and eradication

Legal Literacy Camp sheds light on NDPS Act and its implications

Kawardha, Dec 24:

In a proactive move aimed at raising awareness and promoting legal literacy, a one-day workshop was conducted today at the newly established ADR building within the premises of the District Court, following the directives of District Judge and Chairperson of the District Legal Services Authority, Satyabhama Ajay Dubey. This enlightening workshop centered around the crucial provisions of the National Legal Services Authority (Legal Services to the Victims of Drug Abuse



and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) Scheme, 2015. It also focused on the dissemination of knowledge about legal provisions concerning the misuse of narcotic drugs.

Judge Pallav Raghuvanshi took the opportunity to educate health department officials, drug inspectors, and representatives from various medical associations and drug vendors

present at the event about the detrimental effects of drug abuse. He emphasized that the NDPS Act includes penalties for the unauthorized sale of drugs and underlined that drug addiction is a treatable condition.

Amit Pratap Chandra, Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority, stressed the importance of selling medication strictly on the basis of doctor-prescribed prescriptions. He highlighted



the role of doctors in supplying medication tailored to individuals' physical and mental health needs. Often, individuals misuse drugs without prescriptions, necessitating adherence to the doctor's instructions and the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Drugs Act 2014.

The workshop was attended by several dignitaries, including District Hospital Civil Surgeon

Mahesh Kumar Suryavanshi, Drug Inspector Anil Dani, and Amit Bardiya, along with approximately 30 members of the drug dealer association. The event's success was achieved through the cooperation of District Legal Services Authority Kabirdham staff and paralegal volunteers. It represents a significant step towards community empowerment and responsible medication practices.

Poor people to get permanent and safe houses: Santoshi

■ BJP's historic decision aims to eradicate homelessness in the State

Fingeshwar, Dec 24:

In a historic move, the Chhattisgarh BJP government, during its very first cabinet meeting, has approved the construction of 18 lakh houses for the state's underprivileged population, bringing an end to the era of damp and raw walls. This initiative under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana promises to provide secure and permanent homes to the impoverished and homeless families across Chhattisgarh.

Santoshi Srivastava, an active member of BJP Mahila, lauded the government's commitment to fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of ensuring every citizen has



access to a permanent and safe residence. The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana has witnessed the construction of millions of permanent houses nationwide, offering shelter to countless impoverished and homeless individuals. This monumental decision by the Central Government reaffirms its dedication to this essential cause.

Srivastava emphasized the significance of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, highlighting that during the Congress government's tenure in the state, the scheme was neglected, resulting in the failure to

construct sanctioned houses. Consequently, countless homeless individuals were deprived of permanent and secure housing. With the BJP government's approval of 18 lakh houses in its first cabinet meeting, the state is poised to address the homelessness crisis comprehensively, ensuring no one remains without a permanent and safe residence.

Srivastava expressed heartfelt gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Vishnu Ddo Sai, Deputy Chief Ministers Arun Sao and Vijay Sharma, and all senior leaders dedicated to uplifting the underprivileged. This landmark decision reflects the government's unwavering commitment to its promises, and it has garnered immense support and confidence from the people of the state, who rewarded the party with a resounding majority, enabling it to take this transformative step towards ending homelessness.

KCPS Kurud celebrates National Mathematics Day with enthusiasm

■ Students showcase mathematical talent in Quiz and Speech Competition

Kurud, Dec 24:

Kaliram Chandrakar Public School (KCPS) in Kurud celebrated National Mathematics Day with great enthusiasm. The school's Mathematics Department organized a Mathematics Quiz competition for students in grades 6th to 8th, providing them with an opportunity to showcase their mathematical talents. The students participated wholeheartedly, displaying their love for the subject.

Before the competition, students captivated everyone with speeches highlighting the significance of Mathematics Day. Through their speeches, they portrayed the life of the renowned mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan, emphasizing his passion and dedication



to mathematics. Some students even showcased their artistic talents by creating impressive drawings of the legendary mathematician.

Amar Singh, the Head of the Mathematics Department, addressed the students, reminding them that the day marked the birth anniversary of the brilliant mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan, celebrated as National Mathematics Day. Singh elaborated on Ramanujan's early life, born into a Brahmin Ayangar family in Erode, Tamil Nadu, where his

deep-rooted interest in mathematics began. Ramanujan's journey is a testament to his unwavering dedication to the field, earning him the title of 'Mathematical Wizard.' He highlighted Ramanujan's remarkable achievements, including his study of the world-famous trigonometry book written by Professor S.L. Loni from the University of London and the formulation of groundbreaking mathematical theories.

Principal K. Manjita Thakur commended the students' outstanding

performance in the speech and quiz competition, emphasizing that Ramanujan's life is an enduring source of inspiration. Principals also encouraged students to embrace Ramanujan's work ethic and dedication as a model for success in all subjects. The event saw the participation of teaching staff from the Mathematics Department, including Hemant Sahu, Trilok Sahu, Sajal Chandrakar, Sakshi Dixit, and enthusiastic students, all of whom contributed to the celebration.

Mungeli takes steps in anticipation of possible COVID-19 resurgence

■ Heightened concerns emerge with arrival of new COVID variant in Kerala

Mungeli, Dec 24:

With the specter of COVID-19 looming once more, apprehension is spreading throughout the region. The memory of the pandemic that began four years ago has yet to fade, and a sense of uncertainty now envelops the nation as the possibility of a resurgence grows. As the New Year approaches, the atmosphere remains far from festive, with crowds in markets, banks, and hospitals showing little regard for the situation at hand. COVID-19 prevention measures have seemingly fallen by the wayside, and the city faces a renewed threat.

It appears that the circumstances of four years ago have returned, with the time and place mirroring the initial outbreak of the coronavirus. While the world prepares to celebrate the advent of 2024, the presence of a new virus variant has been confirmed in



Kerala, prompting an advisory from the Central Government. Reports of COVID-19 cases have begun to resurface in the state and neighboring districts like Bilaspur. Regrettably, local testing efforts have not kept pace with the evolving situation. Many individuals have discarded masks and sanitizers, contributing to the reckless demeanor witnessed in markets, banks, and hospitals.

The momentum behind COVID-19 prevention measures in the city has ground to a halt. Even prior to the renewed threat, the district hospital experienced an influx of patients suffering

from various ailments. The government and administration have taken proactive steps to guard against the emerging coronavirus variants. It is imperative for the general public to adhere to COVID-19 guidelines and practice responsible behavior, including mask-wearing, hand hygiene, and social distancing. By doing so, the spread of COVID-19 can be curbed effectively.

In this regard, Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr. Devendra Paikra emphasized the importance of preparing hospitals in accordance with government guidelines as COVID-19

cases resurface in certain parts of the country. Medical facilities are reviving dormant equipment, and individuals arriving at hospitals with cold and cough symptoms are being directed to undergo COVID-19 testing.

Dr. Paikra reassured the public that while COVID-19 is under control in the state, vigilance remains essential. He urged everyone to follow the previously issued COVID-related guidelines, adopt appropriate preventive behaviors, and seek immediate testing and treatment when exhibiting cold, cough, fever, or related symptoms.

67th Baseball National School Sports Competition in Bilaspur

Bilaspur, Dec 24:

Bilaspur's Late B.R. Yadav State Sports Training Center Bahtarai is all set to host the prestigious 67th National School Sports Competition in Baseball from January 2 to 5, 2024. The competition, designed for talented boys and girls aged 17, will see the participation of 700 young athletes from all corners of the country.

To ensure the successful organization of this exciting event, a crucial meeting was convened today in the conference room of the Divisional Commissioner's office, presided over by Divisional Commissioner K.D. Kunjam. During the meeting, Commissioner Kunjam emphasized the importance of a seamless competition and urged all officers to fulfill their assigned responsibilities diligently. He stressed the need to prioritize the convenience and well-being of the participating athletes.

Several key responsibilities were delegated during the meeting to ensure the event's smooth execution. The Superintendent of Police was tasked with security arrangements both at the competition venue and the players' accommodations. The Executive Director of NTPC Sipat was assigned the responsibility of providing essential gear such as caps, T-shirts, and track



suits for the players. The coordination of medals, trophies, awards, and mementos was entrusted to the Co-Managing Director and President of SECL. Additionally, the Municipal Corporation Commissioner was instructed to oversee cleanliness-related arrangements, while the CMHO was entrusted with providing necessary health facilities. The Regional Transport Officer was directed to arrange bus facilities, and the responsibility of promoting the event through daily newspapers was assigned to the Joint Director of Public Relations. Various other departments, including the District Education Officer, Food Controller, Electricity Department, PWD, and Sports and Youth Welfare Department, were also assigned specific tasks to ensure the event's success. The meeting was attended by several prominent officials, including Municipal Corporation Commissioner Kunal Dudawat, District Panchayat CEO Ajay Agarwal, ADM RA Kuruvanshi, and representatives from all participating departments.

Variety of programmes mark Day-2 of prize giving function

■ Of RKC 2023

Raipur, Dec 24:

The Day-2 of the Prize Giving Function, 2023 began with great zeal and fervour on Dec 21 with the temple service at Panch Dev Mandir: HN Thakore Saheb Mandhathasinhji Manoharsinhji Jadeja, President, Rajkumar College, Rajkote (Gujarat) was the Chief Guest of the Day 2 (final day) prize giving function, 2023.

The programme began at Jashpur Hall with the arrival of the chief guest at 1:30pm. After the introduction with members of the Governing Body, flag hoisting and guard of honour by the NCC Cadets and the group photography, the dignitaries moved into Jashpur Hall. The programme inside the Hall started with the School Song "Sarejahan se achha" and bouquets were presented to the dignitaries. The welcome address was read by Maharajadhiraj Aditya Pratap Deo of Kanker, on behalf of the President, General Council, Maharaja TS Singh Deo of Surguja. It was followed by the Annual Report by Lt. Col. Avinash Singh (Veteran), Principal, Rajkumar College (C.G.). Before the individual and set prize distribution commenced from 2:10 to 3:25pm, the convocation of the Class XII students took place.

In the report, the Principal briefed the gathering about the academic excellence and all round development of the school and the students in various fields. It covered a whole gamut of activities in the school and also the



performance of our students outside the school, in the Inter School Competitions. Prizes were distributed to the winners by the Chief Guest HH Thakore Sahebji.

In his Address, the Chief Guest expressed his gratitude for inviting him as the Chief Guest of our esteemed school and eulogized the efforts put in by the founding fathers both at Raipur and Rajkot, with the same name of Rajkumar College. He not only drew a parallel between both the school but offered a suggestion to initiate the teacher and student exchange programmes in the near future.

After the vote of thanks delivered by the Chairman, Managing Committee Raja Shri T.C. Deb of Baramba, the programme inside Jashpur Hall concluded with the National Anthem followed by Photography Session of the Board Members with the Chief Guest. Then the Chief Guest inaugurated the Art and Craft Exhibition and also visited the various Stalls. It was followed by Chairman's At Home

and cultural programme on Ground, PT display, Gymnastics and Horse Riding at Mahant Sarveshwar Das Cricket Pavilion, Rajkumar College.

The concluding event of the Day 2 was the traditional variety entertainment staged inside Jashpur Hall between from 6:30pm to 8:30pm.

The highlights of the Variety Entertainment were as follows: - 1. As per the tradition of Rajkumar College, the evening programme commenced with Vidya Vrind, 2. The Trial (An adaptation from The Merchant of Venice by Shakespeare), 3. Fillers by Junior School 4. Kalyan Sundaram - the Shiva Shakti (XI Girls Day scholars), 5. Fillers by Junior School, 6. Fillers by Junior School, 7. The Quick Style (Class XI - Day Scholars Boys), 8. Fillers by Junior School, 9. Dashavatar (Class XI - Boarder Boys) and 10. Garbh Deep - Paramparaar Aaradhana Ka Sangam (PGBH - Girls). All programmes were highly appreciated by the audience in the hall, informs a press release.

SECL bags awards for Star Rating of mines

■ And performance in Special Campaign 3.0

Korba, Dec 24:

SECL has been awarded by the Coal Ministry for its achievements in Star Rating of three mines and Special Campaign 3.0. SECL's Charcha underground mine (year 2018-19, 2019-20), Bangwar underground mine (year 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22) and Khairha underground mine (year 2020-21) have been awarded for their performance in star rating of mines. The said awards were presented by the Honorable Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi in a grand program organized in New Delhi.

Ministry of Coal has formulated Star Rating Policy to distinguish outstanding performance of coal mines and accord them the recognition. The Star rating policy outlines Star Rating criteria across seven comprehensive modules: "Mining Operations, Environmental factors, Adoption of Technologies-Best Mining Practices, Economic Performance, Rehabilitation & Resettlement, Worker re-



lated Compliance, and Safety & Security." The Star Ratings are awarded on a scale from Five Star to No Star, evaluating each mine's achievements historically.

Emphasis on increasing coal production from underground mines, number of continuous miners in SECL to cross 50:

The Coal Ministry has set a target to increase the total production from underground coal mines to 100 million tonnes by the year 2030. SECL is also making continuous efforts in this direction, as a result of which, after a long time, there has been an increase in coal production from underground mines in the last financial year. At present, the company has installed 12 continuous miners in underground mines and plans are being made to install 40 more continuous miners in the future.

India record maiden Test win over Australia

Mumbai, Dec 24 (PTI):

It was a befitting end to India Women's first 'home season' of Test cricket in 28 years as they recorded a historic maiden victory over a venerable Australia in the one-off Test here on Sunday. On the final day, India produced their best both with the ball and bat to thwart a spirited Australian resurgence, first sparking a collapse in the visitors' ranks to snaffle the remaining five wickets for 28 and then knocking off a meagre target of 75 without much ado to script an eight-wicket win.

Smriti Mandhana (38 not out) and Jemimah Rodrigues (12 not out) embraced each other in a warm hug when the objective of beating a world-dominating side was accomplished, bringing back memories of India's shushed reaction in 2008 in Australia when MS Dhoni's side beat the hosts and made a statement by not indulging in any passionate celebrations.

Playing more than one Test at home for the first time since 1995, there was hardly a moment when the team put a foot wrong.

India Women's stuck to the promise of playing positive cricket, weathered all mini storms along the way and largely dictated terms



against fancied opponents in Australia and England.

In fact, there was no disparity in Team India's clinical performance in the two home Tests played on different surfaces here at the

Wankhede Stadium and at the DY Patil Stadium against England, considering they were playing at home for the first time in almost a decade.

While India scripted the biggest

win for any team by margin of runs against England, their first-ever triumph over Australia in 11 Tests now has ensured more entries in the column of matches won' compared to matches lost'.

In 40 Tests, India now have seven wins and six defeats, while 27 have been drawn. India's dominating show warrants the attention of the game's custodians to ruminate over more 'home' Tests in future since

such games have only been few and far between.

On the fourth day morning, Indian spinners ruled the roost as the trio of Sneha Rana (5-2-9-2), Rajeshwari Gayakwad (1.4-1-0-2) and Deepti Sharma (3-2-5-0) teamed up to wreck havoc on the Australian resistance.

Australia, looking to build on their slender lead of 46 runs, collapsed spectacularly to lose five wickets in the first 45 minutes of the day and concede the game to India.

India were supreme with the bat again as they made 406 in the first essay to also record their highest total ever against Australia in Tests.

Shafali Verma cracked the first ball of the innings for four but Garth produced a peach to find an outside edge off her bat, caught by skipper Alyssa Healy, for the first breakthrough of the innings.

Beth Mooney dropped a sitter off Gardner to give Richa Ghosh (13) an early reprieve when the batter was yet to open her account.

Ghosh went on to add 51 for the second wicket with Mandhana (38 not out off 61 balls, 6x4s) after Shafali Verma (4) fell in the first over. Rodrigues and Mandhana then complete the task.

Harmanpreet hails team's collective effort in Aus win



Mumbai, Dec 24 (PTI):

After India Women's convincing eight-wicket triumph over Australia at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium, captain Harmanpreet Kaur expressed gratitude to her entire team for their collective effort.

During the post-match presentation, Kaur credited their bowling coach's advice on taking wickets without being defensive, acknowledging its positive impact.

"Everyone in the team contributed, everyone was there to win the game for the team. Our bowling coach is telling them about how to take wickets and not be defensive. That's re-

ally helping us." She extended thanks to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and selectors for their support, stating, "I want to thank BCCI for giving us this opportunity and secondly all our selectors - they have given us the best side and shown trust on each and every member."

Looking ahead, Kaur expressed hope for more Test matches in the upcoming years, emphasising the positive results achieved when everything aligns.

"When everything works together, you get positive results. Hopefully, we'll get many more Test games in upcoming years. Thanks to the crowd. Everything went really well for us," she concluded.

Virat, Rohit sweat it out as life moves on

Centurion, Dec 24 (PTI):

It has now been more than a month since the forgettable World Cup final but it still hurts like hell.

However, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are two battle-hardened professionals who know that it's important to move on as they sweated it out in companionable silence.

There's a 31-year jinx in Indian cricket having missed out on a Test series win in the 'Rainbow Nation' and in the twilight zone of their careers, both would want to achieve which no other Indian teams could.

While Kohli, who came back from London after a short break with family, joined the training after half an hour, Rohit did look a bit more relaxed after shutting himself off for three weeks.

The two batted in different nets and centre practice strip, and also faced throwdowns for more than an hour.

There was hardly any conversation between them even when they took short breaks in between.

Unlike the World Cup nets when there was a mix of both focus and laughter, the only sound that made you sit up and take notice was that of the red leather



colliding with the willow.

Coach Rahul Dravid had a hawk eye on centre nets as KL Rahul put his pads on quickly. With Kona Bharat not even bothering to don the big gloves during the first hour, one had no doubt who would keep wickets.

It became more clear with the slip formation when Rahul kept wickets and had young turks Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill for company.

Cricket is piece of life and all present at Supersport Park during the gruelling three hours were seen picking up the pieces.

Amid the silence though, Rohit's sense of humour remained intact when he joked with a well known Youtuber that "you have got competition because others are here," pointing out at other journalists, who have come to cover the series. The first to enter the

nets, Rohit and young Yashasvi Jaiswal were seen taking turns while facing Jasprit Bumrah, Shardul Thakur for five deliveries each before coming in for next round.

However, the signature Rohit came to fore when he slog swept Ashwin deep into the grass embankments. One knew that nothing has changed as per Rohit the opener is concerned.

As the skipper was in the midst of his first stint, he walked Kohli and had a brief chat with coach Dravid as he watched Rohit's batting.

After some time, King Kohli walked out of the main arena and padded up for the throwdown nets where Rohit and Jaiswal would join in a few minutes. "Tujhko pehle jana ki main jaon (You will go first or should I go)," Rohit asked his younger opening partner who wants the senior to take strike.

One of the throwdown specialists Dayanand asked his skipper, "Dada aapke liye kaunsa bowler rakhein, right arm ya left-arm (Should I keep right-arm or left-arm bowler for you)." The skipper was fine with anything as the former skipper already started his knocking at other nets.

It's not even a blip: Healy on first-ever Test loss to India



Mumbai, Dec 24 (PTI):

Australia's first-ever loss to India in the one-off women's Test is not even a "blip" and next year's T20 World Cup in Bangladesh remains their ultimate goal, said captain Alyssa Healy on Sunday.

Indian Women recorded a historic maiden victory over a venerable Australia in the one-off Test, putting a befitting end to their first 'home season' of Test cricket in 28 years. The

eight-wicket win was India's first-ever triumph over Australia in 11 Tests.

"Probably not even a blip," Healy told media after the match when asked where does this defeat leave her side given their dominant record. "It is a format where we are not overly familiar with conditions."

Healy said Australia's squad has undergone a lot of change but they are comfortable with where they are currently placed.

"Within our group, we are really comfortable with where we are at and sort of the progression that we are on and where we want to get to moving forward," she said.

"Ultimately, there is a big T20 World Cup in Bangladesh towards the end of next year and that is a real carrot for us. These are the sort of big trophies that we are wanting to win.

"Yes, every series in between now and then is important, but at the same time, we are building towards that World Cup and we want to make sure that we are playing our best cricket to win those big those big moments."

Jaismine, Arundhati ease into quarters at Women's National Boxing C'ships



Greater Noida, Dec 24 (PTI):

Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Jaismine (60kg) and former youth world champion Arundhati Choudhary (66kg) notched up identical 5-0 wins to progress to the quarterfinals of the Women's National Boxing Championships here on Sunday. Representing SSCB, Jaismine showcased her experience in securing a commanding 5-0 victory over Thongam Kunjarani Devi of Manipur in the round of 16 bout to set up a clash with Poonam Kaitwas of Maharashtra in the quarter-

finals. Arundhati, on the other hand, went head to head against Amita of All India Police. She displayed her skillset and power-packed punches to secure a 5-0 victory. The boxer now will be up against Komalpreet Kaur of Punjab in the quarterfinals. In other significant bouts, Sakshi (57kg) of SSCB faced Jyoti of Delhi in the round of 32 match. The match was closely contested until Sakshi unleashed a flurry of punches, ultimately winning the bout as the referee stopped the contest in the third round.

Prioritising international cricket has helped my game: Starc

Sydney, Dec 24 (PTI):

Senior Australian seamer Mitchell Starc has admitted that he had in the past turned down multiple lucrative offers from the Indian Premier League (IPL) to prioritise his international career, which has "helped" him in improving his game.

Starc has been roped in by two-time winners Kolkata Knight Riders for a record Rs 24.75 crore during the auction last week, and it would be his first stint in the tournament since 2015.

Starc said that the break during the IPL allowed him to recharge himself and stay fit for the international assignments.

"Juggling one cricket schedule is hard enough, let alone when there's two in a relationship. So, I've always spent that time away from cricket with Alyssa or time with family and recharging my body for being as fit and as ready as I can for Australian cricket," he was quoted as saying by AAP. "I don't regret any



of it. I think it's certainly helped my Test cricket. The money is always nice and certainly was this year, but I've always prioritised international cricket, and I think that's helped my game." Starc's last outing in the IPL was with Royal Challengers Bangalore, the only he has represented in the competition till date.

Harmanpreet's spell on third day was turning point: Sneha Rana

Mumbai, Dec 24 (PTI):

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's spell on the third evening was the turning point in the one-off women's Test between India and Australia which the hosts won by eight wickets, said all-rounder Sneha Rana here on Sunday.

Kaur brought herself on after Australia's resurgent batting display kept India on the field for a large part of the third day and dismissed Tahlia McGrath (73) and Alyssa Healy (32), after they had reduced the first-innings deficit of 187 runs and taken a slender lead of 46 runs.

India came out firing on all cylinders to bowl Australia out for 261 after they resumed play at 233/5 on the fourth day and easily chased the target of 75 runs. "We were not thinking much and wanted to stay in the present. Harmanpreet's two wickets were the turning

point," Rana told the media after India's maiden win over Australia in Tests when asked about the turning point in the match. Rana seconded India captain Kaur in acknowledging that head coach Amol Muzumdar had a key role to play in their strong performances. "As Harmanpreet said, he had an important role in the team. He has been a very experienced player and all his inputs have been good," Rana said.

"We have tried to follow that and the result can be seen in the last two Tests. We are very thankful that he has come on as a coach. In the future too we hope to continue doing well under him," she added.

On the fourth and final day spinners Rana, Rajeshwari Gayakwad and Deepti Sharma tamed the Australian batters with a superlative bowling show that saw the visitors lose five wickets for 28 runs.

Karan, Divya emerge winners in air pistol trials



New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

Karan Sehrawat of Haryana and Divya TS of Karnataka emerged victorious at the men's and women's 10m air pistol trials (T2) here on Sunday, concluding the new season's first two national selection trials for rifle and pistol.

The international season begins early in 2024, when the Indian rifle and pistol squad heads to Jakarta, Indonesia, to take part in the Asian Olympic qualifying event for which the teams have been already announced. Olympian Saurabh Chaudhary extended his good run to a second day, topping the men's 10m air pistol T2 qualifications with a world-class score of 586. He was fol-

lowed by his senior Olympian Gurpreet Singh who shot the same score but had seven lesser inner 10s than Saurabh. Three Haryana shooters took the final three qualifying spots, with Aditya Marla and Sehrawat finishing sixth and seventh, while eventual runner-up Shiva Narwal claimed the eighth and final spot with a 583. They turned the tables in the final, however, denying Saurabh a repeat of his T1 win on Saturday. Sehrawat played the perfect final as he led throughout the 24-shot decider with his opponent giving a scare only after the 20th shot, getting within just 0.1. That was the closest he would get as Karan took the title with a final score of 243.0 to Shiva's 242.6.



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Criminal Justice Transformation

In a momentous legislative move, the Lok Sabha has, with the notable absence of 97 suspended Opposition MPs, passed three meticulously redrafted Bills aimed at revitalizing criminal law in India. These Bills encompass an extensive spectrum of changes, from the mere renaming of penal codes to the outright repeal of certain provisions and the comprehensive redefinition of others. This ambitious overhaul signifies a concerted effort to shed the colonial legacy and institute victim-centric laws that align more closely with contemporary realities. While it may be premature to assert that these reforms will unquestionably enhance the criminal justice delivery system, the new legislative enactments—the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, replacing the 1860 Indian Penal Code (IPC); the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, supplanting the 1973 Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC); and the Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, which takes the place of the Indian Evidence Act of 1872—are undeniably more than just a superficial renaming exercise. One of the commendable aspects of these reforms is the decriminalization of certain offenses to align with evolving socio-cultural norms. The judiciary had already set a precedent by striking down archaic laws, and the removal of adultery, homosexual sex, and the attempt to suicide from the new legal code represents a progressive stride forward. Additionally, the definition of mob lynching as a criminal act is a necessary response to the alarming rise in such incidents in recent years. Equally commendable are the prescribed timelines for the registration of First Information Reports (FIRs), investigations, and the utilization of forensic methods and information technology in policing. The penal code has also been made more stringent in dealing with acts of terrorism, while the introduction of community service as a penalty for certain minor offenses underscores the reformative intent of these changes. However, certain areas still warrant our concern and vigilance. Although the sedition law has been officially omitted, in accordance with the government's commitment to the Supreme Court, we must remain watchful to ensure that the shadow of this repealed law does not inadvertently cast itself upon Section 152, which continues to penalize acts that "endanger the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India." The transformation of criminal law should be an ongoing endeavour, responsive to the evolving needs and values of society. It is essential to recognize that these reforms are not the end of the journey but rather a significant milestone on the path to achieving a more just and equitable criminal justice system. They represent a conscious effort to strike a balance between individual liberties, societal values, and the imperative of maintaining law and order. As we navigate this complex terrain, we must remain committed to the ideals of justice, fairness, and respect for human rights. The recent changes in criminal law underscore the dynamic nature of our legal system, capable of evolving to meet the demands of a changing world. The reform process should be guided by a commitment to uphold the principles of justice, accountability, and the protection of individual freedoms. As we move forward, let us remember that the ultimate aim of these reforms is not merely to reformulate laws but to safeguard the rights and dignity of every citizen and to ensure that justice is accessible and equitable for all. It is a journey that requires vigilance, transparency, and continuous engagement with the evolving needs and aspirations of our society.

Merry Christmas

Peace, Secularism and Fraternity

Sujit De

Amid the sound of jingle bells, let us reflect on the three teachings of Jesus Christ.

Peace

Jesus Christ said, "For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace." (1 Corinthians 14:33 KJV). We get strength in peace. This is the reason why William Shakespeare said, "Our peace shall stand us firm as rocky mountains." In peace, we feel the magic of egalitarian divine love that rains cutting across social divisions just like the love of the sun. The sun's egalitarian love ensures a bigger share for the have-nots than the haves. The problem arises when we equate laziness with peace and thus give peace a bad name. But static inertia must not be passed for peace. Sri Aurobindo said, "In a certain sense this inertia and the peace are the bright and dark counterparts of each other, tamas (darkness) and sama (equality) - the higher nature finding repose in peace, the lower seeking it in a relaxation of energy and a return towards the subconscious, tamas." There is a conflict within us. The psychic energy in us wants peace not for lying in bed but for moving forward physically or mentally. On the other hand, the matter in our body seeks peace to enjoy material comfort and rest. But the latter takes us to the deceptive quicksand of the status quo. It discourages us to attain inner peace. When we feel thirsty, we fetch a glass of water and drink. The activity of taking a glass out and drinking water, gives us satisfaction without which we cannot attain peace. My mother used to say, "sukher cheye shanti bhalo." It is a Bengali saying which means peace is better than material comfort. As a matter of fact, the unending desire for more material comfort cannot give us peace. Rather it destroys the calm without which it is impossible to acquire inner peace. "Peace," said Sri Aurobindo, "is a calm deepened into something that is very positive amounting almost to a tranquil waveless Ananda."

Secularism

Christmas also tells us to be secular and to keep religions totally out of the domain politics. According to Mark 12: 17, Jesus Christ said, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Here Caesar means government. This is a clear message in favour of a secular government which is not connected to any particular religion. Had we always followed this teaching, we could have stopped Rasputins from enjoying political power. History witnessed big and small Rasputins doing a great damage after coming out of an unholy alliance between religion and politics. So we need to be very cautious about the tendency of political leaders to use religion as a diversionary tactics to hijack our rights and freedom.

Fraternity

Jesus Christ said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37 - 39). History shows that hatred and its product divide and rule spell disaster for a country. Today living amid rat race, many parents brainwash their children into thinking that conflict instead of cooperation would make them more competitive and smart. This wrong notion is the driving force of machismo, incidents of ragging and behind the story of many action movies. But this is absolutely a bogus idea. Can anything survive without cooperation? If various parts of our mobile phone start competing among themselves then we have to take it to a mobile care shop. Cooperation is the key for survival of everything be it a simple or a complex machine and similarly be it a rural or an urban society. Many advertisements pamper this popular misconception of giving priority to hate and envy in order to achieve success in life like a TV advertisement which used to say "neighbours envy, owners pride". But we must understand that it is a fallacy. All of us should not aim for neighbours envy but try to be His pride by spreading His egalitarian love. Merry Christmas!

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.

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION



A man dressed as Santa Claus feeds seagulls on Tapi river, ahead of Christmas, in Surat, Sunday, Dec. 24.

Christmas: An opportunity to rediscover God's presence among us



RAJENDER KUMAR SHARMA



Every year 25 December is celebrated as a special festival globally. The Christian community has accepted it as Christmas. In Christianity, it is the festival of lights and among Christians like Diwali festival in Hindus. The reality of the Supreme Father God is light and sound. Man has confined himself to small boundaries of religion, caste and community. God created man and man created, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian. Almighty God lost himself in man and left the task of reviving himself to man.

Real liberation

Saints, through "word devotion", saw the divine part of God present within them and saw the same divine part of God in every human being. The light of life within us is a part of Almighty and finding this light in the Supreme Father Supreme Soul is the real salvation. According to the saints, we are trapped in the cycle of 84 lakh births, keep taking one birth after another and dying, but are not able to free ourselves from this tangle of aimless journey. Saints have described the "word" or "sound"

of devotion as the means of salvation. That is, we have to have an encounter with the Supreme Father God present within us and that is possible only when we are free from the burden of all kinds of good and bad deeds and do devotion. Saints have said that human birth is rare, even Gods and Goddesses yearn to attain this birth because the world of gods is also a world like earth. The creator of the universe, Brahma, in the form of Batuk, pointed towards a group of ants to Lord Indra and said, O King of Gods! The ants that you are seeing, all of them have once held the status of Indra." This same saint always talks about the good use of human birth so that the light of our soul gets absorbed in the huge bundle of light of the Supreme Father, the Supreme Soul.

Relationship between Sound, Word and Logos

"Sound" is discussed everywhere in Hindu scriptures, in the Bible it is addressed as "Logos", at some places it is called "Shabd" and at some places it is addressed as "Voice of the Heart". Even when there was nothing, it was the

"word" or "sound" or "logos" and when there will be nothing, it will remain so, that is, it is eternal.

Logos is broadly defined as the Word of God, or the principle of divine reason and creative order.

The "Logos" is Jesus

In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God." (John 1:1) The concept of "Logos" has had a significant and far-reaching impact on philosophical and Christian thought. This "word" has a long history. Understanding God's relationship with the world has been the goal of all religious philosophy. While different ideas have been conceived regarding the divine manifestation.

Thought and language, two ideas undoubtedly contained in the word "logos"; And in every use of the word, both the concepts of the idea and its external expression are closely connected. According to Christian scripture, the New Testament, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through Him, and all things came into being without Him." In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Here it is clear that the "Word" or "Logos" is a reference to Jesus Christ.

The Logos's Expression of Jesus' Attributes

Greek philosophy would have used the term in the context of divine causation, but John used it to express many of Jesus' attributes. In John's use of the concept of "logos", we find that

Jesus is eternal ("In the beginning was the Word") Before coming to earth Jesus was with God ("That

is, the Word was with God") Jesus is God ("i.e. the Word was God.")

Jesus is the Creator ("all things were created through the "Word")

Jesus is the Giver of life ("In him was life") Jesus became human to live among us ("The Word became flesh and dwelt among us").

Christmas gives birth to the pure joy of giving

For the early Church, Christmas was essentially the dawn of a new experience of God's presence among us. In Christian theological terms, Jesus is the sacrament of God. It essentially invites us to move beyond illusion towards realization.

Christmas has not been seen as a festival in the Christian calendar for a long time. We truly celebrate Christmas only when we experience the joy that outweighs our pain and suffering.

Many of us experience some kind of physical, emotional, psychological pain, which often leaves us bitter. Christmas gives us permission and opportunity to transform that inner pain into joy. The pain of the past, filled with one's own bad deeds, gives way to the joy of repentance. The pain of being hurt by others gives the joy of being able to forgive. When we internalize the pain and suffering of those in need, it gives rise to the pure joy of giving. This is the real celebration of the birth of Jesus. We receive the honoree of the Giver. Then, we can truly say that the "Word" or "Logos" has truly become real. That means Jesus became incarnate.

(Writer is Sr. Educationist & Columnist, Dehradun, Uttarakhand.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stabilising ties

When India's foreign minister S Jaishankar visits Moscow this month, he should be hoping to re-establish the old warmth between the two countries. Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov's Pakistan visit in 2021 and his assurance to Pakistan on supply of highly sophisticated military equipment to that country didn't ruffle India much though New Delhi's proximity to Washington has not gone unnoticed in Moscow's diplomatic circles. But international diplomacy is a clever struggle where minds speak more than words. Though military, space, power, energy and infrastructure sectors between India and Russia are all set to be further explored during Jaishankar's visit, and the Ukraine war will merit a mention, interpersonal relations need to be strengthened. The annual India-Russia summit has not been held after 2021, so this needs to be worked out by the two leaders.

Dr Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

Kudos to all sports persons

The Sports Ministry on Wednesday put its stamp on the nominations for the annual sports awards, confirming the prestigious Khel Ratna honour for badminton players Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty and the Arjuna award for 26 sports persons, including pacer Mohammed Shami. The awards will be conferred on the athletes by President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on January 9. Chirag and Satwik are Asian Games gold medallists, World Championships bronze winners and Commonwealth Games silver medallists. It should be noted that 'Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award' is given for the spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports by a sports person over the previous four years. Kudos to all nominated sports persons.

Karan Singh, Chennai

Bills Passed

The Lok Sabha passed the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Bill, 2023, aligning with Supreme Court directives. The Rajya Sabha approved the Telecommunications Bill, 2023, granting temporary government control over telecom services for national security and introducing a new satellite spectrum allocation method. These significant bills were passed without discussion following the suspension of Opposition MPs.

Jahangir Shaikh, Mumbai

JN.1 Variant: India's New Challenge on COVID-19 Frontline

Manoj Kumar K P

India has once again found itself at a crossroads in the battle against COVID-19, with the emergence of the JN.1 variant and a resurgence in cases. The Central Health Authorities have issued a resounding call for unwavering vigilance, and the time has come for us to not just react but to proactively respond to the evolving landscape of viral mutations. India, as the most populous nation globally, faces unique challenges in controlling the spread of COVID-19. The dense human proximity in everyday settings, from crowded trains and bus stands to bustling markets and schools, creates an environment conducive to the rapid dissemination of airborne viruses. Recognizing this vulnerability, the Central Government has been working closely with State and Union Territory Administrations to maintain low levels of COVID-19. However, the emergence of the JN.1 variant in Kerala has raised concerns about the potential spread of this new strain.

While India boasts well-established testing laboratories across all States and Union Territories, the responsibility now lies in exercising the utmost caution. The presence of this new variant calls for prudent precautionary measures. Fortunately, existing medicines and vaccinations appear to be effective against this variant, a reass-

uring dimension bolstered by ongoing research endeavors. The Central Government's dissemination of comprehensive information to local administrations is an integral stride in the right direction. Commendable efforts have been made to augment health facilities in all states since the 2020 pandemic wave. However, sustaining vigilant preparedness is paramount. The Health Department, with guidance from the Central Health Department, must ensure that standardized protocols are followed in all local hospitals.

Rural areas, often overlooked in the fight against COVID-19, demand meticulous scrutiny. Immediate directives mandate a comprehensive assessment of resources, personnel, and machinery in these areas. Adequate stockpiling of essential chemicals and medicines is of utmost importance, and there should be a stark warning against unwarranted self-medication by the public. Raising public awareness in rural hinterlands should be a priority, with the Health Department spearheading efforts to disseminate information regarding symptoms and appropriate channels for recourse. An ideal scenario would entail a proactive network of health workers who promptly subject any suspicion to rigorous testing.

It is crucial to note that the current situation does not warrant alarm, as the Central Government

maintains vigilant oversight. However, the linchpin of our response lies in timely alertness, which serves as a bulwark against potential adversities. Across the globe, there has been a burgeoning influx of novel variants, including the Omicron variant in the United States and various other nations. Our strategy to navigate this intricate landscape should involve the meticulous deployment of RT-PCR testing, followed by genome testing for variant elucidation. The recurrent emergence of novel variants underscores the importance of relentless testing endeavors to ascertain the presence of any newfound mutation. The effectiveness of our response hinges on the expeditious detection of these variants, followed by in-depth analytical scrutiny. While the Omicron variant did not exhibit pronounced lethality, and the available data about the JN.1 variant suggests it is non-fatal, maintaining vigilance is crucial. Panic is not the answer, but an abiding state of vigilance remains advisable.

In navigating this intricate terrain, the precision and swiftness with which variant testing is conducted stand as the crux of an efficacious response. Timely dissemination of medical advice plays a pivotal role in guiding appropriate courses of action. As the specter of novel variants looms, a proactive response to the ever-evolving

landscape of viral mutations is of paramount importance. To fully appreciate the challenges posed by emerging variants, it's essential to consider the global context. The COVID-19 pandemic has been marked by the appearance of several variants, each with its unique characteristics and implications. While some variants have raised concerns due to increased transmissibility, others have caused alarm because of potential vaccine resistance.

The Omicron variant, first identified in South Africa, rapidly spread to various parts of the world, leading to a surge in cases. This variant highlighted the virus's ability to mutate and adapt, underscoring the need for ongoing research and monitoring. Thankfully, Omicron's severity appeared to be lower than some earlier variants, but its high transmission rate posed challenges. The emergence of the JN.1 variant in India serves as a stark reminder that we must remain vigilant. Our interconnected world means that new variants can emerge anywhere and quickly spread to other regions. This reality underscores the importance of global cooperation in monitoring and responding to COVID-19 variants.

Vaccination remains a critical tool in our fight against COVID-19 and its variants. The Central Government's efforts to ramp up vaccination campaigns across

India have been commendable. However, there is a need to accelerate these efforts further. Widespread vaccination not only reduces the severity of illness but also curbs transmission and limits the virus's ability to mutate. In navigating the complex landscape of COVID-19 variants, a data-driven approach is paramount. We must continue to invest in genomic surveillance to identify new variants promptly. This surveillance enables us to understand the genetic makeup of the virus and detect changes that may affect its behavior, including increased transmissibility or vaccine resistance.

Additionally, sharing genomic data and research findings at the global level is crucial for a coordinated response. Collaborative efforts among scientists, healthcare professionals, and policymakers worldwide can help us stay ahead of the virus's mutations. In conclusion, India is once again faced with a new challenge in the form of the JN.1 variant and a resurgence in COVID-19 cases. However, with proactive measures, robust healthcare infrastructure, and widespread vaccination, we have the tools to mitigate the impact of this variant and future ones. It is a reminder that our fight against COVID-19 is far from over, but by working together and staying vigilant, we can protect the health and well-being of our nation.

BRIEF

NaBFID

Mumbai: National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development's (NaBFID) managing director Rajkiran Rai G has said there is a need to re-introduce the Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A) scheme to help infrastructure finance in the future. Rai said at present, there is not a single asset calling out for such help but it is essential to get a facility which will enable "rightsizing of debt" and make it more sustainable.

inDrive

Mumbai: Ride hailing platform inDrive on Saturday said driver registrations on its platform surged by around five-fold while the number of trips more than four-fold during a month-long special campaign. The company said it conducted a special drive from November 15 to December 15 to onboard new drivers as well as motivate registered drivers to take more trips. The campaign saw new registration of more than 80,000 drivers this month against addition of 18,000 drivers in a similar campaign carried out earlier in June this year, said Avik Karmakar, GTM Manager for South Asia at inDrive.

Air India

New Delhi: Air India's first wide-body A350-900 aircraft, sporting new brand livery, arrived here from European aviation major Airbus' Toulouse facility in France. The aircraft, registered as VT-JRA, touched down at the national capital's Indira Gandhi International Airport at 1346 hrs, making the Tata Group-owned airline the first aircraft operator in India to have this type of aircraft in its fleet, a statement said. The delivery flight is operated using a special call sign AI350, it said.

CCI

New Delhi: Fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) has granted an approval to Alpha Alternatives Group for the acquisition of a 10 per cent stake in Dilip Buildcon, according to a notice. The CCI cleared the deal under the green channel route. The transaction involves the acquisition of 9.99 per cent of the equity stake in DBL by way of subscription to warrants by Alpha Alternatives Holdings Pvt Ltd (AAHPL), and its other entities, the CCI said in the notice on Friday.

AIK Pipes and Polymers

New Delhi: Pipe maker AIK Pipes and Polymers on Sunday said it has fixed a price of Rs 89 per share for its Initial Public Offering (IPO), which will open for public subscription from December 26-28. The initial share-sale is entirely a fresh issue of 16.88 lakh equity shares and the company aims to raise about Rs 15.02 crore from the IPO, AIK Pipes said in a statement. Shares will be listed on the BSE-SME platform.

Govt took many pro-active steps to control prices of food items: Goyal

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal on Sunday noted that the Centre has taken many pro-active steps in last few years to control retail prices of food items and said the government will keep inflation under control while ensuring country's economic growth.

He was addressing an event, organised by the ministry here, to celebrate National Consumers Day. "Today, India has become the fastest growing large economy. Going forward, we will keep inflation under check and also ensure economic growth," Goyal said.

Retail inflation inched up to a three-month high of 5.55 per cent in November driven by high-



er food prices, according to latest official data.

The retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was at 4.87 per cent in October.

Inflation had been declining since August when it touched 6.83 per cent.

On steps taken by the central government, Goyal highlighted that 140 new price monitoring centres have been set up to keep a close watch on wholesale and retail prices of essential commodities.

"Today, prices are being monitored at 550 (consum-

ing) centres on a daily basis. This helps in insulating consumers from price rise," Goyal said.

In the last two years, he said, when the entire world witnessed very high inflation, especially in the food items, India was able to control inflation through pro-active fiscal and monetary policies.

"Whenever inflation (in some commodity) started rising, the government took pro-active measures and controlled it."

Goyal cited measures taken by the Centre to control price rise in tomatoes and onions in a short period of time.

The government sold tomatoes and onions through retail outlets of NCCF, NAFED and Kendriya Bhandar as well as mobile vans.

In case of onion, he said

the government is buying onions from farmers to create buffer stock and ensure they get a fair price of their produce.

He also highlighted that the Centre is selling Bharat Dal at Rs 60 per kg and Bharat atta at Rs 27.50 per kg to provide relief to common man.

The government has banned exports of wheat, broken rice, non-basmati white rice and onions. It has also reduced import duties on edible oils and pulses to boost domestic supply and control price rise.

Talking about consumer protection issues, Goyal appreciated the work done by his ministry and National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) to resolve consumers' grievances.

Nearly 75,000 sellers on Meesho hit double digit growth in sales

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

Around 75,000 sellers achieved double-digit growth while over 20,000 sellers witnessed a 10-times jump in their business on Softbank-backed e-commerce firm Meesho, the company said on Sunday.

Meesho is the first unicorn e-commerce firm to have reported profit this year and it claims to have maintained the profitability since it first reported the performance in July.

The company claimed that nearly 10,000 Meesho sellers crossed the Rs 1 crore sales mark and 130,000 registered sales of

over Rs 1 lakh during 2023. Around "60 per cent of these sellers come from small towns like Avinashi, Bharuch, Fiazabad and Silchar," Meesho said.

Meesho said that it added around 7 lakh new sellers this year taking the total number to 15 lakh this year. The company recorded transactions for 14 crore customers and claimed that nearly 80 per cent of the orders came from tier 2 and smaller markets. Meesho said that it recorded a unique pattern of customers placing maximum orders on Sunday. "Indian shoppers have consistently crowned Sundays as the ultimate

shopping day for two consecutive years, beginning with an early bird rush at 7 AM and culminating in the wee hours at 3 AM," the statement said.

Even a customer from Surat placed over 20,000 orders for artificial jewellery, the highest on an individual basis, and continues to shop on the platform.

"More than 67 lakh customers turned to Meesho to shop for hair fall control remedies. As awareness around self-care deepens, there is a discernible shift in consumer habits, with Beauty & Personal Care witnessing a 40 per cent surge in growth," the statement said.

OPPO A59 5G unveiled redefining connectivity with 5G for all

Mumbai, Dec 24:

OPPO, the leading global smart devices brand, has launched the OPPO A59 5G, the most affordable 5G smartphone. The device, starting at INR 14,999, will be available from Dec 25, 2023, at the OPPO store, Flipkart, Amazon, and other retail outlets. The OPPO A59 5G offers a choice between two variants- 4GB and 6GB RAM and is available in Silk Gold and Starry Black colour options.

OPPO A59 5G has a lu-

minous Silk-textured design and a 90Hz sunlight Screen. It is powered by a 33W SUPERVOOC, 6 flash Charging system paired with a massive 5,000mAh battery, that ensures smooth and lag-free functionality throughout the day. The OPPO A59 5G is also equipped with features like 36-Month Fluency Protection and 300% Ultra Volume Mode, which is the first of its kind in the A series under this price segment.

The OPPO A59 5G features a Slim Body design

that makes the phone sleek and comfortable to hold and adds an elegant premium touch to the device. The 90Hz Sunlight Screen with an impressive 720 nits brightness takes the visual experience to the next level. The 96% NTSC high colour gamut ensures fluent experience when using social media platforms like Instagram, X (Twitter) and Facebook.

OPPO A59 5G features a 33W SUPERVOOC flash Charging and a robust 5,000mAh large Battery. The innovative All-Day

Panaji, Dec 24 (PTI):

Increasing exports and reducing imports is the new way ahead for patriotism and "swadeshi", and it will be a "new freedom" for India when not a drop of petrol or diesel is imported, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Sunday.

Addressing the 'Sagar Manthan 2.0' event organised by weekly magazine 'Panchjanya', the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways also said stopping the import of petrol and diesel was linked to arresting terrorism in the world.

"Till this import is not

CHRISTMAS MARKET



A nougat seller holds a platter with tasting samples in his booth with Montelimar nougat displayed at a Christmas market in Paris.

Increasing exports, reducing imports new way ahead for patriotism, says Gadkari



stopped, terrorism will not stop across the world. The aim of my life is to stop import of petrol and diesel. I consider it to be a new freedom for India when not a drop of petrol and diesel is imported into the country," he said.

"The import bill for petrol and diesel stands at Rs 16 lakh crore now. If we reduce this import, the

money we save will go to the poor. That is why we have introduced alternative fuels like bio fuel. Reduction in imports and increase in exports is the way forward for patriotism and swadeshi," he asserted. Gadkari said the size of the automobile industry in India was Rs 7 lakh crore when he took over (in 2014) and now it was Rs 12.5 lakh crore, adding the sector gives employment to 4.5 crore people. It is the industry that gives highest GST to state governments and the Centre, he added. Asserting that the country's automobile industry would be number one in the world in the next five

years, Gadkari said, "Maximum imports are happening in the automobile industry. If we want to become vishwaguru (world leader) and USD five trillion economy, then we have to become number one in exports."

Three months ago, India jumped from seventh position to third in the automobile exports sector, surpassing powerhouses like Japan.

"I can tell you we will be number one in the next five years based on our initiatives like atmanirbhar Bharat (self reliant India) and sushaasan (good governance)," the Union minister claimed.

Axis Bank strengthens partnership with American Express

Mumbai, Dec 24: Axis Bank, one of the largest private sector banks in India, today announced its strategic partnership with American Express with the launch of the Axis Bank Privilege Credit Card on American Express network. With this partnership, Axis Bank customers can now enjoy the local and global benefits of the American Express network.

The Axis Bank Privilege Credit Card on American Express network is packed with a host of attractive benefits such as activation benefit worth

INR 5000 and two complimentary domestic lounge access per calendar quarter. Card Members can also enjoy activation vouchers of marquee merchants on defined spend thresholds on the card, instant discount on online merchants including Swiggy, Blinkit and Zomato, access to a host of local and global benefits like dining discounts, privileges at hotels and retail outlets around the world, in addition to Card Member experiences including pre-ticketing access to sporting and entertainment events.

Speaking on this launch, Sanjeev Moghe, President & Head- Cards & Payments, Axis Bank said, "At Axis Bank, we are constantly innovating to deliver more value to our customers. In line with the bank's premiumization strategy, we are delighted to partner with American Express to bring to market a very compelling proposition for our customers. This partnership will further strengthen our commitment towards servicing the affluent and premium customer segments."

No takers for rupee payment for oil imports

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

India's push for rupee to be used to pay for import of crude oil has not found any takers as suppliers have expressed concern on repatriation of funds and high transactional costs, the oil ministry told a parliamentary standing committee.

The default payment currency for all contracts for import of crude oil is US dollar as per the international trade practice. However, in a bid to internationalise the Indian currency, the Reserve Bank of India on July 11, 2022 allowed importers to pay with rupees and exporters be paid in rupee. While there has been some success with non-oil trade with a select few countries, rupee continues to be shunned by oil exporters. "During FY 2022-23, no crude oil imports by oil PSUs were settled in Indian rupee. Crude oil suppliers (including UAE's ADNOC) continue to express their concern on the repatriation of funds in the preferred currency and also highlighted high transactional costs associated with conversion of funds along with exchange fluctuation risks," the oil ministry told the parliamentary de-

partment related standing committee.

The ministry, whose submissions are part of the committee's report which was tabled in Parliament last week, said Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has informed that it incurred high transaction costs as crude oil suppliers pass on the additional transactional costs to IOC." The RBI, it said, had last year permitted opening of rupee vostro accounts in the partner trading country. Under this mechanism, Indian importers undertaking imports through this mechanism shall make payment in Indian rupee which shall be credited into the special Vostro account of the correspondent bank of the partner country, against the invoices for the supply of goods or services from the overseas seller /supplier. "Payments for crude oil can be made in Indian rupee, subject to the suppliers' complying with regulatory guidelines in this regard," the ministry said. "Currently, Reliance Industries Ltd and oil PSUs do not have an agreement with any crude oil supplier to make purchases in Indian currency for supply of crude oil."

FDI inflows likely to rise in 2024 as India remains 'preferred investment destination'

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

Foreign direct investments into India is likely to gather momentum in 2024 as healthy macroeconomic numbers, better industrial output as well as attractive PLI schemes will attract more overseas players amid geopolitical headwinds and tighter interest rate regime globally.

To ensure that India remains an attractive and investor friendly destination, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said the government reviews FDI policy on an ongoing basis and makes changes from time to time after having extensive consultations with stakeholders.

In the January-September period this year, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the country declined 22 per cent to USD 48.98 billion. The inflow was at USD 62.66 billion in the year-ago period. "However, we are broadly in line with the overall trends of FDI growth. FDI inflows from 2014-23 period is about USD 596 billion, which is

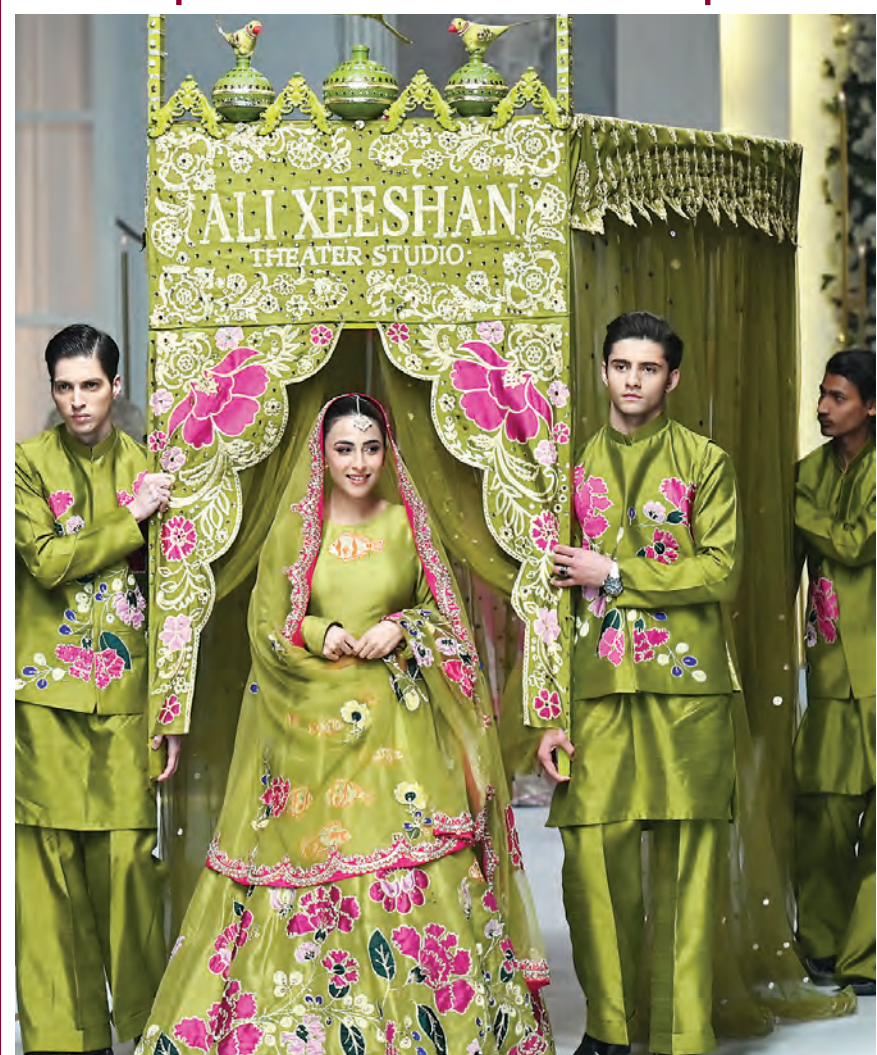
about double than what India received during 2005-14. The trend is positive and India is still the preferred destination for foreign players," Singh told PTI.

According to him, Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes for sectors like pharma, food processing, and medical appliances have started yielding fruits and are attracting foreign investors.

"Many of these sectors have seen a jump in FDI," Singh said.

He said the major reasons for the shortfall in FDI inflows could include the threat of global recession, economic crisis due to Russia-Ukraine conflict and protectionist measures. A decline in real GDP growth rates of Singapore, the USA and the UK could also be a factor as these countries are major sources for FDI into India, he added. Singh also emphasised that India continues to open up its economy to global investors by raising FDI limits, removing regulatory barriers, developing infrastructure and improving the business environment.

HUM BRIDAL COUTURE WEEK



Models present creations by fashion designer Aneeka Ruknuddin during the Pantene HUM Bridal Couture Week, in Lahore.

Govt land encroached in Kukurmuda

Local representatives rally behind preservation efforts

Central Chronicle News

Bazar Atariya, Dec 24: Residents of Kukurmuda have come together to protect government land from encroachment.

The Panchayat representatives, led by Sarpanch Lakshmi Verma and Upsarpanch Jagdish Pal, along with other concerned villagers, submitted a memorandum to Collector Gopal Varma, urging swift action against unauthorized land use. The 20-year-old dispute over Khasra No 516/1, initially allocated to Kejabai for tree plantation under the Hareli Saheli Yojana, has reignited tensions in the community.

After the passing of Kejabai in 2016 without a legitimate heir, the Gram Panchayat unanimously declared the land as reserved for future government use. However, Mangal Netam, a resident



of Khapri and a candidate of Jogi Congress in the assembly elections, recently began plowing the land with a tractor, causing uproar among the villagers.

The villagers have accused Mangal Netam of trying to assert political influence to illegally occupy the reserved land. They have appealed to Collector Gopal Varma to intervene and put an end to this forceful encroachment, emphasizing the impor-

plant number 03 in Kukurmuda. After Kejabai's passing, her brother, Jagdish, handed over this land to Mangal Netam for its upkeep. Unfortunately, this handover has triggered a contentious situation within the community.

Mangal Netam claims that he is the rightful heir to this land as Kejabai was his aunt. Following her demise, he made several attempts to cultivate trees on the land, but each time, the Panchayat intervened by cutting down the already planted trees and levelling the ground. Moreover, whenever the deceased's nephew tried to assert his rights, he was forcibly evicted, and he has previously filed complaints regarding these incidents. This ongoing dispute has caused tension in the community and remains unresolved.

Under the Hareli Saheli Yojana, the government allocated land to tribal families for livelihood through tree planting. Approximately twenty years ago, as part of this scheme, Kejabai son of Manbodh, received a plot of land measuring two and a half acres, identified as No. 48, Khasra No. 516/4, and designated as

of preserving government land for community development.

Under the Hareli Saheli Yojana, the government allocated land to tribal families for livelihood through tree planting. Approximately twenty years ago, as part of this scheme, Kejabai son of Manbodh, received a plot of land measuring two and a half acres, identified as No. 48, Khasra No. 516/4, and designated as

of preserving government land for community development.

Pt. Jhamman Shastri advocates moral governance and devotion

Nand Utsav celebration adds joy to spiritual gathering in Khairagarh

Central Chronicle News

Khairagarh, Dec 24: The village of Chikhladah, near the district headquarters, was aglow with spiritual fervour as a seven-day Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana event unfolded. Acharya Pt. Jhamman Shastri graced the gathering, delivering a profound message about the role of politics in serving the public.

Acharya Pt. Jhamman Shastri, a revered figure at the event, reminded attendees that politics should be a tool for public service, not a pursuit of personal happiness. His insightful discourse shed light on the importance of moral govern-



ance, urging contemporary leaders to uphold ethical values and prioritize the welfare of their constituents.

On the fifth day of the event, Shastri Maharaj captivated the audience with stories that underscored the significance of devotion and service to Mother Cow. This spiritual journey also featured a grand celebration of Nand Utsav, reminiscent of Lord Krishna's birth festivities.

The heartwarming Nand Utsav celebration saw enthusiastic participation from children, who playfully reenacted Lord Krishna's famous butter-stealing escapades. This vibrant event served as a reminder of the joy and unity that religious and cultural celebrations can bring to a community.

Shastriji's poignant words resonated as he highlighted the importance of protecting Mother Cow, an entity revered by many.

Failing to do so, he cautioned, could have grave consequences for society.

Those who honour and serve Mother Cow are believed to receive divine blessings, akin to the devotion demonstrated by Nand Baba, Lord Krishna's foster father. The event culminated with a grand aarti ceremony that brought together villagers and the Thakur family, fostering a sense of togetherness and spiritual unity.

Rajim temple decked out for welcoming the New Year

Improved accessibility and vibrant temple preparations await visitors

Central Chronicle News



Central Chronicle News

Rajim, Dec 24: As the New Year approaches, the ancient city of Rajim, often referred to as the "Prayagraj of Chhattisgarh," is buzzing with anticipation. Devotees and tourists from near and far are converging upon this spiritual hub to welcome the New Year, which coincides with a sacred Monday, dedicated to Lord Shiva.

With the New Year just

around the corner, devotees are preparing to celebrate in a spiritual setting. Many express their intention to begin the year by seeking the blessings of Lord Rajivalochan and Panchmukhi Kuleshwarnath Mahadev, aiming to secure divine grace for their families throughout the year.

Rajim's charm extends beyond its spiritual significance; its proximity to the capital city, Raipur, makes it easily accessible. Buses

ply regularly between Raipur, Dhamtari, Mahasamund, Gariaband district headquarters, and Rajim, ensuring a hassle-free journey for tourists and devotees. Road widening projects are also underway, promising smoother travel in the future.

Nestled at the confluence of three rivers, Rajim is often hailed as the "Prayagraj of Chhattisgarh." Devotees have the unique opportunity to take a holy dip at

the confluence of Sondhur Parry and Mahanadi rivers, experiencing a spiritual connection with the divine. The town boasts a multitude of ancient temples, each steeped in history and significance.

In anticipation of the New Year and the accompanying fair, the temples of Rajim have undergone a transformation. Colorful lights and fresh coats of paint now adorn these sacred structures, creating an atmosphere of celebra-

tion and devotion.

Temple administrator Chandrabhan Singh Thakur expects a significant increase in visitors compared to previous years. He assures devotees that arrangements are in place to ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience. The temple will host religious programs, including Sunderkand recitations, and remain open from morning until late evening to accommodate the expected crowds.

Allegations of corruption in construction of Anganwadi building

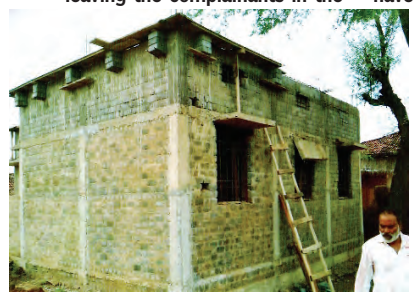
Complaints raised over misuse of materials and negligence

Central Chronicle News

Khairagarh, Dec 24: In the Gram Panchayat Juralkala, located adjacent to the district headquarters, a controversy surrounding the construction of an Anganwadi building has come to light. In October 2021, concerned villagers raised allegations of corruption and negligence, prompting them to file complaints with district authorities, including the SDM and the Collector.

The complainants voiced their grievances, alleging that sub-standard materials and negligence on the part of the Sarpanch and Secretary led to structural issues in the newly constructed Anganwadi building. They urged for a thorough investigation to address their

concerns and bring transparency to the matter. However, even after two years, the status of the investigation remains unclear, leaving the complainants in the



dark about its outcomes. They expressed disappointment that an official from the Panchayat

had visited the Anganwadi center only once and seemed to have made little progress. In a positive turn of events, orders have been issued by the investi-

gating officer to rectify the building's issues, indicating a commitment to address the concerns raised by the villagers. The inauguration of the Anganwadi building is scheduled for Sunday, and notable dignitaries, including the newly elected Dongargarh MLA Harshita Swami Baghel, Khuman Deshlahre,

Vashisht, Santosh Banjare, Taalu Ram Sahu, and others, are expected to attend the ceremony.

"The officer had come only to roam in the name of investigation. We do not know what happened in the investigation. The building becomes a symbol of corruption."

Tuman Sahu complainant
"Orders were issued by the investigating officer during the investigation to make necessary improvements, which have now been implemented."
- Dinesh Tandekar Secretary Gram Panchayat Juralkala

State-level football competition kicks off in Maneri



Central Chronicle News

Dongargaon, Dec 24: The excitement of football fans is palpable as a state-level football competition commenced on Saturday in the village of Maneri, located near the city. The tournament is set to enthrall spectators for seven consecutive days, from December 23 to 31.

The Organizing Committee, led by Secretary Nohar Sahu, has revealed

that this year's event will feature four days of intense football action. The competition boasts a grand prize of Rs. 31,000 in cash, along with a coveted championship trophy. Additionally, the runner-up team will receive Rs. 15,000 in cash and a runner-up trophy, while all participating football teams will be duly honoured.

The opening ceremony witnessed the esteemed presence of Sarpanch Jugat

Bai Pohan Sahu from Gham Panchayat Maneri, who graced the occasion as the chief guest. The event was presided over by Narbadbai Chandravanshi, a district member from Dongargaon. Distinguished guests, including Pahandas Sahu, Tarachand Sahu, Indrakumar Gangber, Anita Hemant Sahu, and former Sarpanch Kevaladas Sahu, added to the grandeur of the event.

Football enthusiasts from the region have been cordially invited to witness the seven-day spectacle of state-level football competition. The opening matches of the tournament delivered an exciting showdown, with FC Salhe clinching a victory in the first game against FC Matia, while Khursitkul triumphed over Dongargarh in the second match with a score of 2 goals to nil.

Rajim zone in the grip of cold wave

Bonfires and warm clothes offer comfort to residents

Central Chronicle News

Rajim, Dec 24: As the region finds itself in the clutches of a relentless cold wave, residents of Rajim are showing remarkable resilience in the face of plummeting temperatures. Mornings are shrouded in heavy clouds, delaying the appearance of sunlight until as late as 9:45 am. Even in the evening, the clouds persist, keeping people bundled up in warm clothing throughout the day.

To combat the biting cold, locals are gathering around bonfires for warmth, utilizing whatever materials they can find, from old tires to cotton sacks, to keep the



fires burning. The city's temperature has plummeted to as low as 11 degrees Celsius, making it imperative for people to adjust their daily routines. Those accustomed to rising at 4:00 am are now getting up between 6:00 am and 7:00 am, leading to tardiness for many. In response, shopkeepers have adjusted their business hours, shutting their shops as early as 7:30 pm, causing the market to empty by 8:30 pm. Hot water has become a necessity for bathing, and locals are flocking to cloth

shops to purchase shawls, sweaters, blankets, mufflers, gloves, and shoes. Rajim city is a prominent trading hub in the district, attracting merchants from neighboring areas. The dense morning fog has made driving a challenge, requiring vehicles to use headlights throughout the day. People are seen walking with their hands, feet, and faces covered in warm clothing. A multitude of bonfires are lit every morning, providing warmth to villagers who venture into the fields for

work. It's important to note that this year's cold wave has returned after a mild winter last year. The cold weather has led to an increase in viral fever, cough, and winter-related illnesses, with residents seeking treatment from both private doctors and government hospitals. Health experts recommend wearing warm clothing in the morning and evening, consuming lukewarm water, avoiding cold beverages and foods, and staying away from dust and gardens. Morning walks are recommended only when the cold is less severe. Although the Nagar Panchayat typically provides firewood for bonfires during colder months, this year has posed challenges, leaving residents to cope with the frigid conditions as best as they can.

Safety Workshop conducted at Pendra Road Station

Central Chronicle News

Bilaspur, Dec 24: Under the guidance of Divisional Rail Manager Praveen Pandey, the Divisional Security Department is consistently conducting safety campaigns to raise awareness and promote safety-consciousness among its employees.

As part of this initiative, a safety workshop was organized at Pendra Road Station on December 21. Senior Divisional Security Officer Anurag Kumar Singh and security advisors were present during the workshop.

Approximately 100 railway employees from various departments, including station masters, drivers, guard supervisors, fitters, SSEs, JEs, DTIs, pointsmen,



gatekeepers, and others, actively participated in the workshop.

During the session, several safety topics were discussed, including precautions to be taken during the winter season, the duties of station masters in case of signal and point failures, clamping and padlocking points during shunting, ensuring track safety in the condition of rail fractures, responsibilities of drivers

when a train stalls in a block section, and various safety measures to prevent unauthorized activities, vandalism, and trespassing.

Additionally, the workshop provided training in fire fighting, first aid, and CPR. Senior Divisional Security Officer emphasized the importance of adhering to safety rules and executing their duties diligently without resorting to shortcuts.

Shahdol station transforms for enhanced travel experience

Central Chronicle News

Bilaspur, Dec 24: In a significant stride towards providing passengers with a more comfortable and convenient travel experience, Indian Railways, often hailed as the nation's lifeline, is embracing modern technology and infrastructure development.

The ambitious Amrit Bharat Station Plan, dedicated to enhancing existing facilities and introducing modern amenities, is now in full swing. This transformational initiative is currently underway at 15 stations within the Bilaspur Division.

Shahdol Station, a key participant in the Amrit Bharat Station Plan, is set to undergo a series of re-



markable upgrades, promising passengers a superior and more contemporary journey. The station's facelift includes measures such as widening the circulating area to ensure smoother traffic flow, crafting an airport-style entrance porch, implementing structured entry and exit points, meticulously

planning spacious parking areas, adorning the surroundings with beautiful gardens, illuminating the premises with improved lighting arrangements, adding artistic designer signages, erecting a wide-foot overbridge for convenient movement, refurbishing platform flooring, erecting additional plat-

form shelters, expanding restroom facilities on platforms, renovating waiting rooms, enhancing security with CCTV installations, and establishing long-term amenities catering to the needs of women, senior citizens, and differently-abled individuals.

The initial phase of this remarkable transforma-

tion is already in progress, with the construction of platform shelters well underway, promising swift completion. Furthermore, efforts to reinforce boundary walls and optimize drainage around the station building have been initiated. Plans are also in motion to create well-organized parking spaces catering to both two-wheelers and four-wheelers, ensuring an added layer of convenience for passengers. The renovation and beautification of Shahdol Station's exterior have already commenced, marking a significant milestone in the modernization journey, as Indian Railways welcomes a new era of railway travel comfort and aesthetics.

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Delhi Metro completes 21 years of operations

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

Delhi Metro, which began operations with a small 8.4-km line in December 2002, on Sunday completed 21 years of journey dotted with several milestones.

On this very day in 2002, the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had inaugurated the first stretch of the Delhi Metro from Shahdara to Tis Hazari on the Red Line. Passengers services began a day later on Christmas.

Since then, the Delhi Metro has emerged as Delhi's lifeline and the entire National Capital Region (NCR), the DMRC said in a statement on Sunday.

"From an inaugural network length of just 8.4 kilometres with six stations in 2002, the Delhi Metro stands tall today

with a network of 393 km and 288 stations. More than six million passenger journeys are being performed every single day on the Delhi Metro making it one of the largest mass transit systems in the entire world," it said.

In the last 21 years, more than 380 km of additional lines have been laid in the NCR, which is a "staggering feat" and probably, the biggest infrastructure marvel created in the country, the DMRC said.

In addition, another 65 km of new lines are being laid across the national capital, which will take the network length beyond 400 km in days to come, officials said.

The DMRC said 2023 was also a "year of achievements" for the urban transporter.

From the September 17, the DMRC started to oper-

ate the Airport Express Line at a "massive speed of 120 kilometres per hour".

"This historic increase in speed of India's fastest Metro corridor gradually from 90 kmph to 120 kmph was made possible by meticulous planning and time-bound implementation by DMRC's engineers in consultation with a number of other government agencies and domain experts," the statement said.

The total journey from New Delhi to Yashobhoomi Dwarka Sector-25 now takes about 21 minutes. Earlier, the travel time between New Delhi and Dwarka Sector 21 was approximately 22 minutes and now it has reduced to around 19 minutes between these two stations, which saves three minutes.

The approximate travel

time between New Delhi and Terminal 3 Airport is now about 15 minutes and 30 seconds. Earlier, it was a little more than 18 minutes.

In the year gone by, the DMRC introduced a number of new digital ticketing solutions that have made ticketing extremely convenient. While the entire system was made compliant with the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) system, a QR code-based ticketing system was also introduced whereby now commuters can purchase QR code paper tickets or QR code tickets on the app, officials said. On November 1, the Delhi Metro achieved a milestone with the launch of 'Momentum 2.0,' an innovative platform set to redefine the daily commuting experience for millions in the NCR.

'PM aims to make 140 cr people including poor self-reliant'

Ahmedabad, Dec 24 (PTI):



Amit Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to make 140 crore people, including the poor, in the country "atmanirbhar" (self-reliant) and has worked with dedication for it. PM Modi wants to make India self-reliant in space technology and defence, and also aims to make the poor people self-reliant, Shah said addressing a gathering here of beneficiaries of the PM SVANidhi scheme, which helps street vendors get easy loans. The Union minister said poor people have benefited the most under the Modi government.

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel was also

present at the function to give loans to beneficiaries of the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM-SVANidhi scheme).

Shah said Prime Minister Modi has given a call to make India "atmanirbhar" and wants to make the country self-reliant in space technology, defence, all kinds of busi-

nesses and other fields.

"PM Modi wants to make 140 crore people including all the poor people atmanirbhar. Besides space technology, research and development among other things, the prime minister has worked with complete dedication to improve the standard of life of 60 crore poor people," Shah said. "In the last nine years, around three crore people got their own homes, four crore people got electricity connections, 10 crore people got gas cylinders, 12 crore people got toilets, 80 crore people got free ration and 60 crore people have been covered under the Rs 5 lakh health insurance (scheme)," he said.

BJP dilemma in AP: To ally or not to ally

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI):

For a party which fetched less than one per cent of votes in Andhra Pradesh in the last Lok Sabha polls, the BJP finds itself in a rather sweet spot in the state ahead of the 2024 general elections as the two main regional parties vie with each other to keep it on their side.

While the Telugu Desam Party wants an alliance with the BJP, the state's ruling YSR Congress is keen that the national party go solo in the coming polls like in the 2019 elections, sources in the two regional parties said.

With the state's minori-

ty votes of Muslims and Christians seen as a solid base of the YSR Congress, its leaders are of the view that an electoral alliance with the BJP will not suit their party but have noted its backing to the Modi government's agenda in Parliament to underline its unquestioned support. "The BJP has had differences with its poll allies but never with us. Our leader (Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy) has maintained good ties with the BJP leadership and has backed them wholeheartedly without seeking any share in power," a YSR Congress leader said.

The BJP on its part is

mulling its options, with a section of state leaders keen for an alliance with former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP as they believe that is the only way they can hope to win some seats and motivate their cadres. Lok Sabha and assembly polls are held simultaneously in Andhra Pradesh. The TDP following its alliance with actor Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena Party is hopeful of a strong show against the YSR Congress but the state's ruling party has been electorally dominant in the last five years, riding on a slew of welfare schemes it has implemented for different demographics.

Cong leader Sunil Kedar disqualified from Maha assembly

● After conviction in bank scam

Mumbai, Dec 24 (PTI):

Senior Congress leader and former Maharashtra minister Sunil Kedar has been disqualified from the state legislative assembly following his conviction by a court for misappropriation of funds at the Nagpur District Central Cooperative Bank (NDCCB).

A gazette order of the state legislature secretariat issued on Saturday said Kedar stands disqualified as MLA from the date of his conviction on December 22 under provisions of Article 19 (1) (e) of the Constitution of India and Section 8 of the

Representation of the People Act, 1951.

The order said Kedar's constituency Saoner, located in Nagpur district, has become vacant from the date of his conviction. A magistrate's court in Nagpur on Friday sentenced Kedar and five others to five years' rigorous imprisonment for misappropriation of funds at the NDCCB.

The case dates back to 2002.

Kedar, the five-time MLA, was convicted under Indian Penal Code Sections 406 (criminal breach of trust), 409 (criminal breach of trust by public servant), 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating), 471 (whoever

fraudulently or dishonestly uses as genuine any document which he knows or has reason to believe to be a forged document), 120(b) (criminal conspiracy) and 34 (common intention).

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