

'Service, not power, at centre of good governance'

New Delhi, Dec 25 (PTI):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said his government follows the principle of good governance that has got public service, not power, at its centre.

Releasing the first series of 11 volumes of collected works of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya at a function here, Modi said his government is setting up several institutions committed towards nation-building, just like 'nation first' was supreme for Mahamana, a title often used for the Banaras Hindu University founder. The prime minister said



PM Modi and former president Ram Nath Kovind pay tribute to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary, at Sadaiv Atal, in New Delhi, Monday.

several institutions of national and international importance being set up

Tribute to Vajpayee, Malaviya on their birth anniv

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tributes to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 99th birth anniversary on Monday, saying he worked to speed up the country's development all his life. Modi, along with President Droupadi Murmu, her predecessor Ram Nath Kovind, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and several Union ministers, including Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nirmala Sitharaman, Kiren Rijiju, Hardeep Singh Puri and Arjun Ram Meghwal, paid tributes to the BJP stalwart at his memorial, "Sadaiv Atal", here.

today give a new direction not only to India of the 21st century, but the entire world.

He said the country is indebted to the great personalities who made invaluable contributions to the nation and he was privileged to release a

book of Malaviya's works.

"Malaviya Ji dedicated to India, a big number of institutions of nation-building. We are glad to note that today, Bharat is again creating the nation-building institutions at unprecedented levels," Modi said.

Three new bills get Prez assent

New Delhi, Dec 25 (PTI): President Droupadi Murmu on Monday gave assent to the three new criminal justice bills which were cleared by Parliament last week.

The three new laws -- the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Act -- will replace the colonial era Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872. While replying to a debate on the three bills in Parliament, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said the focus were on delivering justice rather than handing down punishment.

MP CABINET EXPANSION

Vijayvargiya, Patel among 28 ministers sworn-in

Bhopal, Dec 25 (PTI): Twenty eight legislators, including former Union minister Prahlad Patel and BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, were on Monday inducted into the Madhya Pradesh cabinet led by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav. A total of 18 MLAs took oath as cabinet ministers, while 10 were sworn in as ministers of state including six with independent charge. Governor Mangubhai Patel administered the oath of office and secrecy to the ministers at a function held in the Raj Bhawan here. Those who took oath as cabinet ministers are -

Vijay Shah, Kailash Vijayvargiya, Prahlad Patel, Karan Singh Verma, Rakesh Singh, Uday Pratap Singh, Sampatia Uikey, Tulsiram Silawat, Aidal Singh Kansana, Govind Singh Rajput, Vishvas Sarang, Nirmala Bhuria, Narayan Singh Kushawaha, Nagar Singh Chouhan, Pradyumna Singh Tomar, Rakesh Shukla, Chaitanya Kashyap and Inder Singh Parmar. The ministers of state with independent charge are Krishna Gaur, Dharmendra Bhav Lodhi, Dilip Jaiswal, Gautam Tetwal, Lakhan Patel and Narayan Singh Pawar.

PM to attend 'Veer Baal Diwas' prog today

New Delhi, Dec 25 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Tuesday participate in a programme marking 'Veer Baal Diwas', which commemorates the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh's two sons.

A statement said the prime minister will flag off a march-past by the youth in Delhi on the occasion.

The government is organising participative programmes all over the country for informing and educating the citizens, especially the young children, about the story of exemplary courage of the Sahibzades, a reference to the Sikh guru's sons.



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CENTRAL Chronicle

Raipur, Tuesday, December 26, 2023 | Pages 12 | Price ₹ 3.00 | City Edition | Fastest growing English Daily of Chhattisgarh

Pending paddy bonus of Rs 3.7k cr transferred to 12 lakh farmers

Raipur, Dec 25: Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Monday digitally transferred pending bonus of Rs 3,716 crore to more than 12 lakh farmers who had sold their paddy in 2014-15 and 2015-16 in cooperative societies under minimum support price.

Addressing the function meant to disburse bonus, Sai said his government will fulfil every "Modi guarantee" (ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's pre-poll promise) in the next five years.

The event was held in Bendri village of Raipur district to mark Good Governance Day, observed nationwide on the birth anniversary of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The bonus of Rs 300 per quintal was not disbursed to paddy farmers by then Raman Singh-led BJP government for Kharif marketing seasons 2014-15 and 2015-16.

The previous Congress government under Bhupesh Baghel had promised to disburse this bonus but failed to do so



citing some reasons. In its manifesto for the 2023 Assembly polls, which were held on November 7 and 17, the BJP had promised to pay this bonus on December 25 if it came to power in Chhattisgarh. "We had promised farmers that as soon as the BJP comes to power in the state, we will give the outstanding bonus of two years to them. I am very happy today we have transferred Rs 3716 crore into the bank accounts of more than 12 lakh farmers", the CM said. The confidence of the farmers of Chhattisgarh

on the BJP government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has increased, Sai asserted.

The CM further said his government has decided to provide 18 lakh houses to the poor under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna.

"We have made a provision in the recent supplementary budget to give Rs 1000 per month to married women under Mahtari Vandana Yojna," he said.

The promises of annual assistance of Rs 10,000 to landless labourers, recruitment to one lakh government vacant posts in a transparent manner, free

treatment upto Rs 10 lakh under Ayushman Card, procurement of paddy at Rs 3100 per quintal and tendu leaf collection at Rs 5500 per standard sack will also be fulfilled, he added.

The government has issued an order to procure 21 quintal paddy per acre from farmers and, if required, the schedule of the procurement drive, which is scheduled to end on January 31, will be extended, the CM said.

Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma, party MLAs and other leaders were present on the occasion.

Former PM Vajpayee remembered on Good Governance Day



Raipur, Dec 25: Former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Late Atal Bihari Vajpayee was remembered on his birth anniversary today in Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Memorial Hospital, Raipur. A cleanliness drive was organized to celebrate his birth anniversary as Good Governance Day. Remembering his contribution towards the nation, heartfelt tributes were paid to him in the program organized in the telemedicine hall of the hospital. Raipur North MLA Purandar Mishra who was present on the occasion as chief guest started the cleanliness campaign by holding a broom in his hand at the entrance of Pt Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Medical College and Ambedkar Hospital.

Sahu, Dr Manju Singh, Dr Jyoti Jaiswal, Dr Usha Joshi, Dr Snigdha Jain, Dr Varsha Mungtawar, Mrs Ranjana Dhruv, Dr PK Khodiyar, Dr Vivek Patre, Dr Kamlesh Jain and Dr Piyush Bhargava also participated in the cleanliness drive.

In the program organized in Telemedicine Hall, MLA Purandar Mishra administered the oath of good governance, resolve and cleanliness to the officers and employees of the hospital. Addressing the program, the MLA said that cleanliness had great importance in the field of health. According to him the idea of a healthy and beautiful nation can be realized only through cleanliness. Remembering the contribution of Atal ji for the formation of Chhattisgarh state, he paid emotional tribute to him. All the officers and employees of the hospital were present in large numbers.



Dy CM Sao narrowly escapes stage collapse



Raipur, Dec 25: Deputy Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh and Lormi MLA Arun Sao narrowly escaped the collapse of welcome stage built near the old bus stand of Lormi during his visit to the area today. The stage was built to accord a grand welcome to him by the workers. More people reached the stage than the capacity, due to which the stage collapsed, although it did not cause any injury to anyone. Sao also participated in the paddy bonus amount distribution ceremony organized at Manas Manch, where he addressed thousands of common people

present in the assembly constituency. Meanwhile, while talking to the media, Sao said that as per the guarantee of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the election manifesto of the Assembly, the first task to approve PM Houses for 18 lakh families of Chhattisgarh was carried out immediately after the oath taking of the CM. The second major task of Modi's guarantee in the interest of farmers has been completed by giving the paddy bonus amount of the last two years to the farmers, he said, adding that 'we will do what we said'.

BJP President extends greetings to Sai

For bonus distribution; sanction of amount for PMAY and paddy purchase

Raipur, Dec 25: The newly appointed State President BJP Kiran Singh Dev has extended greetings to the people of the state on occasion of birth anniversary of former PM and Bharat Ratna Late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and for the Good Governance day being observed in his memory. On this occasion Dev also expressed gratitude to CM Vishnu Deo Sai for starting the work of fulfilling PM Modi's Gurantee.

BJP State President extending greetings to farmers said that the CM Sai fulfilling the promise made has transferred total of Rs 3716 cr into the accounts of 18 lakh farmers in the state. This will help in improving the financial condition of the farmers and their family members. Deo also urged all the BJP office bearers, party workers and public representatives to play an active and effective role in taking the public

welfare policies and schemes of the BJP government at the Centre and state to the masses on occasion of Atal's Good Governance Day.

BJP State President Kiran Singh Dev said that the birth anniversary of former PM Late Atal Bihari Vajpayee is observed as 'Good Governance Day'. Dev said that the BJP state government under leadership of CM Vishnu Deo Sai has today deposited bonus amount of 2 yrs directly into the account of the farmers and taking the first step to

wards fulfilling the promises made under 'Modi-ki-Gurantee'.

BJP State President said that the BJP in its first cabinet itself has taken the initiative for fulfillment of the promises made by granting sanction of amount for houses to 18 lakh poor families under PMAY in the state. In the same way by issuing order for purchase of 21 quintal per acre from farmers, Sai has shown its commitment for the welfare of the poor and farmers and for which he extended greetings to CM Sai.

Congress opposes deforestation in Hasdev



BJP govt is cutting trees to benefit some people, says former MLA Vikas

Raipur, Dec 25: Congress leader and former MLA Vikas Upadhyay along with workers formed a human chain at Bhim Rao Ambedkar Chowk here in protest against deforestation in Hasdev by the BJP government. Vikas Upadhyay also appealed to

save Hasdev. People are pleading to save Hasdev Aranya, the densest forest of Chhattisgarh, Upadhyay said. Within a few days, as soon as the Bharatiya Janata Party government came to power, it started showing anti-tribal, anti-farmer policies, he said, adding that selected leaders of BJP are cutting thousands of trees to benefit some people. He further asserted that Congress will take to street to save Hasdev.

Deforestation in Hasdev permitted by previous Cong govt: CM



Raipur, Dec 25: Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said that the permission for deforestation in Hasdev was granted when the Congress was in power in the state. Whatever has happened there has happened with the permission of the Congress government, Sai said while talking to the reporters on 'Save

Hasdev Movement' of Congress before he left for Bilaspur tour today.

Frees felling has started amid tight security for the second phase of Parsa Purva Kante Basan (PEKB) coal mine project in the biodiversity-rich Hasdev Aranya area located in Surguja district. Social workers and villagers are protesting in large numbers to save the forest. Social workers allege that the people protesting against coal mining in Hasdev area have been detained by the police.

Opposition party Congress also raised the issue in the state assembly and accused the BJP government of favoring the industrialist.

Brijmohan takes part in prog organized on Good Governance Day

Says Atalji fulfilled dream of ancestors by making Ch'garh a state

Raipur, Dec 25: Cabinet Minister Brijmohan Agrawal paid floral tributes to former Prime Minister Late Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary in a program organized at BNB School premises of Tilda on Good Governance Day. Atal ji created Chhattisgarh so that the dreams of our ancestors could be fulfilled, he said, adding that Atal ji took many steps for the



all-round development of this place. Today is an important day especially for the farmers as the amount of

outstanding paddy bonus is being transferred to their accounts he said. State government is fulfilling its promises, he

added. According to Agrawal 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan', construction of roads in every village, Pokhran nuclear test are the contributions of Atal ji. The cabinet had taken the decision to fulfill Modi's guarantee on the birth of Atal ji, said the Minister. Agrawal also distributed Ayushman Bharat cards to 6 beneficiaries. He distributed Ayushman Bharat cards to beneficiaries Tanisha Sahu, Dulari Dewangan, Jaya Nishad, Chanchal Yadu, Piyush Sahu and Pragati Sharma. Local public representatives, SDM Prakash Tandon and a large number of citizens were present.

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TURBAN TYING COMPETITION



Sikh children wait for the judgement in a turban tying competition organised to mark martyrdom of the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, in Amritsar, Monday.

Jesus Christ inspiration for humanity, says Nadda

New Delhi, Dec 25 (PTI):

BJP president J P Nadda visited the Sacred Heart cathedral here on the occasion of Christmas on Monday and hailed Jesus Christ as an inspiration for humanity.

Nadda met senior priests at the cathedral, in what is being seen as part of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) outreach to Christians. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also visited the cathedral on Easter.

After his visit to the cathedral, the BJP president said Jesus Christ dedicated his life to peace and harmony and is an inspiration for humanity.

"I was fortunate to visit this church on the pious occasion of Christmas.



BJP National President JP Nadda visits the Sacred Heart Cathedral Church on the occasion of Christmas, in New Delhi, Monday.

We took the blessings of Jesus Christ," he told reporters.

"All of us know that the life of Jesus Christ is a source of inspiration for the entire humanity. He dedicated his entire life to

humanity," Nadda said.

Everyone must take inspiration from Jesus Christ's teachings, preaching and contributions to humanity, he said, adding, "He dedicated his entire life especially for peace

and harmony in the society, taking everyone along."

"We pray to Jesus Christ that we dedicate ourselves to humanity, peace and everyone's progress in our country and all over the world in a cordial atmosphere while keeping in mind the path shown by him," Nadda said, adding, "This will be our regards for him."

The BJP has been making efforts to connect with the Christian community leaders, especially in states like Kerala where Christians are in large numbers.

The party has cited its improved poll performance in the northeastern states, which have a sizeable Christian population, as a proof of its increasing acceptability among them.

BJP names Poojari as Leader of Oppn in Legislative Council

Bengaluru, Dec 25 (PTI):

The Karnataka BJP on Monday announced the appointment of senior party MLC and former Minister Kota Shrinivas Poojari as the Leader of Opposition in the state Legislative Council, and MLA Arvind Bellad as Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly.

The BJP also has also appointed its MLCs Sunil Vallypуре and N Ravikumar respectively as the Deputy Leader of Opposition and its Chief Whip respectively in the legislative council -- the upper house, while party MLA Doddanagouda G

Patil has been named as the Chief Whip in the lower house of the state legislature.

In a press release announcing these appointments, state BJP President B Y Vijayendra said, "appointments have been made as per the directions of party national President J P Nadda."

After the Assembly polls in May in which Congress swept to power, the BJP participated in two legislature sessions -- in July and earlier this December -- without appointments to these key posts, which had drawn large-scale criticism from ruling Congress and some sections of the society.

In fact, the post of legislature party leader or leader of Opposition in the Assembly too was vacant till November, until R Ashoka was appointed, ahead of the legislature session earlier this month.

After the appointment of Ashoka as the LoP and Vijayendra as the party's state unit president in November, which led to some amount of disgruntlement in the BJP, there was a lot of speculation within the party, as to who will occupy other key legislature posts -- for which appointments were made today-- amid large number of aspirants and lobbying.

Poojari, who hails from Billava community and has a Sangh Parivar background, has already served as both leader of the house and opposition leader in the Legislative Council.

The appointment of Bellad and Patil as Deputy Leader of Opposition and chief whip in the Legislative Assembly respectively is significant considering that both hail from the north Karnataka region, as there was open disgruntlement in the state BJP, about the region not being given enough representation, after Ashoka and Vijayendra were given posts.

'Over-possessiveness led to murder of software engineer'

Chennai, Dec 25 (PTI):

Being empathetic appears to have cost R Nandhini, a software engineer from Madurai, her life. Little did she or her family suspect that her once-school classmate would go to the extent of murdering her. Her classmate Vetrimaran, a transman, made her believe that he would give her a surprise on her birthday eve on Saturday and convinced her to accompany him to a deserted place in Pommar in Thalambur police limits.

He then blindfolded her and chained her hands and feet as a "surprise," slashed her neck and wrists, emptied a can of petrol and torched her before fleeing from the spot, said police. Hearing her cries, a few

passers-by alerted the police. However, before she was rushed in an ambulance to the Chromepet Government hospital for treatment, Nandhini gave out the mobile number of Vetrimaran, police said.

"Initially, he came to identify Nandhini and had accompanied her to the GH but later disappeared," a police officer said. He was however, nabbed on Sunday and later remanded in judicial custody.

Police investigation revealed that Pandi Maheswari, 26, studied with Nandhini at a school in Madurai. Nandhini had continued her friendship on humanitarian grounds even after Maheswari changed the name to Vetrimaran. He was in regular touch with

her. He got incensed when she started avoiding him. "He became over-possessive when he noticed her talking to other male friends. There was an argument between the two over this," said a police official.

On December 23, on Nandhini's birthday eve, Vetrimaran called her to say that he would not quarrel with her and asked her to meet him as he planned "a surprise" for her birthday. After presenting her new clothes, he took her to an orphanage near Tambaram and made a donation. On the way home, he took Nandhini to Pommar where he blindfolded her, tied her limbs, inflicted cut injuries on her neck and wrists, doused petrol and torched her, and fled.

EX-MP LAND DEAL

Former IAF Squadron Leader convicted for amassing illicit assets

New Delhi, Dec 25 (PTI):

A Special Court has convicted a former Indian Air Force Squadron Leader for allegedly moving funds for a former Congress MP for a land deal and amassing disproportionate assets worth Rs 40.36 lakh, officials said Monday.

Squadron Leader Polu Sreedhar, facing several health issues, was not given any respite by the court, which convicted him for amassing assets that could not satisfactorily be accounted for, they said.

The special court will start hearing arguments on the quantum of the sentence from January 2 next year, they said. In its FIR, the CBI had alleged that from January 1, 2007,

to December 31, 2010, deposits worth Rs 11.9 crore were made in his three accounts in Axis Bank.

The money allegedly belonged to former Congress MP Balashowry Vallabhaneni and was supposed to go towards a land deal worth Rs 12.5 crore. The CBI registered the case on September 27, 2016, against Sreedhar, Balashowry, and bank manager Manish Saxena. The agency filed a charge sheet six years later, on November 24, 2022, against Sreedhar only as it could not find sufficient evidence against Vallabhaneni and Saxena.

The agency reduced the quantum of illicit assets from Rs 11.9 crore to Rs 40 lakh in its charge sheet as it found that the former

MP had purchased land with his own money using the accounts of Sreedhar. Sreedhar during the trial claimed that the CBI did not consider his earnings from share trading, mutual funds, and commission earned from land deals.

Special Judge Ashwani Kumar held that Sreedhar "could not show" that the money was earned through share trading or land dealings as claimed by him, as well as he did not intimate about the unaccounted for money either to his own office or to the Income Tax Department. The Judge said that the prosecution was able to prove beyond doubt that Sreedhar had "earned unaccounted money" to the tune of Rs 40 lakh.

HP CM dedicates Sanjauli-Dhalli tunnel to people

Shimla, Dec 25 (PTI):

The newly-constructed Sanjauli-Dhalli tunnel, built at a cost of Rs 47.36 crore, was inaugurated by Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu here on Monday.

Taking a jibe at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Sukhu said the construction work of the 154.22-metre tunnel was going on at a snail's pace under the previous government in the hill state and the Congress government expedited it and the structure was completed within a year.

The state government has directed all departments to ensure a time-bound completion of every project, Sukhu was quoted as saying in a statement issued here.

The existing Dhalli tunnel, which was constructed in 1852, served as a single-lane passage and had



CM Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu at the inauguration of newly constructed Rs. 47.36 crore Sanjauli-Dhalli tunnel spanning 154.22 meters, in Shimla, Monday.

surpassed its design life, causing persistent traffic congestion. With the inauguration of the new tunnel, these issues would be addressed.

Tourism, a key industry in Himachal Pradesh, stands to benefit significantly from the improved

connectivity. The tunnel, strategically positioned on the route to popular tourist destinations, such as Kufri, Naldehra, Tattapani, Narkanda and Chail, will ease the movement of tourists and contribute to the region's economic growth, Sukhu said.

The paintings in the tunnel on the theme of the Jatar procession of Shimla were conceptualised by Professor Him Chatterjee, who had earlier designed the murals (wall paintings) on the 28,991-square metre Integrated Transit Corridor in and around

the Pragati Maidan in Delhi.

The idea was to take the journey from Shimla towards upper Shimla and therefore, the Jatar (devta) procession was chosen, Chatterjee, the chairman of the department of visual arts in the Himachal Pradesh University, told PTI, adding that the tunnel was hand-painted by the students of the university and artists from Delhi.

The Choltu dance form depicted in the paintings is an important form of "Pahari" dance, which is practised in upper areas of the state, such as Theog, Rohru, Rampur, Kotkhai, he said. The dance is performed in the devotion of local deities on special occasions.

"Initially, I developed the details of the drawings and one of my students, Diksha, enlarged those. It took almost a month and a half to paint the tunnel," Chatterjee said.

'Vajpayee set example of purity, transparency in politics'

Lucknow, Dec 25 (PTI):

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday termed former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee as the "Ajatshatru" (the one who has no enemies) of India's politics, and said that he set an example of purity and transparency in politics.

"Atal ji was the 'Ajatshatru' of India's politics. Along with bailing out India from political instability of India, he set an ideal example of purity and transparency in politics in the country.

"The foundation stone of the new model of development, security and good governance that India has established under the

leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the last nine-and-a-half years was laid by respected Atal ji during his reign," Adityanath said at the Lok Bhavan in Lucknow on Vajpayee's birth anniversary.

Tributes were paid to former PM Vajpayee at the Lok Bhavan by CM Adityanath, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak and other leaders on Monday.

Due to his special attachment towards Uttar Pradesh, Vajpayee chose the state for his education and workplace, Adityanath said.

He added that the state government is working with commitment to



Yogi Adityanath

wards the ideals and values for which the former PM dedicated his life.

The UP CM said this year is also the beginning of Vajpayee's birth centenary. Many programmes will be organised in the next one year to keep his

memories alive and to showcase every aspect of his life, which gave a new direction to the society and the nation.

To remember his literary interest and contribution in the field of journalism, different types of programmes will be organised from gram panchayat to state level in basic education schools, universities and other institutions, he added.

On this occasion, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, Jal Shakti Minister Swatantra Dev Singh, UP Legislative Council member and state BJP chief Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary, other public representatives and other

senior officers were present, the UP government said in a statement.

Earlier, in a post on X, Adityanath said, "Tributes were paid to the carrier ('sanvaahak') of excellent democratic values in Indian politics former prime minister 'Bharat Ratna' revered Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji at his statue on the occasion of 'Good Governance Day'.

The sacred memories of respected Atal ji will always remain alive in the hearts of all of us."

Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak in a post on X, said, "Today, on the occasion of 'Good Governance Day', the birth anniversary of respected Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji, the grandfather of the BJP, the 'Ajatshatru' of Indian politics and our source of inspiration, former Prime Minister 'Bharat Ratna', Floral tributes were paid at the statue of revered Atal ji at the Atal Bihari Scientific Convention Centre, Lucknow."

NAME CHANGE

It is informed to the general public that I, Prahlad Rungta S/o Late Tikam Chand Rungta resident of Ward No. -36, Ganjpara, Durg, Teh. & Distt. Durg (C.G.) have changed my old name Prahlad Rungta S/o Late Tikam Chand Rungta so in future, I should be recognized by my new name that is Prahlad Kumar Rungta S/o Late Tikam Chand Rungta in all government and other documents.

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VBSY: Bridging the gap to deliver government schemes

Vikrant Singh leads efforts to inform villagers about government initiatives

Khairagarh, Dec 25:

The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra continues its mission to bring the benefits of government schemes directly to those who need them. In a program organized in Gram Panchayat Saloni under the Khairagarh block on Saturday, Chief guest Vikrant Singh, a State BJP Working Committee member, and Rajnandgaon District Panchayat Vice President, led the initiative. The event also featured under the chairmanship of District BJP President Ghamman Sahu and District BJP General Secretary Ramadhar Rajak as special guest. City Circle General Secretary Alok Shrivastava was present as special guest.

During the program, Chief Guest Vikrant Singh addressed the audience and highlighted



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of transforming India into a developed nation. He emphasized that the requirements to elevate a developing nation to the status of a developed one are being diligently fulfilled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Singh envisioned that when the country celebrates its 100th anniversary

of independence, India will proudly stand as a developed nation.

He mentioned the concept of "Raths," which symbolize the idea of a developed India, and explained that various essential services, such as agriculture, healthcare, Aadhaar, and more, are being made accessible to the underprivileged

through innovative efforts. These services are being extended to their doorsteps, ensuring that they reach 100 percent of the eligible population. Singh also announced that mobile stalls providing information about government schemes would travel to areas where these services are needed.

In his closing remarks, he encouraged all citizens to take full advantage of these schemes for their benefit. Additionally, Vikrant Singh directed all district-level officers to ensure that the benefits of these schemes reach the eligible beneficiaries. This proactive approach aims to maximize the number of people who can benefit from these initiatives. The event was attended by various dignitaries, including Sarpanch Amisha Verma, Ravindra Verma, Bhushan Verma, and many others.

Martyrdom day of Veer Narayan Singh celebrated

Anwari, Dec 25:

The village of Bhatagaon celebrated the martyrdom day of Chhattisgarh's first martyr, Veer Narayan Singh, on December 23 with great enthusiasm. The day began with a Kalash Yatra through the village streets, accompanied by the melodious sounds of traditional music. Hundreds of men, women, and children participated in this procession.

Veer Narayan Singh, a true hero, dedicated his life to fighting for the right to food. During a devastating famine, unscrupulous traders had hoarded grain in their warehouses, denying the poor access to essential sustenance. In response to this injustice, Veer Narayan Singh took action. He bravely opened these warehouses and distributed food to the starving and thirsty villagers.

It's crucial to note that his actions were not motivated by a desire to loot,



but rather to ensure that people had their rightful access to food. Thakur Ram Netam Jai eloquently emphasized this point in his address, stating that Veer Narayan Singh could not stand to see the public suffering from hunger. He had initially asked the moneylender Makhnal for food from his warehouse, but when Makhnal refused, Veer Narayan Singh took it upon himself to provide for the needy. Veer

Narayan Singh's audacious act left the British authorities shocked. He was subsequently hanged in Jaistambh Chowk in Raipur, the capital of Chhattisgarh, and his legacy lived on as a symbol of resistance.

Speaking about Veer Narayan Singh's remarkable life, Ram Netam further explained that he was a provider of food for over three hundred villages. During the famine, he opened all his food stores

to alleviate the suffering, but it was still not enough. This led him to open the grain warehouses belonging to Makhnal, a courageous act that would go down in history.

The event also featured addresses by Lalit Thakur, Kalajan Singh Mandvi, Harishchandra Mandvi, Khemraj Chandrakar, and others, as attendees celebrated the legacy of a true hero who ensured that the right to food was upheld for all.

Blankets distributed to city's newspaper distributors

- To protect them from the effects of cold
- Under Manav Seva, the operator of Vishal Honda showroom extended cooperation, blankets were also distributed to school children



Korba, Dec 25: On Sunday, senior journalist Tapan Chakraborty and social worker Padam Singh Chandela, director of Hotel Chandela, distributed a dozen blankets provided under Human Services to the newspaper distributors of the city to protect them from the effects of severe cold.

Due to increasing cold, the health of those who go

out in the morning is being adversely affected. Newspaper distributors also get up early in the morning to distribute newspapers from door to door. In such a situation, with the efforts of senior journalist Tapan

Chakraborty, to protect his health from the effects of cold, Ashok Rishri, the operator of a showroom in the city, provided blankets for distribution to Saptanik newspaper distributors. On Sunday morning, senior journalist

Tapan Chakraborty, social worker Hotel Chandela director Padam Singh Chandela and Korba Press Club secretary Dinesh Raj, in the presence of Chhattisgarh Newspaper Distributors Association state president Vinod

Sinha and district president Vipendra Kumar Sahu, newspaper distributors Rama, Rajesh Pal, Blankets were distributed to Rai Singhad Kanwar, Krishna Kumar Nirmalkar, Jai Singh Netam, Golu Dewangan, Muritaram Kashyap, Dilip Yadav, Rajesh Pal, Sunil Sahu, Lakshmi Rathore, Bajrang Yadav and Hemant Jangade. During this, senior journalist Tapan Chakraborty told that he has discussed with other newspaper distributors of the city and Ankush Aggarwal, operator of Mangalam Auto and Raja Gupta, operator of Ravi Sweets for the needy, and they have also assured to cooperate soon.

CM pays homage to the former PM Late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee

By garlanding his statue



Bilaspur, Dec 26: Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, on Monday, paid homage to the Former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the occasion of his birth anniversary. He garlanded the statue of the former Prime Minister situated within the premises of Atal Bihari University. Besides, Chief Minister Sai honoured the valiant freedom fighters by paying floral tributes at the 'Shaheed Smarak,' a memorial dedicated to the freedom fighters of Chhattisgarh. University Vice-Chancellor

Arun Nath Diwakar Bajpai, along with Bilha MLA Dharam Lal Kaushik, Bilaspur MLA Amar Agrawal, Beltara MLA Sushant Shukla, and other dignitaries, joined in paying tribute to Bharat

Ratna Late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. They offered floral garlands to his statue and commemorated the sacrifices of Chhattisgarh's freedom fighters at the Shaheed Smarak.

Absconding accused of theft of Rs 25 lakh from ATM nabbed

After 10 years

Jagdalpur, Dec 25:

Javed Ali and Irfan Ali, who were filling cash in the ATM of State Bank branch under Bakavand police station area of the district, had stolen about Rs 25 lakh from the ATM. During investigation in this case, accused Javed Ali was arrested and his brother accused Irfan Ali had absconded. Finally, after ten years, the absconding accused Irfan Ali has been arrested by the police today on Sunday. During interrogation, the accused confessed to the incident by telling his secret pass-



word to his brother. According to the information received from the police, the accused Javed Ali and Irfan Ali were employees of the cash company. They used to deposit cash in ATMs of Nagarnar, Bakavand and Jagdalpur. Both of them are brothers, but they got the job by keeping the company management in

the dark about their relationship. Taking advantage of this, both the brothers planned to steal the money from the ATM. On July 11, 2014, Javed Ali took Rs 19 lakh from the branch manager of State Bank and deposited it in the ATM located at Bakavand in the afternoon. Then in the evening he again went to

the same ATM and sprayed the CCTV camera installed there and stole Rs 24 lakh 08 thousand 600. Both the brothers divided the stolen amount among themselves. During investigation, accused Javed Ali was arrested and his brother accused Irfan Ali had absconded. The absconding accused Irfan Ali was being continuously traced. On December 22, information was received from the informer that Irfan Ali had come to Jagdalpur. After which he was surrounded and arrested near bus stand Tiraha of Jagdalpur. Absconding accused Irfan Ali was sent on remand.

Kurud district under chilling winter

Locals find comfort and camaraderie around

Kurud, Dec 25:

As winter grips Kurud with an unusual cold spell, the town's residents are showcasing their resilient community spirit by coming together to combat the chilly weather. In the face of disrupted daily routines and the discomfort faced by schoolchildren and senior citizens, the town has found warmth in the form of bonfires and heartwarming connections. Hotels and tea stalls



across Kurud have transformed into gathering hubs, providing locals with a welcome escape from the biting cold. Some innovative residents have even embraced the tradition of lighting bonfires to ward off the winter chill, demonstrating their de-

termination to keep the town's spirits high. The radiant heat from crackling flames has added a cozy charm to the conversations between friends and neighbors, creating a sense of togetherness that the cold cannot diminish. Despite the brisk market activity

and bustling city life, Kurud's residents can be spotted sharing warm tea and delightful conversations at a prominent establishment on Mandi Road.

In an inspiring display of unity, young entrepreneurs, businessmen, government officials, lawyers, and dedicated social workers like Ravikant Chandraakar, Santosh Bais, Shishupal Sinha, Sanjay Dhruv, Sunil Jethani, Manoj Agrawal, Sanjay Chenwani, Tikam Katariya, Praveen Kela, Sharad Pandya, and many others have come together to relish these heartwarming moments.

Christian society immersed in the celebration of Jesus' birth



Korba, Dec 25: The entire country was immersed in the celebration of the birth of Lord Jesus. Similarly, every church in Korba district was decorated with colorful lights. People from all sections of the Christian society visited the homes of Christians a week in advance and gave messages of joy about the birth of Jesus. On the other hand, on 24th December, special prayer and worship has been done in every church. A special arrangement for the Christmas tree was also organised. Jesus' birthday was

celebrated by cutting the cake at 12 o'clock in the mid-night. On December 25, special worship was performed in all the churches to commemorate the birth anniversary of Jesus. Similarly, apart from Korba city, huge enthusiasm was also seen in suburban areas Balko, Katghora, Bankimogra, Deepka, NTPC, Darri, Urga, Kartala and forest areas Lemru, Kutruwan. The oldest church of the city, Mennonite Church and Roman Catholic Church located in Kosabadi were decorated with great decorations.

AVMEMS Jawanga organises annual sports meet 2023-24

MLA Chaitram Atami honored the overall champion first Shabari House, second Dankini House and third Shivnath House with shield

Geedam/ Dantewada, Dec 25: Aastha Vidya Mandir English Medium School (AVMEMS) organised a 3 days Annual Sports Meet for the year 2023-24 based on the guidelines by the Central Board of Secondary Education at Education City Jawanga, Geedam of Dantewada district. It is important for every child to have passion for sports and art along with education. Various sports competitions were organized for students from class 1st to class 12th in boys and girls categories. 1200 children from 8 houses i.e. Arpa, Pairi, Shankhani, Dankani, Shivnath, Shabari, Mahanadi and Indravati Houses participated actively in different games like 50, 100, 200, 400, 800 meter race, relay race, three legged race,

long jump, high jump, shotput throw, discuss throw, volleyball, kho kho, kabaddi.

In the inauguration ceremony, Chairman of School Management Committee Bomada Ram Kowasi and Principal Gopal Pandey unveiled the torch and green flag. In the closing ceremony, Chief guest Dantewada MLA Chaitram Atami, guest of honour District Panchayat member Ramu Netam, Sangeeta Netam, Geedam Janpad Panchayat President Anti Wek, Janpad Panchayat member Rajesh Kashyap, Jawanga Gram Panchayat Sarpanch Aarti Kovasi, School Management Committee President Bomda Ram Kowasi, social worker Dr. Budhri Tati, District Mission Coordinator



Shyamal Shori, APCs Sikendar Khan, Rajendra Pendes, ABE0 Bhavani Punem, Cluster Coordinator Nitin Vishwakarma were present. Chief guest MLA Chaitram Atami and other guests honoured the overall champion of this sports meet, first Shabari House, second runner-up Dankini House and third runner-up Shivnath House with shields and prizes. In the

closing ceremony the little children enthralled the audience by performing wonderful cultural dances and songs. Winners in various sports disciplines were honored with prizes, sweets and cash were distributed by the guests and officials. Aastha Vidya Mandir's Principal Gopal Pandey, Vice Principals Pramod Gupta, Ravindrath Panigrahi, Superintendents Ravi Prakash Thakur, Sushma

Das, Lecturer Amujuri Biswanath, Program Coordinators Bikash Bain, Ashimanand Baipari, Harishankar Verma, PTI Mamta Dubey and other teachers were contribute their valuable time and dedication in the three-days event. Chief guest MLA Chaitram Atami while addressing the children and parents said that Education City Jawanga has proved to be a milestone in the field of education, its praise is heard in the field of education in the country and abroad also. It is a matter of pride for Bastar region including Dantewada. His excellency former President Ramnath Kovind, the world's popular and famous Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and many ministers and officials

have also visited the Education City Jawanga and Aastha Vidya Mandir. He said that the then Dantewada Collector IAS Reena Kangale and OP Chaudhary are heartily congratulated for thinking about an institution like Education City Jawanga in a sensitive area like Dantewada. Today, OP Chaudhary has also been a minister in Government of Chhattisgarh Cabinet ministry. MLA Chaitram Atami assured that they have made it, they will improve it. Thereafter guests met the children and spent time with the future of India and learned about the education system. Officers, parents, employees and students of Dantewada district were present in this grand program.

Party backed by LeT chief Hafiz Saeed fields candidates in Pak elections

Lahore, Dec 25 (PTI):

A new political front organisation of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks mastermind Hafiz Saeed has fielded candidates for most of the national and provincial assembly constituencies across Pakistan for the February 8 general elections, saying it wants to make the country an Islamic welfare state.

Saeed, the founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), has been in jail since 2019 after being convicted for several years in multiple terror finance cases

along with some other leaders of the banned Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD). The Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) party - set up by Saeed - says it is a political party. The electoral symbol for the PMML is 'chair'.

In a video message, PMML President Khalid Masood Sindh said that his party is contesting on most of the national and provincial assembly seats.

"We want to come to power not for corruption but to serve the people and make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state," he

said. Sindh is a candidate for NA-130 Lahore, from which Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif is also contesting.

Saeed's son Talha Saeed is contesting from Lahore's NA-127. When contacted, Sindh denied his party's link with Saeed's outfit. "The PMML has no backing of Hafiz Saeed," he claimed on Monday.

In 2018, the Milli Muslim League (MML) was the political face of

JuD. It had fielded candidates on most seats, especially in Punjab province but failed to win a single seat.

For the 2024 polls, the PMML has been formed because of a ban on the MML.

The US has placed a USD 10 million bounty on Saeed, a UN-designated terrorist.

Saeed-led JuD is the front organisation for the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which is responsible for carrying out the 2008 Mumbai attack that killed 166 people, including six Americans.

MIGRANTS AT CAMP IN MEXICO



Migrants camp in Alvaro Obregon, Mexico. A caravan of migrants started the trek north from Tapachula on Sunday, just days before U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrives in Mexico City to discuss new agreements to control the surge of migrants seeking entry into the United States.

External Affairs Minister Jaishankar arrives in Russia

Moscow, Dec 25 (PTI):

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday arrived in Moscow on a five-day visit to Russia during which he will hold talks with his counterpart and discuss various bilateral and global issues.

"Arrived in Moscow. Look forward to my engagements," Jaishankar said in a post on X.

During his visit, he will also travel to St. Petersburg.

"The time-tested India-Russia partnership has remained stable and resilient and continues to be characterized by the spirit of the Special and

Privileged Strategic Partnership," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in New Delhi on Sunday.

The minister will meet Russia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov to discuss matters related to economic engagement. He will also hold talks with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov for discussion on bilateral, multilateral and international issues. "Focusing on the strong people-to-people and cultural ties between our two countries, the external affairs minister's programme will include engagements in Moscow

and St. Petersburg," the MEA said.

The two sides are expected to discuss various aspects of the bilateral relations, especially in areas of trade, energy, defence and connectivity.

The ties between India and Russia remained strong notwithstanding Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. India's import of Russian crude oil has gone up significantly despite increasing disquiet over it in many Western countries.

India has not yet condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and it has been maintaining that the crisis must be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue.

Iran's navy adds sophisticated cruise missiles to its armory

Dubai, Dec 25 (AP):

Iran's navy on Sunday added domestically produced sophisticated cruise missiles to its arsenal, state TV reported.

The TV said both Talaeieh and Nasir cruise missiles have arrived at a naval base near the Indian Ocean in the southern Iranian port of Konarak, some 1,400 kilometers (850 miles) southeast of the capital, Tehran.

Navy chief Adm. Shahram Irani said the Talaeieh has a range of more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) and called it "fully smart." Irani said the cruise missile is capable of changing targets during travel.

He said the Nasir has a range of 100 kilometers (62 miles) and can be installed on warships.

Last month, a container ship owned by an Israeli billionaire came under attack from a suspected Iranian drone in the Indian Ocean, as Israel wages war on Iran-backed Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

From time to time Iran announces the test firing, production and commissioning of new military equipment that cannot be independently verified.

The country says it has a stock of various kinds of missiles with ranges up to 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles), capable of reaching its archenemy Israel and U.S. bases in the region.

Pakistani police free 290 Baloch activists

● Arrested while protesting extrajudicial killings

Islamabad, Dec 25 (AP):

Pakistani police on Monday freed 290 Baloch activists who were arrested when they attempted to hold a protest last week in the capital, Islamabad.

Their release came days after protest organizers gave authorities a deadline to release all those detained.

The activists had travelled 1,600 kilometers (about 1,000 miles) on Thursday from Turbat, a town in Baluchistan province, to protest forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in the militancy-ravaged southwest.

The protesters were

mostly women and some had brought along their children, aged 7-12, when security forces used batons and water canons to disperse and arrest them.

They wanted to draw attention to the case of 24-year-old Balaach Mola Bakhsh, who died in November while in police custody in Baluchistan. Authorities said he was killed after militants ambushed the police vehicle transporting him.

Police said Bakhsh was carrying explosives when he was arrested. His family insists he is innocent, demanding justice for him. They also said he had been detained since October. Police said they arrested him in November.

The police use of force against the protesters sparked anger among

Baluchistan residents and drew nationwide condemnation from top human rights activists.

Protest organisers said that as the dozens of vehicles carrying the activists reached the outskirts of Islamabad before dawn Thursday, police used water canons against them and started beating them up to prevent them from reaching the heart of the capital.

At the weekend, organizers and protesters held a sit-in outside the Islamabad Press Club to denounce the violence. "Four female police officers with batons hit me," Mahrang Baloch, one of the organisers, told reporters as she and dozens of others held portraits of those detained by the police, demanding their release.

Brazil's federal police arrest top criminal leader Zinho after negotiations

Rio De Janeiro, Dec 25 (AP):

Brazil's federal police said one of the country's top criminal leaders surrendered Sunday after negotiations with local authorities.

Luiz Antonio da Silva Braga, better known as Zinho, is the top leader of the largest militia group in the state of Rio de Janeiro. He had 12 arrest warrants issued against him, federal police said.

"After the formalities due to his arrest, the inmate was taken for medical forensics and then sent to the state's prison system, where he will remain available for our courts," federal police said.

Militias emerged in the 1990s when they originally were made up mainly

of former police officers, firefighters and soldiers who wanted to combat lawlessness in their neighborhoods. They charged residents for protection and other services, and more recently moved into drug trafficking themselves.

Zinho's group dominates Rio's west region, where several members of his gang were killed in recent years. He had been on the run since 2018.

Ricardo Cappelli, executive secretary of the federal Justice Ministry, said on social media that the federal police had conducted several investigations until it reached Zinho. "This is work, work, work," Cappelli said.

Zinho's lawyer did not respond to a request for comment from The

Associated Press.

The militias are believed to control about 10% of Rio's metropolitan area, according to a study last year by the non-profit Fogo Cruzado and a security-focused research group at the Fluminense Federal University. The militias are distinct from drug trafficking gangs that control important areas of Rio.

The area dominated by Zinho's group made news in October when gang members set fire to at least 35 buses in apparent retaliation for police killing one of their leaders. The attack took place far from Rio's tourist districts and caused no casualties, but it underlined the ability of the militias to cause chaos and inflict damage.

At least 68 killed in central Gaza in airstrike

Deir Al-Balah, Dec 25 (AP):

At least 68 people were killed by an Israeli strike in central Gaza, health officials said Sunday, while the number of Israeli soldiers killed in combat over the weekend rose to 15.

Associated Press journalists at a nearby hospital watched frantic Palestinians carry the dead, including a baby, and wounded following the strike on the Maghazi refugee camp east of Deir al-Balah. One bloodied young girl looked stunned while her body was checked for broken bones.

The 68 fatalities include at least 12 women and seven children, according to early hospital figures.

"We were all targeted," said Ahmad Turokmani, who lost several family members including his daughter and grandson. "There is no safe place in



Gaza anyway." Earlier, the Health Ministry in Gaza gave the death toll as 70. The Israeli military had no immediate comment. As Christmas Eve fell, smoke rose over the besieged territory, while in the West Bank Bethlehem was hushed, its holiday celebrations called off. In neighbouring Egypt, tentative efforts continued on a deal for another exchange of hostages for Palestinians held by Israel.

The war has devastated parts of Gaza, killed roughly 20,400 Palestinians and displaced almost all of the territory's 2.3 million people. The mounting death toll among Israeli troops - 154 since the ground offensive began - could erode public support for the war, which was sparked when Hamas-led militants stormed communities in southern Israel on October 7, killing 1,200 and taking 240 hostages.

Gunfire erupts at a Colorado mall on Christmas Eve

One man is dead and 3 people are hurt

Colorado Springs (US), Dec 25 (AP) A man was fatally shot and three people were hurt as gunfire rang out at a shopping center in Colorado on Christmas Eve, police said Sunday.

A fight broke out between two groups of people in the afternoon at the Citadel Mall in Colorado Springs and officers received a report of gunshots and responded, the Colorado Springs Police Department said in a series of posts on the social media platform X. One adult male was

dead at the scene with a gunshot wound, and two more, each of whom had been shot at least once, were taken to hospitals in serious condition, police said.

A female also was taken to a hospital with what were said to be minor injuries.

Police said they detained "multiple people" and were "working to determine their involvement."

The mall was cleared and closed, police said, and there was no known continuing threat to the community.

Colorado Springs is about 71 miles (114 kilometers) south of Denver.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES



People walk and play at a park decorated for the New Year and Christmas festivities with an Orthodox Church in the background in Moscow, Russia.

Minor earthquakes rattle Hawaii's Big Island

Hawaii, Dec 25 (AP):

Hundreds of people reported feeling minor earthquakes of similar intensity on Hawaii's Big Island and on the Olympic Peninsula northwest of Seattle, but no damage was reported.

The earthquakes on Saturday afternoon in Hawaii and Sunday morning in Washington state were over 2,600 miles (4,200 kilometres) apart and apparently unrelated.

A magnitude 4.1 quake struck around 4:30 p.m. Saturday nine miles (14 kilometres) southwest of Volcano off the southeastern coast of the island of Hawaii.

The quake was too small to generate a tsunami, according to the National Weather Service US Tsunami Warning System.

However, dozens reported feeling it through the US Geological Survey. The quake was in the area of Kilauea, a volcano that erupted for several weeks before quieting in September.

British home secretary under fire for making joke about date rape drug

London, Dec 25 (AP):

British Home Secretary James Cleverly was under fire Sunday for joking about date rape just hours after announcing plans to crack down on what he had dubbed a "perverse" offence.

Cleverly, who oversees national security and law enforcement in England and Wales, faced a call to step down after he reportedly joked at an event at the prime minister's home about drugging his wife.

He told women guests at a Dec 18 reception that the

secret to a long marriage was having a spouse who "is always mildly sedated so she can never realise there are better men out there," the Sunday Mirror newspaper reported.

Cleverly said "a little bit of Rohypnol" the so-called date rape drug "in her drink every night" was "not really illegal if it's only a little bit".

The drug, colloquially known as a roofie when it is crushed and put into someone's beverage without their knowledge, makes the subject drowsy and can lead to uncon-

sciousness and memory loss. Cleverly apologised through a spokesperson for what he called an "ironic joke" after he had announced the Conservative government planned to update legislation to make clear that such drink spiking is illegal. He described the practice as a "perverse" crime.

The comments were made during a drinks reception at 10 Downing Street where political journalists mingled with political aides, ministers and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

Three men shot in New Orleans' French Quarter

New Orleans, Dec 25 (AP):

Three men were shot and wounded early on Sunday in New Orleans' French Quarter.

The New Orleans Police Department said the gunfire rang out at 2:09 am at an intersection in the busy neighbourhood frequented by tourists, WVUE-TV

reported. Two of the men were shot in the legs and a third was shot in the back.

Police said the shooting began after a fight between the men who were shot and a fourth man. It was not immediately clear whether police had identified or apprehended the shooter. The group separated initially, but the

fourth man followed the others and another argument began, police told the news outlet. The fourth man then took out a gun and fired at the other three men. The shooting victims were transported to a hospital for treatment. Police did not disclose the ages of the men or the status of their condition.



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Judicial Reforms

SC's Decisive Actions

In a nation where justice delayed is often considered justice denied, the Supreme Court of India, under the stewardship of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud since November 2022, has made commendable strides in reforming the justice delivery system. The need to tackle the colossal backlog of cases, which has plagued our courts for years, has been rightfully recognized as a matter of utmost importance. Delayed justice has long been a bane for litigants, and it's high time we address this issue. The Supreme Court's recent actions are indeed a step in the right direction. The Supreme Court's most noteworthy achievement this year has been its relentless efforts to reduce the pendency of cases. As of December 15 this year, the Court managed to dispose of a staggering 52,191 cases. This marks a remarkable 33% increase compared to the 2022 figure of 39,800 cases decided. Such a substantial increase is not merely a statistic but a testament to the Court's commitment to delivering justice swiftly and efficiently. This is the highest number of cases resolved since the inception of the Integrated Case Management Information System in 2017. Leveraging technology played a pivotal role in this achievement. The Court introduced strategic reforms, including the reduction of the timeframe for verification and listing of cases from ten days to just seven. This reduction has allowed the Court to set a new standard for timely and efficient justice delivery. Recognizing the paramount importance of personal liberty, the Supreme Court expedited proceedings in matters such as bail, habeas corpus, eviction, and demolition, ensuring that they were processed within a single day and listed immediately. Notably, these proceedings were also conducted during the summer vacation, breaking away from traditional practices. The establishment of specialized Benches dedicated to handling specific types of cases has further streamlined the judicial process. This innovative approach has proven to be effective and efficient. It not only expedites the adjudication of cases but also ensures that cases are heard by judges with expertise in the relevant field. In addition to these procedural changes, the Supreme Court has implemented several litigant-friendly initiatives. These include the introduction of a hybrid hearing system, the establishment of an RTI portal, and the creation of an e-SCR (electronic version of Supreme Court reports) providing online access to thousands of judgments. The Court's integration with the National Judicial Data Grid has allowed real-time tracking of cases, fostering transparency and increasing judicial accountability. The Supreme Court's remarkable efforts serve as an example for high courts across the country. They must take inspiration from the innovative strategies employed by the apex court and implement them to expedite trial proceedings. It's high time that our entire judicial system prioritizes the efficient delivery of justice, ensuring that the wheels of justice turn swiftly for every citizen.

Inclusive Democracy

EC's Bold Move

Yash Pal Ralhan

In a commendable stride towards fostering a more inclusive and respectful political discourse, the Election Commission of India has taken a significant step by issuing guidelines to political parties ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. These guidelines specifically address the use of derogatory and offensive language in reference to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Such language, historically employed to marginalize and stigmatize individuals with disabilities, has no place in a modern and inclusive society. The power of language cannot be underestimated. It plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and attitudes toward various social groups. When political leaders resort to derogatory language, it not only reflects poorly on the targeted individuals but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes and contributes to a culture of exclusion. The Election Commission's firm stance against such language sends a clear message that it expects political discourse to rise above divisive and discriminatory tactics. While these guidelines are undoubtedly a step in the right direction, their effective implementation is paramount. The Election Commission must actively monitor political campaigns and take appropriate action if parties violate these guidelines. This may include issuing warnings, imposing fines, or even disqualifying candidates who persistently engage in the use of derogatory language towards PwDs. Strict enforcement will serve as a robust deterrent, reinforcing that such behavior will not be tolerated in the Indian democratic process. The Election Commission's initiative underscores the significance of language in shaping public attitudes and reflects a commitment to fostering a democratic culture that upholds the dignity and rights of all citizens. As India prepares for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, it is imperative that political parties not only acknowledge these guidelines but also actively contribute to building a more inclusive and respectful political discourse. For the first time, the Election Commission has issued a comprehensive set of guidelines to political parties, urging them to abide by these principles. One of the key directives is to refrain from using ableist language in political discourse. Terms like "dumb," "retarded," "blind," "deaf," and "lame" have been historically employed to denigrate and discriminate against individuals with disabilities. The Election Commission rightly insists that such language has no place in the political arena. Political parties and their representatives must strictly avoid comments related to disabilities or PwDs that are offensive or perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices. Any usage of such language may attract provisions of Section 92 of the Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, which lists penalties for such offenses. Additionally, political parties are encouraged to declare on their websites their commitment to using disability and gender-sensitive language and etiquette, respecting human equality, equity, dignity, and autonomy. To further promote inclusivity, all political parties are urged to adopt rights-based terminologies as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). They should also provide disability training modules for party workers at all levels and appoint nodal authorities to address complaints from persons with disabilities regarding the usage of ableist language. Moreover, political parties should strive to include more PwDs as members and party workers to break down attitudinal barriers in both the party and the public. This would provide equal opportunities and promote genuine inclusivity in the political landscape. The Election Commission's efforts extend beyond language guidelines. They have taken significant steps to ensure accessible polling stations, including ground-floor locations, Braille signage on Electronic Voting Machines, ramps, priority entry for PwDs, wheelchairs, and accessible toilets. The introduction of home voting facilities for PwD voters with a benchmark disability of 40 percent has also been a notable success, allowing them to exercise their voting rights conveniently and securely.

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@centralchronicle@gmail.com.

PM MODI AT CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

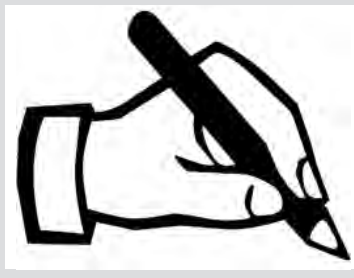


Prime Minister Narendra Modi with students during Christmas celebrations at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg, in New Delhi, Monday, Dec. 25.

Creating Will to Skill is the need of hour



PROF. SUNIL GOYAL



Why am I asking this question? The question is relevant because nothing can hold you back if you have the will to get skilled. Industry backed courses in emerging technologies, a talent connect portal where you can upload your skill certificates and get highlighted in front of recruiters, and government incentives along the way - all this in one platform is the need of hour. A learner can leverage it if they are keen to skill. Without the will of the learner, ecosystem efforts to skill would be fruitless. May I be given liberty to ask, "Should we rename Skill India as Will India?"

One right step in this direction is the NEP2020. In a single stroke, it brought skills into the mainstream, right alongside academics. Shifting from preventing students from dropping out, the vision transformed to skill students to make them employment ready. I being a keen observer of the skilling landscape's growth trajectory, can emphasize the significant achievement of NEP 2020 in integrating vocational education and work-integrated learning into academic courses. The workplace is changing rapidly and so are the dynamics of talent planning, performance management, and candidate/employee experience strategies. Additionally, the HR value chain is undergoing a radical transformation. Technology has been a boon to mankind in terms of freeing the time to try more intelligent and productive work! It continues to drive innovation across multiple facets of life. While some companies track productivity, others monitor employee engagement and well-being to better understand employee experience. Not surprisingly, the staffing industry is also seeing a major shift.

It was the need of the hour as employers expect candidates to be skilled on foundational level of education. This may not be available in the regular curriculum which was the need of the hour as employers expect candidates to be skilled on foundational level of education. In this connection, the four R's model can play a pivotal role in creating a positive impact on the skilling landscape.

Relevant: Ensure the curriculum fulfils current and future needs and is aligned to Industry perspective and NEP2020.

Reach: Ecosystem participation is a must to reach the last

mile and for maximum outreach. Rigor: Projects and quizzes help learners apply knowledge; fair and transparent assessments and proctored certifications to check skill level. Retention: The program has to be adaptive, blended, and provide mentoring and career coaching for 360-degree development. While today's workforce will need to learn new skills and learn to adapt as new technologies emerge continuously, a study was conducted under the guidance of author by the research scholars of BRAUSS (MHOW) School of Social Sciences and Management Studies as to how Industry, academia, and public sector can collaborate to help students, our future workforce, become ready for the future? The findings reveal that the businesses that adopted digital transformation not only survived but also grew despite the crisis. They set the groundwork for strong growth in the new normal because of their fast learning and agile implementation. Similar to this, it was found that upskilling is an essential and unavoidable component of the ongoing success of not only enterprises but also of global economies. The research study suggested that industry can collaborate with academia for upskilling in multiple ways. Centres of Excellence (CoE) are a great way to cooperate. These CoE's established by sectors of technology clusters in college premises will give the students an early start and enable them to seize the opportunities as they come out of educational streams. The results of the study reveal that today in edu-

ational institutions there is lack of digitally skilled staff. Faculty lack awareness about applications of technology. Moreover, they are not in active practice. Industry can collaborate to train and provide practical exposure to academia while supplying some of their best technologists as visiting faculty to colleges. The study come out with several other suggestions also. Most important among them is that Organizations must assist employees in understanding the importance of competency development and establishing it as a critical employee success measure, as well as provide learning resources and enable access to Edutech platforms, partner-led training, and work-lab environments. Organizations must inculcate the right learning culture, set up the required infrastructure, and provide incentives to enable employees to learn and adapt continuously. Organizations must assist employees in understanding the importance of competency development and establishing it as a critical employee success measure, as well as provide learning resources and enable access to Edutech platforms, partner-led training, and work-lab environments. Organizations need to help employees choose the next best skill they can learn. Including competency building as a part of the formal performance assessment can be a great way to encourage the employees to upskill.

Author is an Eminent Social Scientist, Columnist, and Professor of DoHE, GoMP based at Indore, Madhya Pradesh. Email gasspub@gmail.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Farmer's Day

Farmer's Day is celebrated on 23 December. Former PM Choudhry Charan Singh gave green signal to many policies for the farmers during his tenure to improve their condition and their lives. Indian Farmers' Day is celebrated every year on Charan Singh's birthday, but now according to the former PM, there have been a lot of people in politics who show seriousness towards the problems of farmers and do politics on these issues. The big issue of farmers is to save their crops from getting destroyed due to the havoc of nature. Agricultural experts should develop such technology so that farmers in every state can be saved from crop losses caused by the vagaries of weather, that is, crops should be harvested and cultivated as per the changes in the weather cycle. If this could be done then it would be a true tribute to the farmer leader.

N Mateeni, Mumbai

Shame for the government

Deadlympics gold medallist Virender Singh Yadav also decided to return his Padma Shri to the government showing solidarity with the country's top wrestlers who have objected to the election of Sanjay Singh as a chief of Wrestling Federation of India. Reportedly, he is very close to Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, member of the Lok Sabha. Sirmy question is that why the Govt is silent, why it doesn't try to solve this crucial matter, and why the government is supporting such evil-mannered people.

Md Salman, Mumbai

Electoral Chessboard for 2024

As the political landscape takes shape for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the India Alliance meeting on December 19 witnessed West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee proposing Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge as a prime ministerial candidate. Arvind Kejriwal, AAP's national convener, supported this proposal. If Kharge is declared the joint candidate, the upcoming elections are set to become intriguing. With Kharge's significant role in South Indian politics, his Congress presidency, and his Dalit background, the NDA will face a formidable challenge. As 17% of the population belongs to Scheduled Castes, their support for the India Alliance could shape the elections. The key question remains: will all opposition parties unite behind Mallikarjun Kharge for the contest?

N Ashraf, Mumbai

Confronting Record Temperatures: The Climate Change Challenge



Shivanshu K. Srivastava

As we stand on the precipice of 2023, a year poised to shatter records as the warmest in history, the world finds itself at a crossroads, grappling with the undeniable reality of climate change. The shocking revelation, with a 99% chance that the average temperature will breach the critical 1.5°C mark above pre-industrial levels, serves as an urgent wake-up call, demanding a deep reflection on the consequences of our collective inaction. The forecast, delivered by California-based Berkeley Earth in its November 2023 temperature update, marks a stark departure from earlier

predictions, underscoring the volatile and unpredictable nature of our climate system. The initial estimate of a mere 14% chance of record temperatures in 2023 has given way to a disconcerting certainty, emphasizing the need for a profound reassessment of our approach to climate change mitigation. While a single year's breach of the 1.5°C threshold does not automatically signify the failure of our climate goals, it serves as an alarming indicator of the precarious state of our planet. The Paris Agreement, a landmark accord ratified by nearly every nation on Earth in 2015, established the 1.5°C limit as a crucial safeguard against the worst impacts of climate change. Now, in the face of the imminent breach, the urgency of our collective response cannot be overstated. Beyond the statistics and forecasts lies a deeper truth - a truth about our dependence on fossil fuels, the relentless march of industrialization, and the insidious impacts of human activity on the delicate balance of our planet.

The unprecedented warming of 2023 is not a mere anomaly; it is a symptom of a broader malaise that demands radical intervention. The 1.5°C threshold represents more than just a number; it signifies a line we dare not cross. Beyond this point, scientists warn of triggering tipping points, setting off irreversible chain reactions that could reshape our climate in ways we can scarcely comprehend. The melting of polar ice, disruptions to global ecosystems, and the intensification of extreme weather events are but a few of the potential consequences that loom large if we fail to address the root causes of our current trajectory. As we confront the reality of 2023 breaking temperature records, it is crucial to scrutinize our own contributions to this crisis. The burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and unchecked industrial emissions are the culprits driving this surge in global temperatures. The time for half-measures and incremental change has passed; what is now required is a radical reimagin-

ing of our energy systems, production methods, and consumption patterns. Governments, industries, and individuals must unite in a collective effort to transition towards a sustainable and regenerative future. Green technologies must be embraced, and policies incentivizing clean energy adoption and penalizing environmental degradation must be enacted. The economic cost of climate inaction far exceeds the investment required for a transition to a low-carbon future. International collaboration is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Climate change is a global challenge that recognizes no borders. The failure of nations to honor their commitments under the Paris Agreement exemplifies the inadequacy of isolated efforts. A coordinated global response is imperative, underpinned by shared responsibility and a commitment to leaving no one behind. The warming of 2023 is not just a scientific phenomenon; it is a call to arms, urging us to reassess our values and

priorities. The pursuit of unbridled economic growth at the expense of environmental degradation is a Faustian bargain that we can no longer afford. Sustainability must be the cornerstone of our development, with social and environmental well-being placed at the forefront of our decision-making processes. In the face of the unprecedented warming predicted for 2023, we are confronted with a stark choice - to continue down the perilous path of ecological degradation or to embark on a transformative journey towards a sustainable future. The clock is ticking, and the window for meaningful action is rapidly closing. The events of 2023 should serve as a clarion call, a rallying cry for a global movement dedicated to preserving the only home we have - our planet. The time for rhetoric is over; the time for decisive action is now.

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

BRIEF

Green shoots



New Delhi: Green shoots are beginning to become visible as far as investment cycle is concerned led by government spending in the infrastructure sector, Kotak Mahindra Bank whole-time director Shanti Ekambaram said. "I think the last 18 months have been very good on the consumer credit side but you are beginning to see green shoots even in the investment cycle," she told PTI. The government focus on infrastructure development in the last three years has created space for capital expenditure by the private sector as well.

Inks pact

New Delhi: Adani Green Energy (AGEL) on Monday said it has signed a power purchase agreement (PPA) with the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) to supply 1,799 MW of solar power. With the signing of this balance PPA, AGEL has completed the power off-take tie-up for the entire 8,000 MW manufacturing-linked solar tender awarded to it by the SECI in June 2020, a company statement said. According to the statement, AGEL has announced the execution of a PPA with the SECI to supply 1,799 MW of solar power. "We are glad to conclude the largest green PPA and enable a sustainable energy landscape. Aligned to India's target of 500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030, Adani Green is determined to deliver in excess of 45 GW renewable energy, a five-fold increase from our current operating portfolio," Amit Singh, CEO, AGEL, said in the statement.

Term ends



Mumbai: The board of RBL Bank will no longer have a Reserve Bank of India representative, as the two-year term of the central-bank appointed additional director Yogesh Dayal has ended. In a communication to exchanges on Sunday, the city-based private sector lender said Dayal's term as an additional director has ended on December 23, 2024. Dayal, a chief general manager with the central bank, had to be appointed as an additional director following concerns on the way RBL Bank was being run and its practices. According to reports, the central bank's concerns included the outlook of the incumbent top management and also its exposure to the riskier unsecured loans.

Disinvestment fetches over Rs 4.20 lakh cr in 10 years

but target to be missed again in FY24

New Delhi, Dec 25:

With general elections on the horizon, the government's privatisation bandwagon has almost but stalled as a government wary of being accused of selling family silver opts for minority stake sales on stock exchanges over outright privatisation. The result — the disinvestment target for current fiscal year is again likely to be missed. Big ticket privatisation plans such as that of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) and CONCOR are already on the backburner and analysts feel meaningful privatisation can happen only after April/May general elections. In the current fiscal, out of the budgeted amount of Rs 51,000 crore, about 20 per cent or Rs 10,049 crore has been collected through minority

stake sales via IPO (Initial Public Offering) and OFS (Offer For Sale). Strategic sale of a host of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), including SCI, NMDC Steel Ltd, BEML, HLL Lifecare and IDBI Bank, are in the pipeline for completion in the current fiscal. However, with the process of due diligence and demerger of core and non-core assets yet to be completed with respect to most of the CPSEs, there has been a delay in inviting financial bids.

In the case of IDBI Bank, where the government had received multiple EoIs (Expressions of Interest) back in January 2023, the bidders are yet to get security and 'fit & proper' clearance from the government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), respectively. Hence the privatisation of all the CPSEs in the list and IDBI

Bank are likely to spill over into the next financial year. In total, there are around 11 transactions which are being processed by DIPAM (Department of Investment and Public Asset Management) currently. There are three more — Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), Container Corporation of India (CONCOR) and subsidiaries of AI Asset Holding Ltd (AIAHL), the entity holding the former subsidiaries of the now-privatised Air India, for which 'in principle' approval of the Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs (CCEA) is already in place but EoIs have not been invited by DIPAM. "Strategic disinvestment decisions are being governed by political necessities. With elections round the corner, we do not expect any movement on the strategic sale side," a market expert said.

Wheat sown in 30.86 mn hectares so far

New Delhi, Dec 25: After facing loss due to terminal heatwave last year, more farmers are cultivating climate resilient wheat varieties which has been sown in more than 60 per cent of the planted area of 30.86 million hectares so far, according to agriculture commissioner P K Singh. Wheat is the main rabi (winter) crop, sowing of which normally begins in November and harvesting is done from March-April. As per the agriculture ministry data, wheat sown area stood at 30.86 million hectares till December 22 of the ongoing rabi season, slightly lower than 31.44 million hectares in the year-ago period. "This is because there was a delay in wheat sowing in some parts where paddy harvesting got late. Otherwise, wheat sowing is progressing well," Singh told PTI.

Keeping in mind the terminal heat problem that wheat farmers faced last year, the government this year has promoted climate resilient wheat varieties and kept a target to cover 60 per cent of the total cropped area, he said.

Semiconductor policy to help realise Gujarat's commitment towards self-reliance: CM Patel

Ahmedabad, Dec 25:

The 'Gujarat Semiconductor Policy' will help realise the state's commitment for a self-reliant India and Gujarat, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel has said. The policy is setting the stage for a future in the world of technology and manufacturing, and helping Gujarat transform itself into a semiconductor powerhouse, he said. According to the state government, chip maker Micron Technology's decision to set up a USD 2.75-billion plant at Sanand near Ahmedabad indicates that Gujarat's dedicated semiconductor policy is bearing fruit and attracting global players. Under the policy, the state government will set up 'Dholera Semicon City' near Ahmedabad where eligible projects will be given subsidies for setting up manufacturing units, it said ahead of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS) to be held in Gandhinagar next month. The summit is a forum for business networking, knowledge sharing and



strategic partnerships for inclusive growth and sustainable development. In June this year, the Gujarat government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Micron Technology for setting up a semiconductor assembly and test facility at Sanand. "With the prime minister's guidance, Gujarat has emerged as a policy-driven state. Taking this tradition further, we have implemented the country's first dedicated semiconductor policy. Our commitment for 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Aatmanirbhar Gujarat' will be realised by this policy," CM Patel has said. In July last year, Gujarat announced a dedicated policy to draw new investments in the semi-

conductor sector by offering incentives and subsidies to start operations in the state, and will remain in force till 2027. The Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR) is set to host the ambitious 'Semicon City', spanning 5,000-10,000 acres and generating a massive two lakh jobs over the next five years by attracting semiconductor fabrication units, display fabrication units, silicon photonics, and semiconductor assembly, testing, marking, and packaging facilities, as per the state government. Speaking at a startup event recently on semiconductor policy investment, Union Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Rajeev Chandrasekhar said, "(Prime Minister) Narendra Modi ji in January 2023 enacted a policy. We have these big units and plants like Micron coming up in Gujarat. There are over 30 design startups that have come up. We are going to set up a new Indian semiconductor centre for research," he said.

Running at 100 pc capacity now, NINL: MD Mehta

Was home to snakes, scorpions when acquired by Tata Steel,

Kalinganagar (Odisha), Dec 25: Snakes and scorpions crawled the premises of NINL, the land around was covered with bushes and the plant machinery was full of rust, its MD & CEO Sudhir Kumar Mehta said remembering the challenges involved in restarting the sick unit within a set 90-day deadline. The company was in debt, Mehta said, adding NINL is now doing financially good and has generated a revenue of around Rs 3,000 crore in the April-September or first half of the ongoing fiscal. On July 4, 2022, Tata Steel completed the acquisition of Odisha-based Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd (NINL) — the first state-



owned steel company to be divested by the Narendra Modi-led government — through its erstwhile subsidiary Tata Steel Long Products (TSLP) for a consideration of Rs 12,100 crore. "NINL premises is of 2,500 acre. It had been

closed for a long period. When we first entered the unit post the acquisition, there were snakes, scorpions, and lizards crawling in the premises. Bushes up to several feet had grown all over the area and the plant machinery was lying non-functional in rust," Mehta said, replying to a question on the revival of the sick unit within a 90-day deadline set by the parent Tata Steel. Accordingly, a detailed plan was chalked out and the entire area was cleaned and made accessible. The offices and buildings were repaired and reconstructed and broadband lines were laid to connect the plant with outside world, he said. In

August, all the employees were paid their entire salary as per the take over agreement, Mehta said. NINL's 1 million tonne per annum (MTPA) steel manufacturing unit at Kalinganagar, around 120 km from state capital Bhubaneswar, was closed for over three years on account of various reasons including lack of funds. Further, technical and mechanical experts from Tata Steel plants in Kalinganagar, Jamshedpur, and Meramandali worked non-stop to restart the NINL blast furnace on October 11, 2022, and the first billet was casted within two weeks on day of Diwali - October 24, he said.

First rupee payment for oil to UAE: India looks for more deals, no targets: Officials

New Delhi, Dec 25:

India's first-ever payment in rupees for crude oil purchased from the UAE is helping the world's third largest energy consumer push for taking the local currency global, as it looks for similar deals with other suppliers, officials said, adding internationalisation is a process and there are no targets. With the nation more than 85 per cent dependent on imports for meeting its oil needs, India has been pursuing a three-pronged strategy of buying from the cheapest available source, diversifying sources of supply and not breaching any international obligation like the

price cap in case of Russian oil. While the strategy helped save billions of dollars, when it ramped up imports of Russian oil that was shunned by some in West post Ukraine war, it is looking to settle trade in rupees instead of dollars in a bid to cut transaction costs by eliminating dollar conversions. India in July signed an agreement with the UAE for rupee settlement and soon after Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) made payments for purchase of a million barrels of crude oil from Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) in Indian rupees. Some of the Russian oil imports too have been settled in rupee. Officials

said the default payment currency for import of crude oil has been the US dollar for several decades and the currency traditionally has liquidity as well as lower hedging cost. But to boost the rupee's role in cross-border payments, the Reserve Bank of India allowed more than a dozen banks to settle trades in rupees with 18 countries since last year. Since then, India has been encouraging big oil exporters such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia to accept the Indian currency for trade settlements, officials said, adding the first success happened in August this year when IOC made the rupee payment to ADNOC.

Visa, agri, GSP likely to figure in India-US trade policy forum meet in Jan

New Delhi, Dec 25:

Issues about visas, promoting agri trade and resumption of benefits under the American generalised system of preferences (GSP) are expected to figure in the meeting of India-US Trade Policy Forum (TPF) in January here, an official said. US Trade Representative Katherine Tai will be here for a meeting with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. "Both sides will discuss ways to increase trade and investments between the two countries during the two-day meeting from January 13, 2024. It will be the 14th ministerial-level meeting of the India-US TPF," the official said. The

last meeting was held in Washington in January 2023. India in that meeting highlighted the delay in the issuance of business visas to people from India. New Delhi is also keen on restoration of its beneficiary status under the US GSP programme. The previous Trump administration in the US revoked the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) from India in 2019. The GSP allows eligible developing countries such as chemicals and engineering were getting duty-free access to the US market under the GSP, introduced in 1976. Both the countries in the last

TPF meet had noted that the movement of professionals and skilled workers and business travellers between the countries contributes to enhancing bilateral economic and technological partnership, the official added. The official said that the proposed social security totalisation agreement may also figure in the meeting. Under a totalisation agreement, an expatriate in either country need not contribute to the social security schemes of the host country. It would benefit a number of Indians, particularly from the IT sector who are working in America and paying social security but are unable to get any benefit out of it.

Small stocks lead 2023 bull run; give big returns to investors

New Delhi, Dec 25:

Smaller stocks have emerged as Dalal Street's favourites in 2023 that has turned out to be a "great year" for equities, rewarding investors with big gains, driven by optimism over the country's macroeconomic fundamentals and heavy retail investors participation. Experts said equity markets are experiencing a prolonged bull run and it is during this time that the midcap and smallcap segments tend to outshine their larger counterparts. Till December 22 this year, the BSE smallcap gauge has jumped 13,074.96 points or 45.20 per cent while the midcap index has surged 10,568.18 points or 41.74 per cent. In comparison, the BSE 30-share benchmark Sensex has ral-



lied 10,266.22 points or 16.87 per cent during this period. The smallcap index scaled its all-time high of 42,648.86 points on December 20 this year and the midcap gauge also reached its record peak of 36,483.16 points on the same day. The BSE benchmark also hit its lifetime high of 71,913.07 points on

December 20. The midcap index tracks companies with a market value that is on an average one-fifth of blue chips while smallcap firms are almost a tenth of that universe. Analysts attributed better domestic macroeconomic fundamentals and the confidence of retail investors as the major drivers for the

exuberance in equity markets this year. "When the overall economy becomes robust, small and midcap segments tend to do well," Mukesh Kochar, National Head of Wealth at AUM Capital, said. Kochar termed 2023 as a "great year" as far as the equity market is concerned. "We have seen a new high with broad-based participation," he said. In all bull runs, there has always been a new set of performers and this time PSU, defense and railways emerged as the greatest performers, he said, adding there have been strong Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) and retail money in a market where Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were consistently selling.

Cyber risks biggest threat faced by Indian organisations, says survey

New Delhi, Dec 25:

Cyber risks are cited as the biggest threat faced by Indian organisations with 38 per cent of respondents feeling highly or extremely exposed to it, says a survey. With this, cybersecurity has jumped two spots from number three to number one on the risk radar when compared to the 2022 Global Risk Survey, the PwC's 2023 Global Risk Survey- India edition stated. PwC said the final results of the survey are based on 3,910 survey responses from Business and Risk Management leaders (CEO, board, risk management, operations, technology, finance, audit) across 67 territories providing their views on the status and direction of risk in their organisation. 163 Indian organisations were a part of

this survey. Other digital and technology risks are also top concerns for business leaders in India (at 35 per cent). To address the challenges, Indian organisations are making bold investments in cybersecurity with more than half of the respondents planning to invest in cybersecurity tools (55 per cent) and AI, machine learning and automation technologies (55 per cent) in the next 1-3 years, according to survey findings. To back these investments, 71 per cent of Indian organisations are gathering and analysing cybersecurity and IT data for risk management and opportunity identification. Globally 61 per cent of the organisations are doing the same. Sivarama Krishnan, Partner and Leader, Risk Consulting, PwC India said that

the 2023 Global Risk Survey shows that Indian business leaders are not only demonstrating an increased appetite for taking risks but are also doing a reasonable job of identifying opportunities presented by risks. "This mindset shift is critical for an organisation's progress- it will not only help businesses be better prepared to manage risks, but also grow, build resilience, deliver outcomes and create value for all stakeholders," Krishnan added. The survey also showed that 99 per cent of Indian business leaders are confident their organisation can balance growth with managing risk effectively, of which 66 per cent are very confident of the same. Globally these figures stand at 91 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah during e-foundation of various development projects, in Ahmedabad.

Kiran Dev commences home tour after victory

Minister Kedar Kashyap joins momentous occasion

Central Chronicle News

Kurud, Dec 25: The Bharatiya Janata Party's newly appointed State President, Kiran Dev, kickstarts his inaugural tour from his home region, Jagdalpur in Bastar.

Accompanying him on this momentous journey is the three-time Cabinet Minister of the Raman Sarkar and the current Cabinet Minister in the Sai government, Kedar Kashyap. The grand celebration commenced at Sandha Chowk in Jagdalpur at 11:30 am.

The BJP members of Kurud Vidhan Sabha extended a hearty welcome to Kiran Dev and Kedar Kashyap. The event res-



onated with party workers passionately chanting slogans such as "Jai BJP, Jai Chhattisgarh, Jai Shri Ram," reflecting their fervor and dedication.

During the gathering, Kiran Dev recognized the

relentless efforts of party workers, attributing the Bharatiya Janata Party's return to power to their unwavering commitment. He motivated party members to prepare diligently for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, em-

phasizing that their dedication and determination would lead to greater achievements. Kedar Kashyap said that our government will fulfill Modi's announcements as soon as possible and bring prosperity in the state.

The event witnessed the presence of prominent BJP leaders, including Bastar Deputy In-charge Niranjana Sinha, senior BJP leader Kamlesh Thokne, Pankaj Sinha, Suresh Agrawal, former President Jyoti Chandrakar, opposition leader Bhanu Chandrakar, and numerous dedicated party workers, adding to the fervor of the celebration.

Cleanliness campaign observed in various Chowks

In Pandaria Municipality

Pandaria, Dec 25: Pandaria witnessed a dedicated cleanliness campaign on Sunday, organized under the joint leadership of Mahamaya Seva Samiti and the Municipality of Pandaria. Guided by Swachhata Brand Ambassador Virendra Sharma, Advocate Naval Kishore Pandey, State Executive Member Chandrakumar Soni, and Pandaria Mandal President Gajpal Sahu, the event celebrated Atal Bihari Vajpayee's legacy. The initiative took place at Atal Chowk in Rauha under the Pandaria Municipality.

The campaign promoted cleanliness by focusing on



cleaning various squares and intersections, including Atal Chowk in Rauha. It also provided an opportunity to reflect on the ideals of the late Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Previously, the committee had motivated residents by conducting cleanliness drives at various public locations in the city

for 100 weeks. Now, the committee has recommenced its cleanliness program, aiming to continue fostering a clean and hygienic environment.

Prominent participants in this event included General Secretary Padmraj Tandon, Chintu Anil Thakur, Pawan Kumbhkar, Manmohan

Sahu, Harish Jain, Bhaskar Dewangan, Manish Soni, Jai Chandravanshi, Deva Chatterjee, Buddhesh Roy, President and MP of Mahamaya Seva Samiti Sanjay Soni, along with enthusiastic community members from the surrounding areas, contributing to the event's success.

Terra Pati: A time-honored irrigation technique

Central Chronicle News

Rajim, Dec 25: Sukalu Sonkar, a 70-year-old resident of Chaubandha village, continues to use the age-old "Terra Pati" method to irrigate his garden, ensuring the growth of thriving crops. Every morning, he diligently tends to his small plot, nurturing it with water collected through this traditional technique.

Sonkar reflects on the enduring practice: "We've been using 'terra pati' since ancient times. I plant crops and personally water them. This keeps me healthy and active. Idleness brings troubles, so I stay engaged, exercising my body, aiding digestion, and maintaining my mobility."

He further shares his family's deep-rooted tradition: "I've been involved in

vegetable farming since my childhood, working alongside my father and grandfather. Today, my children continue this legacy, providing fresh, wholesome vegetables to ensure the community's well-being."

In a nearby garden managed by his son, modernity meets tradition, with the installation of a motor pump for irrigation. This combination of methods showcases the evolving landscape of farming practices.

Decades ago, farmers across the region often employed the "Terra Pati" method, even on larger land holdings. This technique required a two-person effort: one to draw water from a well and another to guide its flow. A spade or shovel was used to create pathways for efficient irrigation.



As technology advanced, electricity reached more villages, and farmers shifted to monoblock and diesel pumps during the 90s. Submersible pumps gained prominence after 2000, simplifying the ex-

traction of water from greater depths.

While government initiatives aim to benefit farmers, challenges persist, as Sonkar points out: "The Congress government worked on Narva Garva Ghurwa Bari for

Chhattisgarh's farmers, but Bari's farmers did not receive their due, even missing out on submersible pump machines.

Farmers, it seems, continue to operate under their own circumstances, relying on their self-reliance and resilience. Their livelihoods are often determined by the quality of their crops and the market prices they can secure. When both factors align positively, farmers find satisfaction and prosperity.

However, the precarious nature of agriculture means that even a successful crop can lead to financial hardship if market prices do not support their efforts. The challenges faced by farmers underscore the need for effective and equitable support systems to ensure their well-being.

Eurokids Rajim hosts exciting sports day for kids

Central Chronicle News

Rajim, Dec 25: Eurokids School in Rajim conducted an exhilarating sports day for the children, bringing joy and fitness to the forefront. The event featured a variety of engaging activities, including thrilling races and sessions of Yoga and Zumba centered around "Jaagrt Indriyon".

The school's director, Manmeet Kaur, emphasized that such events are designed to nurture children's physical development, boost self-confidence, and foster essential teamwork skills. Children were lauded for their efforts and enthusiasm, receiving well-deserved certificates and medals.

What made this sports



day even more special was the active involvement of parents who joined in the fun-filled activities organized by the school. It was a day filled with laughter,

fitness, and family bonding. Notable attendees included Manmeet Kaur, Prabhu, Jyoti Singh, and the proud parents of the participating children.

CDEOEA delegation meets CM Sai

Key proposals for enhanced benefits and inclusivity

Central Chronicle News

Pithora, Dec 25: The Chhattisgarh Disabled Officers Employees Association (CDEOEA) recently had a productive meeting with Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai. During this meeting, the association submitted a comprehensive 6-point demand memorandum, aimed at enhancing the rights and opportunities for disabled officers and employees in the state.

Under this proposal, the disabled vehicle allowance would be increased in line with the seventh pay scale, mirroring the Central gov-



ernment's policies, and swift implementation is on the horizon. Furthermore, the association seeks the establishment of a dedicated Disability Board to address the challenges faced by disabled officers and employees.

The union also advocates for the elimination of con-

straints related to education and disability within the Education Department for Assistant teachers, teachers, and lecturers. Additionally, they call for the introduction of an open transfer policy tailored to the needs of disabled teachers. Furthermore, their demand includes the imple-

mentation of a 3% reservation rule for disabled individuals in promotions, aligning with the reservation roster of the Chhattisgarh government.

The union proposes the construction of handicapped buildings with facilities in every district for the benefit of all disabled individuals. Lastly, the association emphasizes the strict adherence to the Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 within Chhattisgarh.

The meeting, attended by notable figures such as State President Kukram Kurre, State Coordinator Manoj Mahilange, State Treasurer Ishwar Lal Soni, and several others, marks a significant step towards advancing the rights and well-being of disabled officers and employees in Chhattisgarh.

Dongargaon thrashes Mainpur 6-0

In State-Level Football Tournament



Central Chronicle News

Dongargaon, Dec 25: The state-level football competition, hosted in the neighboring village of Maneri, witnessed a series of thrilling matches on Sunday, with all the winning teams securing one-sided victories.

In the opening match, Maneri triumphed over Rengakathera with a close 1-0 victory, setting the stage for an action-packed day. However, it was the second match that stole the spotlight as New Star Dongargaon outplayed Mainpur with a commanding 6-0 margin, showcasing

their prowess on the field. The excitement continued with the third match, featuring Ambagarh Chowki and Maneri, where Maneri secured a 2-0 win. In the fourth match, Rajnandgaon faced off against Rabis Club Dongargaon, resulting in a 4-0 victory for

Rajnandgaon. As the competition heats up, spectators can look forward to three more exciting matches on Monday, featuring teams from Maneri versus Salhe, Police Line Rajnandgaon against Bhilai, and Khursitkul versus Rajnandgaon.

Arang Rugby players excel at state championship



Central Chronicle News

Arang, Dec 25: The Arang Rugby Football Club showcased its talent at the Under 14 Open State Level Rugby Football Championship held in Raipur. Fifteen players from the club represented Raipur district, and their remarkable performance brought honor to the Arang community.

In the boys' category, players such as Somesh Kunwat, Pawan Sahu, Toran Puri Goswami, Tushan Verma,

Shriyansh Gupta, Gopal Dhurandhar, Khemraj Vishwakarma, and Gopi Pal displayed their rugby skills. In the girls' category, Anjali Vishwakarma, Dolly Miridha, Ankita Kunwat, Savita Kenwat, Preeti Nishad, Jagrati Nishad, and Jaya Kanwat delivered outstanding performances. Notably, the girls' team performed exceptionally well and secured the championship trophy. Their victory was met with applause and recognition from the local

community. Public representatives from the area, including Krishna Kumar Bhardwaj, Ashok Chandrakar, Sandeep Jain, Vikram Parmar, Vedprakash Dewangan, and Ritesh Sahu, extended their congratulations to the talented players. The Arang Youth and Sports Organization, represented by Patron Yogendra Chandrakar, President Aman Sahu, Vice President Lokesh Sahu, and Secretary Manish Sonkar, also celebrated the achievement.

Paddy Procurement woes: Farmers demand limit increase

Concerns mount as procurement deadline nears

Central Chronicle News

Mungeli, Dec 25: Paddy procurement in Mungeli is facing significant challenges due to restrictions imposed on procurement centers. Farmers are increasingly anxious as the set limits remain unchanged, casting doubt on achieving the procurement target with only 25 days left.

Despite the change in government, farmers' issues persist, and the purchase limits in societies are causing growing concerns. The procurement center authorities and farmers alike are distressed by the failure to meet the stipulated deadlines. Both societies and farmers are increasingly

vocal in their calls to raise these limits.

Those involved in paddy procurement centers emphasize that with only 25 days left, increasing the limit is imperative to complete procurement by January 31. Otherwise, an extension of the procurement deadline may be the only option. The existing situation in societies indicates that taken quotas are fully utilized by January.

Due to the continuous reduction in the committee's procurement limit from the start of the procurement process, there is a growing concern that the entire paddy will not be purchased by January 31. To address this issue, it is crucial to either raise the limit or extend the procurement period.

Paddy procurement commenced on November 1 across 105 procurement centers in the district, with a



deadline of January 31 to purchase farmers' paddy. Societies are responsible for allocating 60 percent of online and 40 percent of offline tokens. However, the current limits assigned to societies have hindered the timely completion of paddy procurement.

Furthermore, the reduced limits have resulted in paddy purchases concluding as early as 2 to 3 pm, whereas an increase in limits could facilitate procurement until 5 pm. This

predicament is pervasive across most societies.

Farmers have prepared their paddy for sale, and as a result, they are flocking to obtain tokens. They endure long queues to secure their tokens, often spending an entire day at the society office. This surge in demand underscores the challenge farmers face in selling their paddy due to the existing limit constraints.

The delayed paddy procurement is attributed to farmers' reservations dur-

ing the assembly elections, where they held back their produce in anticipation of paddy purchases and bonuses promised by the BJP and Congress manifestos. Additionally, adverse weather conditions hindered paddy transportation to the procurement centers. As a result, paddy procurement in the district remains far from its target, causing growing concerns among farmers as the 25-day deadline approaches.

At the government level, correspondence is underway to raise the procurement center limits, and some purchasing centers have already seen an increase in their prescribed limits. As soon as instructions are received, the limits will be expanded accordingly.

- Santosh Singh, District Nodal Officer, Mungeli

