

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! India certain to...

preventing accidents. "India is on the move, and is moving fast. In a way, this is the beginning of the golden period for India's mobility sector," he said. "Today India's economy is expanding rapidly. India is sure to become the third largest economy in the world in the third term of our government," the Prime Minister said.

The country is going to general polls in April-May this year. The Prime Minister recalled a mobility-related conference from his first term (2014-19) and talked about his focus on battery and electric vehicles. Modi expressed satisfaction that he could see significant progress during his second term and said that in the third term mobility will see new heights.

Stressing that the "speed and scale" of his government has changed the very definition of mobility in India, Modi said the numbers of growing economy and the growing income are bound to infuse new confidence in the mobility sector.

Modi said that the number of cars sold in India rose from 12 crores to more than 21 crores from the 10 years before 2014 to after 2014, while the number of electric vehicles sold in India rose from two thousand per year 10 years ago to 12 lakh per year today.

The Prime Minister said that India is making new policies keeping in mind the needs of the future.

Referring to the Union Budget that was presented on Thursday, he said that in 2014 India's capital expenditure was less than 2 lakh crore which now has risen to more than 11 lakh crore.

This has brought many opportunities for India's mobility sector as well, he added. The Prime Minister further said that the National Electric Mobility Mission is pushing the manufacturing of electric vehicles.

Modi exhorted the industry to explore research avenues that utilize India's abundant raw materials for battery manufacturing and delve into areas such as green hydrogen and ethanol.

"Why not conduct research to manufacture batteries using raw materials available in India? The auto sector should also explore research in green hydrogen and ethanol," Modi said.

He also highlighted the work being done in the infrastructure sector.

"We are challenging seas and mountains, and building engineering marvels in record time. From Atal Tunnel to Atal Setu, India's infrastructural development is creating new records. In the last 10 years, 75 new airports have been built. Around 4 lakh rural roads have been constructed," he said.

"Fast-Tag technology is facilitating savings in fuel and time in the industry," he affirmed. Citing a recent study, the Prime Minister noted that Fast-Tag technology is contributing to an annual benefit of Rs 40,000 crore to the economy.

He also said that due to the efforts of the government in the last 10 years, about 25 crore people have come out of poverty and a new middle class is emerging and means of transportation such as cycles, two-wheelers or four-wheelers, become their first requirement.

"Mobility sector is witnessing an unprecedented atmosphere in the country and you must capitalize on it."

He said that about 4 lakh km of rural roads have been laid, 90,000 km of national highways have been constructed, 3500 km of high-speed corridors have been developed, and 15 new cities got Metro rails.

"The speed and scale of our government has changed the very definition of mobility in India," he said adding India is now on the threshold of becoming a global economic powerhouse.

He added that there are immense possibilities in the mobility sector in the next 25 years and urged the industry to transform itself rapidly to fully utilize these possibilities.

He also urged industry leaders to collaborate with ITIs to make the courses more relevant according to the needs of the industry.

Talking about the scrapping policy which gives exemption in road tax on new vehicles in exchange for scrapping of old vehicles, Modi said the auto industry can also consider offering certain incentives.

Commenting on the tyre sector, the prime minister asked the sector players to reduce import dependence for rubber with the cooperation of farmers.

The Expo features the participation of over 28 vehicle manufacturers, in addition to the presence of more than 600 auto component manufacturers.

Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said that all the players from the mobility sector are participating in the show and expressed hope that it would become an annual expo.

India may become the largest EV market by 2030, Goyal said.

Mortar, pistol seized...

terrorists for years together. The preliminary investigation suggested that it was an old hideout used by terrorists who were active in the area some two decades ago, they said, adding police have registered a case and started investigations.

SEC reviews revised...

(HQ) Vevaik Puri, Joint Director RDD Avleen Kour; Assistant Commissioner Relief (Migrant) Riyaz Ahmad, besides senior officers from concerned departments were present in the meeting where as Deputy Commissioners joined the meeting via video conference.

At the outset, the SEC reviewed the district wise status of progress in updating the Panchayat Electoral Roll-2024 and discussed about the issue/difficulties in updating the same.

The SEC extended the period for filing claims, objections, additions, deletions, corrections, and transpositions to 12th February 2024 and asked to organise additional special camps at the polling booth locations on 10th and 11th of this month.

He said that Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) will address claims and objections by 23rd February 2024, and the final publication of the Panchayats Electoral Roll 2024 shall be scheduled for 3rd of March 2024.

SEC emphasized upon the concerned officials to gear up their men and machinery to expedite the process of updating the Electoral Roll and achieve the target well in time.

He added that Panchayat Election Booth Officials (PEBOs), including Village Level Workers (VLWs), Multi-Purpose Workers (MPWs), and Gram Rozgar Sevaks (GRS), along with Assembly Booth Level Officers shall be available to guide electors with requisite forms and Panchayat Rolls.

Ram temple consecration...

occasion. Our aspirations fructified with commitment to righteousness through established procedure of law," he said.

Dhankhar asked the students to take pride in the achievements of the country and said the youth shares a responsibility in "neutralising" the "anti-national" narratives against India.

"I become sad when I see informed minds tarnishing our image outside the country raising questions on our democratic values. Some outside elements have become hot beds of anti-national narratives backed by teachers and students of Indian origin. The youth has to neutralise these anti-national narratives," he said.

Dhankhar also spoke about the abrogation of article 370, which, he claimed, was rejected by the entire country.

The event was also attended by Minister of State for Education, Subhas Sarkar as the guest of honour.

The convocation ceremony was presided by JNU Chancellor Kanwal Sibal and Vice Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit.

More than 800 students from the 2023-24 batch were awarded doctorate degrees during the ceremony.

Govt to sell...

Rs 27.50 per kg and Bharat Dal (chana) at Rs 60 per kg.

"We are now issuing orders that all the entities that are stocking rice would need to disclose their stocks on the portal of the food department. So the retailers, the big chain retailers, the wholesalers and the processors would all be required to disclose their stocks on the portals. They would need to disclose stocks in categories such as broken rice, non-basmati rice, parboiled rice and basmati rice," he said.

Chopra said this step will check hoarding of rice.

The secretary said the prices are going up despite the comfortable stock position of rice in the government's buffer stock as well as in the domestic market.

He said this step would ensure that "entities that are holding stocks for reasons best known to them are able to get this kind of a signal and release the stocks into the market which should cool down the prices."

Chopra highlighted that the government has taken various steps in terms of export regulations, including prohibition on shipments of non-basmati white rice and broken rice, 20 per cent export duty on parboiled rice and minimum export price of USD 950 per tonne for basmati rice.

Under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS), he said the government has been vigorously pushing but with not much success.

"In spite of all that we find that the prices are still showing an upward trend," he said.

Asked whether the government will impose a stock limit on rice or ban shipments of par-boiled rice, he said, "all options are open" to bring down the prices.

Chopra also sought to dispel market rumours that the government would lift restrictions on rice exports.

"There is some kind of impression in the trade that the export regulations will be taken off very soon. So I would also like to take this opportunity to convey through you to the general public and also to the traders in particular that the government has no proposal to revisit the restrictions which are prevailing at this time and they are here to stay for some time until the prices are controlled," he said.

The secretary said he is giving a signal to those people who are holding stocks for export purposes, that "this is not going to get done anytime soon."

The ministry further said the stock position of rice/paddy must be declared by traders/wholesalers, retailers, big chain retailers and processors/millers in all States and Union Territories, until further orders.

This step has been taken to manage the overall food inflation and to prevent unscrupulous speculation.

The respective legal entities will have to declare stock position of Paddy and Rice in categories such as broken rice, non-basmati white rice, parboiled rice, basmati rice and Paddy.

Earlier, the ministry highlighted that the export of broken rice was prohibited from September 2022. In respect of non-basmati rice, which constitutes about 25 per cent of total rice exports, an export duty of 20 per cent has been imposed from September 8, 2022.

Subsequently, the export Policy of non-basmati white rice was prohibited with effect from July 20, 2023.

In basmati rice, the contracts for basmati exports with the value of USD 950 per tonne only and above are being registered for issue of Registration cum Allocation Certificate (RCAC). A 20 per cent export duty on parboiled rice has been imposed which will be applicable till March 31, 2024.

"All these measures have curbed the pace of the increasing trend of rice prices in the domestic market," the statement said.

MoU signed to...

centre will serve three sports -- athletics, archery and boxing. Despite the chilly weather, a motley turnout at the NDS Stadium witnessed traditional folk dances during the opening ceremony and were treated to some foot-tapping music by the popular local band, Dashugs.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent a special message for the Khelo India Winter Games 2024. An exhibition ice-hockey match between UT-Ladakh and Indo-Tibetan Border Police set the ball rolling. A thrilling 500m short-track ice skating by a team of girls from across India was an additional treat.

The first medals of the Khelo India Winter Games were also decided on Day 1. Eklavya Jagal of Uttar Pradesh won the gold in the under-17 short track (300m) skating for boys. He clocked 31.81 seconds. In the boys 17-plus short track skating, Karnataka's Akash Aradhya (32.81) won the gold medal.

AICC Screening committee...

told the party leaders that the party has decided to democratically select party



AICC screening committee and JKPC leaders during meeting at Jammu.

candidates after taking feedback from the ground. Anyone can send them their views till the screening committee sends recommendations to the CEC (Central Election Committee) of the party in next few days.

He also told that their job is a technical one in the sense the committee shall assess the situation of the party and prospects of candidates but the seat sharing shall be discussed with likeminded parties of INDI Alliance by the high powered group of the party, assigned the task.

AICC Incharge Solanki said that the party has already geared up for the elections and there is need to further intensify the activities to expose BJP's failures on various fronts.

The leaders sought the views of each participants in the meeting about various issues faced by the people and strategy to contest the elections.

Two cops suspended...

at Gandhi Nagar police station while being on a four-day police remand. "District Police Jammu suspended two officials and attached SHO Gandhi Nagar Inspector Pankaj Sharma to DPL (District Police Lines), showing its commitment to a thorough and transparent investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death," police said in a statement.

As per standard protocol, the police said the body of the deceased was shifted to Government Medical College, Jammu and a request has been made for the constitution of the board of doctors to conduct an autopsy in the presence of a first-class executive magistrate to determine the cause of death.

The statement said police understand the public's concern and emphasises its commitment to upholding the highest standards of accountability and transparency in law enforcement operations.

CS takes stock...

tolerance towards any of the unlawful activity deemed detrimental for the health of the lake.

Dulloo called for preserving the environment of the lake besides taking other scientific measures for its conservation. He asked for making concerted efforts to remove the weeds and lily pads from the water surface. He stressed on restricting the untreated waste water into from going into the lake and optimal use of the STPs developed for preserving the lake from pollution.

Regarding the beautification of the lake the Chief Secretary asked for completing all the ongoing projects like installation of aerators and fountain clusters at different spots in the lake. He even asked for making a breakthrough in installation of the musical and high jet fountain in the lake as per the proposal.

The Chief Secretary also took note of the implementation of Rs 273 Cr Dal Lake conservation plan which includes components like dredging, catchment area management, development of sewerage network, Eco-parks, Viewing decks/jetties/ghats besides completion of other conservation works.

He even advised for exploring the possibility of the construction of 'Ferris Wheel' in PPP mode inside the lake area. He asked for seeking the consultancy services regarding the best possible mechanism of getting it installed here. He also asked for looking into the establishment of STP at Gupta Ganga as requested by the conservation authority.

In his presentation the Vice Chairperson LCMA, Bashir Ahmad threw light on different measures taken by them to conserve this water body. He also provided details of the projects completed so far and the physical progress of those under execution.

It was given out that the lake area has not decreased as per the earliest possible available records (1985 settlement by Sir Walter Lawrence). It was revealed that the area is almost same as per the ETS survey carried out in 2009 and satellite imagery. Moreover the authority had carried out delineation of Lake boundary for the first time, besides carrying out drone survey done through SOI in the years 2020 and 2023.

Regarding taking of other steps it was said that the Bathymetric Survey for scientific de-weeding/dredging has been done, plantation of 160000 plants for treatment of catchment area has also been completed.

In the last two years one third of the lake has been rejuvenated, 6.5 Sqkm has been cleared off lily and the open expanse of the Dal Lake has been increased for the first time to more than 20.3 sq kms.

As far as the waste & sewage management is concerned it was added that a load of 48 MLD load has been calculated out of which 36 MLD is catered by 5 STPs to which all the houseboats have been connected.

About the dredging of the lake it was given out that 20 navigation channels of length of 10 km stands retrieved. About 150,000 cum of silt has been dredged out from the settling basin during in last two years, the meeting was informed.

It was apprised that the programmable aerators cum fountains at seven clusters with more than 760 nozzle/fountains are going to be made functional soon. It was also revealed that the authority is in a process of installation of high super jet fountain of 85 mts tall inside Dal Lake.

The Bio-methanation of the weed had also been taken up in collaboration with National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED).

For beautification of the lake, it was said that creation of green spaces, children

parks, eating joints, food-courts, toilet blocks and parking is being developed.

For the purpose of monitoring of lake quality parameters, Online Continuous Effluent Monitoring System is being deployed at STPs. Installation of 48 CCTV cameras have been installed to keep check on illegal transportation of construction material in the prohibited areas of the lake, the meeting was apprised.

Champai Soren takes...

the Begumpet airport in Hyderabad in two flights, Congress sources said. AICC Telangana in-charge Deepa Das Munshi and state Transport Minister Ponnambalabhar received the MLAs.

It was not immediately known where the ruling coalition MLAs would be accommodated.

After taking the oath, Champai Soren said, "We will take forward welfare schemes launched by Hemant Soren. I am committed to the development of Jharkhand".

He also said, "We will continue the fight for 'Jal, Jungle, Jameen' (water, forest, land) for all-round development of tribals and others."

Meanwhile, former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren was remanded in Enforcement Directorate custody for five days by a special PMLA court here in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged land fraud, lawyers said.

The ED had sought 10 days remand for Soren on Thursday. The court then reserved its order and sent the JMM executive president to judicial custody for a day.

Soren was arrested on the night of January 31 after a seven-hour grilling by the ED in the money laundering case. He resigned as the chief minister before that.

Advocate General Rajeev Ranjan Singh, who appeared for Soren, prayed that his client be allowed to stay in jail at night as there are security concerns. However, there was no clarity on whether his plea was entertained.

Hemant Soren had also moved the Supreme Court, challenging his arrest. The top court on Friday refused to interfere with his arrest by the ED in a money laundering case and asked him to approach the high court.

The alliance, between the JMM, Congress and RJD, has 47 MLAs in the 81-member Jharkhand assembly and is supported from outside by the lone CPIML (L) legislator.

The 67-year-old tribal leader was sworn in as the 12th chief minister of the state. He became the sixth CM from Jharkhand's Kolhan region which comprises East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum and Seraikela-Kharsawan districts.

Champai Soren's swearing-in took place after a day of high political drama with alliance legislators expressing concerns over the delay in his appointment by the governor.

On Thursday, Champai Soren also urged the governor to accept his claim to form the government at the earliest as there was "confusion" in the state which was without a chief minister since the resignation of Hemant Soren, deepening a political crisis.

Amid the concerns, the majority alliance took steps to shift its MLAs out of Jharkhand in chartered flights on Thursday.

However, the planes could not take off due to poor visibility and the MLAs had to return to Circuit House here after a two-hour wait at the airport.

Temperatures dip in...

Faizan Arif posted on his X handle.

He said the temperature in Qazigund was the lowest in the past 16 years. "Qazigund today's temperature = -9.4 C. Previous Record = -12.2 C on 13 Feb 2008. Summary = Lowest temperature in the last 16 years," he said in a related post.

Although 'Chilla-i-Kalan' - the 40-day harshest winter period - ended earlier this week, the cold wave has continued in Kashmir: The Valley is currently going through a 20-day-long 'Chilla-i-Khurd' (small cold) which shall be followed by a 10-day 'Chilla-i-Bachha' (baby cold).

India logs 187...

cases had dropped to double-digits till December 5, but cases had begun to increase after the emergence of a new variant and cold weather conditions.

After December 5, a maximum of a single-day rise of 841 new cases were reported on December 31, 2023 which is 0.2 per cent of the peak cases reported in May 2021, official sources said.

Of the total active cases, a large majority of these (around 92 per cent) are recovering under home isolation.

"The currently available data suggests that the JN.1 sub-variant is neither leading to an exponential rise in the new cases nor a surge in the hospitalisation and mortality," the official source stated.

India has witnessed three waves of covid-19 in the past with the peak incidence of daily new cases and deaths being reported during the delta wave during April-June 2021.

At its peak, 414,188 new cases and 3915 deaths were reported on May 7, 2021.

Since the pandemic began in early 2020, there have been more than 4.5 crore people getting infected and over 5.3 lakh deaths in about four years since then across the country.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease stands at over 4.4 crore with a national recovery rate of 98.81 per cent, according to the ministry's website.

According to the website, 220.67 crore doses of Covid vaccines have so far been administered in the country.

Nominations open for...

journalism, social impact journalism and photojournalism. The last date for submission of nominations is February 26.

"The ACJ Awards will be presented on May 3, 2024, World Press Freedom Day in Chennai. Each award shall carry a citation, trophy and prize money. The total prize money for this year stands at Rs 4,00,000 across the three categories," an official statement said.

The ACJ Award for Investigative Journalism carries Rs 2 lakhs as a cash prize. The winner of K P Narayana Kumar Memorial Award for Social Impact Journalism will get Rs 1 lakh. The winner in the newest category, the Ashish Yechury Memorial Award for

Photojournalism, will also receive Rs 1 lakh.

97 BDOs transferred

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Government on Friday transferred 97 Block Development officers/Incharge Block Development Officers/Look-after Block Development Officers/APOs/equivalent with immediate effect.

In a significant move aimed at enhancing administrative efficiency, the Government of Jammu & Kashmir, Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, has issued Government Order No. 54 -JK (RD&PR) of 2024, dated February 1, 2024.

The reshuffle affects Block Development Officers, Incharge Block Development Officers, Look-after Block Development Officers, Assistant Project Officers (APOs), and their equivalents.

For detail of transfer order visit our website www.statetimes.in.

Interim Budget navigating towards Viksit Bharat: Raj Rattan

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Raj Rattan Raina, BJP leader, Jammu & Kashmir, extended commendations to the Union Finance Minister for presenting a forward-looking interim Budget for the financial year 2024-25. He emphasized that this interim budget distinctly outlines the futuristic approach of the BJP in realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. In a statement issued here today, the senior BJP leader said that Modi government's commitment to eradicating corruption, instilling transparency across all levels, leveraging modern technology to address societal challenges, and providing equitable opportunities for the youth, women, farmers, and marginalized sections of society remains steadfast, as affirmed by the Finance Minister. The budget encompasses major initiatives, including offering low-interest loans to new start-ups, establishing a dedicated body for research and innovations, and intensified efforts to uplift farmers, he added. Raj Rattan Raina congratulated the Finance Minister for refraining from imposing new tax burdens on the people and retaining all concessions and incentives outlined in the previous budget. He highlighted the continuation of the construction of new houses for the underprivileged, as indicated in the budget. Raina said that the budget introduces three significant economic railway corridor programs including energy, mineral, and cement corridors, port connectivity corridors and high traffic density corridors. He expressed special appreciation for the inclusion of Vande Bharat coaches in most trains nationwide, making railway journeys affordable and comfortable, even in remote villages-a distinctive feature of the proposed railway corridor.

The senior BJP leader expressed hope and optimism that this interim budget will bring relief and satisfaction to all sections of society. He believed that the budget's strategic focus on holistic development and key sectors will contribute to the realization of Viksit Bharat, fostering progress and prosperity across the nation.