

Odisha: A leading State in Disaster Management in India

Bhubaneswar (KCN) : On account of its geo-climatic conditions, our State is vulnerable to multiple disasters. The State encounters one or more major calamities like flood, cyclone or drought every year. Not a single year has passed in which the State has not any major disaster. Our Government came to power just after the Super Cyclone of 1999. For want of adequate preparedness, people in affected area of the Super Cyclone in the year 1999 badly suffered for a pretty long time. Keeping that in view, our priority was to set up a disaster management system that will alleviate the people from distress on account of natural disasters. The Government have accordingly taken well thought-out measures to make Odisha a disaster resilient State. It is now a leading State in disaster management in the entire country.

The Government of Odisha has taken a number of Disaster Risk Reduction and capacity building initiatives to reduce the vulnerability of the people to different disasters. As a result of improved preparedness, the State has been able to successfully manage the major calamities like Floods of 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008 & 2011, Drought of 2010, 2011 & 2015 and Very Severe Cyclonic Storms Phailin of 2013 and Hudhud of 2014. In sharp contrast with the situation in 1999, number of human death due to Very Severe Cyclonic Storm 'Phailin' could be restricted to 21 whereas close to 10,000 people had lost their lives due to Super Cyclone of 1999. This has brought glory to the state both from within the country and globally. For this rare achievement, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Odisha Shri Naveen Patnaik was felicitated by the Special Representative

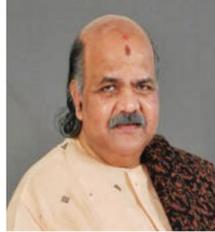
of the Secretary General of United Nations, Ms Margaret Wastom at



Bhubaneswar. Similarly, Special Trophy was handed out to the then Minister, Revenue & Disaster Management and the Special Relief Commissioner in the India Today Conclave at New Delhi. The World Bank has also highly praised the action of the Government of Odisha. However, we have not been complacent with such praises and prizes but rather are making concerted efforts to strengthen our disaster mitigation activities. 'Mission Zero Casualty' has remained the policy of the state government for all disasters. National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project: The State Government is implementing the World Bank assisted National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project covering 6 coastal districts and areas adjoining Chilika Lake in Khordha district. The estimated cost of the project is Ra.702.20 crore. Under this project, all the 154 Multipurpose Cyclone Shelter taken up for construction have been completed. Besides, work of 138 roads (207.6 km) out of 143 all-weather roads (218.5km) to connect the Cyclone Shelters, and 53.715 km out of 58.225 kmsaline embankment taken up under this project have already been completed. Similarly, post Phailin, 162 more cyclone shelters and 100 all weather connecting roads have been taken up under NCRMP (Additional Financing) at a financial outlay of Rs.478.27 crore. In the

He also urged for both conservation and protection of the Ecosystem associated

mean time, work of 89 cyclone shelters and 90 roads (138.66 km) is complete. The project is



likely to be completed very soon. Early Warning Dissemination System (EWDS): The Government is implementing the Early Warning Dissemination System (EWDS) for Last Mile Connectivity as one of the Components (Component-A) of the National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project (NCRMP) under World Bank assistance. In 22 blocks under 6 coastal districts (Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagat-singhpur, Kendrapara, Puri & Ganjam) of Odisha. The project aims at establishing a fool-proof communication system to address the existing gap of disseminating disaster warning up to the community level especially for cyclone and tsunami. EWDS comprises of technologies like Satellite Based Mobile Data Voice Terminals (SBMDVT), Digital Mobile Radio (DMR), Mass Messaging System, Alert Siren System at 122 locations and Universal Communication Interface (UCI) for interoperability among different communication technologies. People in the coastal areas will be alerted through these 122 alert siren towers and thereby will be able to save their lives and property. The project is expected to be completed by 31st July 2017. This project is first of kind in the entire country. Odisha Disaster Recovery Project: For augmenting disaster resilient houses, Odisha Disaster Recovery Project has been taken up by the Govt. with

with the largest lagoon of Asia. Mr. Pradhan met Country Head of UNESCO Shigeru Aoyagi, here today in this regard. UNESCO in association with ONGC is planning to support development of Chilika Lake as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

World Bank assistance for the people living in vulnerable condition within 5km from the



coastline Phailin affected districts of Ganjam and Khordha districts. Under this project, construction of 16572 houses and required public infrastructure has been taken up for construction. Out of this, construction of 14563 houses have already been completed and occupied by the beneficiaries. Provision of toilet, 24-hour water supply and electricity connection is made to each house. The estimated cost of the project is Rs.115.00 crore. Heat Wave Mitigation Plan: The State Government has been taking all required measures to encounter the heat wave situation in the State. Whereas 2042 people had lost their lives due to heat wave in the 1998, the death toll due to heat wave has been substantially brought down through enhanced preparedness and awareness raising measures. The Heat Wave Management Action Plan prepared by the Government of Odisha has been highly praised at the National level. Management of Drought-2015: The Government has successfully managed the severe drought situation the State encountered during the year 2015. Henceforth, scientific parameters like rainfall, satellite pictures of crop conditions, Soil Moisture Index, etc shall be taken into consideration for assessment and declaration of drought. The Government is taking steps to install Automatic Rain Gauge/ Automatic Weather Station at each Gram

ONGC in partnership with UNESCO has developed long term and short term plans for conservation of Chilika Lake.

Protection of the animals and birds; improving livelihood of fishing community; tourist guides and local population; direct income genera-

tion and welfare activities at Mangalajodi, etc, said Mr. Pradhan. He said that Special Focus should be given to improvement of livelihood of people associated with the lake.

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cyclone/ flood season. Learning from the experience in past disasters, the State Government has taken steps to construct a number of cyclone proof shelters along the coast where people can stay during any cyclone to save their lives. The State Government had instituted a study through IIT, Kharagpur to find out the number of cyclone shelter required in the coastal areas and accordingly, IIT after detailed survey had suggested construction of 512 Multi-purpose Cyclone Shelters in areas within 10km from the coast to save the lives of the people during cyclone. However, the Government has so far taken up 568 Multi-purpose Cyclone Shelters out of which 489 shelters have been completed and handed over to the Cyclone Shelter Management and Maintenance Committees constituted at each shelter level. Similarly, the Government has also taken up construction of 311 Multi-purpose flood shelters out of which 247 shelter buildings have been constructed as on date and shelter level Committees. Various volunteer groups have been formed at each shelter level to undertake specific disaster response tasks such as search & rescue, evacuation, shelter management, first aid, etc. Training has been provided to 50 such volunteers at each shelter level. Now these cyclone shelters are hubs of disaster management activities. Community mobilisation has taken place in the State in a big way under Disaster Risk Mitigation programme. Community is now more informed about disaster risks and the technique to get respite from it. The state implemented community based disaster preparedness programme covering almost all the vulnerable districts with assistance of the Government of

India and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Under this programme village specific Disaster Management Plans were prepared, Community Volunteer Groups were selected to carry out different disaster response activities and required training was provided to such volunteers. The state has also initiated school safety programme. Mock Drills on Response Activities for different Disasters like, Flood, Cyclone, Tsunami, etc. are regularly organized in the State. Mock drill on management Cyclone & Flood is conducted on 19th June every year. Response drill is also conducted before onset of approaching cyclone. Tsunami Mock drills conducted in 328 coastal villages within 1.5 km of coast in 6 coastal districts under IOWAVE on 23rd October 2016. In the technology front, multilayer communication systems have been set up for disaster management. 60 satellite phones have been procured and provided to all District Collectors, ODRAF units and key disaster managers. Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is functioning at the State HQRS. on 24X7. Similar EOCs function in various departments and districts during disaster seasons. As per the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the State Government has constituted the State Disaster Management Authority, the State Executive Committee and the District Disaster Management Authority in each district. Disaster Management Plans have been prepared at the State and District levels as per the provisions of the Act and approved by the State Disaster Management Authority. The related Departments of the Government have also prepared their Disaster

tion and welfare activities at Mangalajodi, etc, said Mr. Pradhan.

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Management Plans. All these plans are reviewed every year and suitably revised. Massive awareness generation programmes have been taken up throughout the state. 29th October is being observed as the State Disaster Preparedness Day. Short video films have been prepared for awareness development of common people on Heat Wave, Cyclone Shelter Management, Healthcare and Sanitation, Food and Nutrition Community Based Disaster Preparedness, OD-RAF, Management of Floods and Embankment construction. NGO Coordination cells have been promoted at block, district and state level. There is regular interaction with the Inter Agency Group comprising of 22 INGOS, NGOs and UN Agencies for disaster management related activities. The Government has declared 8 disasters i.e. Lightning, Heat Wave, Whirlwind, Tornado, Heavy Rain, Boat Accidents, Drowning and Snakebite as State Specific Disasters. People affected by these disasters now get all benefits under SDRF Norms like other disasters approved by the Government of India. The Government is maintaining complete transparency in the relief administration. The list 19 lakh and odd beneficiaries who received agriculture input subsidy have been uploaded in the official website of the State Government. Similarly, the Collectors have been given instruction to upload the details of all beneficiaries, who receive any relief assistance, in the website of the respective District Administration.

the various projects.

Union Minister assured that he will seek support of the State Government, Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Union Ministry of Culture in the context of nomination and selection of Chilika Lake as UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Pradhan
On
Chilika
Care

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ADHM and Shivaay still in the competition

Santhu... is out-and-out Yash's show

Film : Santhu Straight Forward
Cast: Yash, Radhika Pandit, Devaraj, Shyaam, Anant
Director: Mahesh Rao

Santhu Straight son's open nature. Enter Ananya (Radhika Pandit) an architecture student and it is love at first sight for Santhu. But his dreams suffer a crushing blow when

languages and of well known films such as Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge and 3 Idiots. Having said that, the director succeeds in bringing out an enter-

screen. Shyaam as antagonist and Devaraj as Santhu's father keep the movie going. Girish who plays the hero's friend brings in a dose of



Foward is a perfect example of a commercial film. It follows a safe storyline -- boy meets girl story, and with a little help from friends and a loving family, the two end up together. All a steady march towards a happy ending.

Though it is a tried and tested template, this still makes for a one-time watch because Yash keeps the show going. The title character Santhu is a carefree youngster, who believes in being straight forward and his parents are proud of their

he gets to know Ananya is engaged to Deva (Shyaam) a builder and her maternal uncle. The rest of the story is whether Santhu plans to propose to Ananya and how he wins her over.

Director Mahesh Rao, who has also written the story, did scream from the roof top that his film Santhu Straight Forward is an original script and not a remake. Sadly, the plot not only carries the thread from Tamil film, Vaalu, but also sees other elements that are borrowed — scenes from other

tainer that has the right amount of love, family sentiments, songs and action sequences that pop up dutifully at regular intervals.

This role is a cake walk for Yash, who carries the film on his shoulders. He knows what best works for him at present and has followed it in style. Joining Yash is Radhika Pandit, who not only makes for a pretty picture, but adds to the film with her presence. Of course, one should look out for the good chemistry the duo share on-

comedy. Supporting them are Anant Nag, Sumithra and Seetha among the ensemble cast.

Santhu... has rich production qualities thanks to cinematographer I Andrew.

V Harikrishna has mastered the art of blending music with the film's storyline.

The film has a thin plot but it keeps you entertained.

It's out-and-out Yash's show that cannot be missed by his fans.

Truly proud of 'Ventilator': Priyanka Chopra

MUMBAI(KCN): Actress Priyanka Chopra says she is proud of her maiden Marathi production "Ventilator". "Ventilator", my first Marathi venture, is a film I'm truly proud of, and I can't wait for you guys to see it! November 4," Priyanka, who has also done a cameo in the film, tweeted on Wednesday.



She shared the trailer of the film, which stars as many

as 116 actors, including filmmaker Ashutosh Gowariker.

"Ventilator" is written and helmed by "Ferrari ki Sawaari" fame director Rajesh Mapuskar.

The film revolves around an ailing senior member of a family who is being put on the ventilator just days before the Ganapati festival, leading to varied degrees of speculation and panic among the large clan he belongs to.

BT Exclusive! Nadira Zaheer Babbar

Bombay (KCN): Nadira Zaheer hasn't done till date in her life. In an exclu-



Babbar will soon be seen enacting both her mother and herself in a play to be featured at the Prithvi Theatre Festival.

The soon-to-be 70 actress wishes to do everything she

sive chat with Bombay Times, she opens up on finally being able to write a play on her mother and work with Makarand Deshpande at the same time.

Deepika stuns in latest trailer of 'xXx'



Deepika Padukone's fierce Serena avatar in her Hollywood debut 'xXx: The Return of Xander Cage' is a treat to our eyes.

Paramount Pictures recently released the latest trailer of the action-adventure film starring Vin Diesel in the lead. The 30-year old actress is seen in a bold look and her action sequences give us the chance to see a different side of the 'Piku' star in this new trailer of the film.

For the Indian audience, Paramount Pictures India also released the trailer in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

The movie also stars Donnie Yen, Samuel L. Jackson, Tony Jaa, Nina Dobrev, Ruby Rose, Rory McCann, Kris Wu and Ariadna Gutierrez. Directed by D.J. Caruso, 'xXx: The Return of Xander Cage' is slated to hit the big screens on January 20, 2017.

From Page 1

all imaginary. "His allegation is nothing but figment of his imagination. Perhaps being representing Bihar in Rajya Sabha, he has lost touch to the ground realities of Odisha. To build up his party, he should not indulge in innuendoes and cast aspersions on me or honorable CM Naveen Patnaik. He should concentrate more on the huge responsibility that has been given to him by honorable PM", Mr.Mahtab said.

"Mr.Pradhan's speech is only for his self-satisfaction. Why does he give such remark even after the BJD president and CM confirmed that our party would not make any understanding with Congress? Even

Mr.Mahatab himself has admitted that the statement he had made was purely personal", BJD Spokesperson Sameer Das said.

Mr. Mahtab two days ago had said that his party should reconsider its policy of maintain equal distance from Congress and the BJP.

"I do not see any logic behind maintaining the equal distance policy in case of Congress as the national party is not the same as it was earlier. The BJD should make an amendment to its policy, if required," Mr.Mahtab had said.

BJD Supremo Mr.Panaik while rejecting Mr.Mahatab's statement had said: "There is no question of any kind of alliance with Congress.."



"Ventilator" is written and helmed by "Ferrari ki Sawaari" fame director Rajesh Mapuskar.

India to emerge as economic superpower in 15-20 years: Rajnath

LUCKNOW(KCN): Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh today exuded confidence that India will emerge as economic super power in 15 to 20 years following the steps being undertaken by the Centre to strengthen the economy.

"I cannot speak about a couple of years but on the basis of my limited understanding I can confidently say that no one can stop India from becoming an economic super power in 15 to 20 years if the economy continues to move in the direction it is being taken by the central government", Singh said addressing the meeting of Indian Commerce Association here.

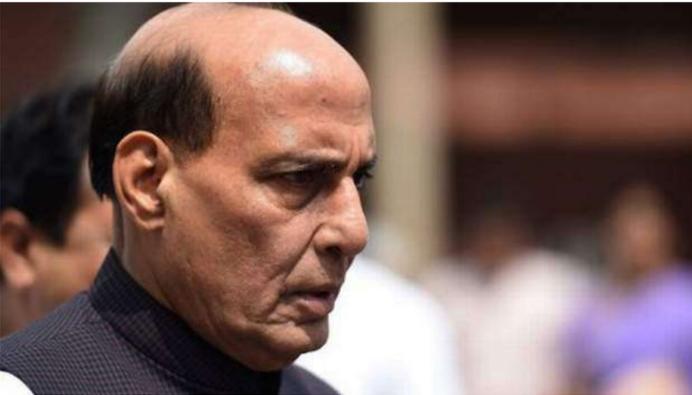
"We can proudly claim that India's economy is progressing the fastest in the world and its GDP growth rate has reached 7.9 per cent ..I have full confidence that it will be in double figures in a couple of years", he said.

Investors from world over are coming to India despite slow-down and the highest investment has taken place in India in 2015-2016, he said.

The country has emerged as a favourite investment destination,

he added.

Citing various achievements of the Narendra Modi government on the economic front, Singh said GST will come into force from April 2017 which will start a new taxation system.



The problems arising out of different taxation system in different states will come to an end and tax realisation will go up resulting in increase in government income and GDP growth will also go up by 1.5 to 2 per cent, he said.

Stressing that not a single minister in the Narendra Modi government is facing corruption charge, Rajnath Singh said that though he cannot claim that the entire administrative structure has been

cleaned up but one thing is clear that there is no corruption at the top.

"When the Gangotri has been cleaned, the Ganga coming out from there will automatically be clean ...efforts were on to ensure maximum transpar-

Referring to the

of doing business will be achieved in a few years because of the steps to change the process and system of doing business, Rajnath Singh said there is an effort to bring transparency in economy.

Referring to the

ency", he said.

Speaking about foreign trade, Singh said that it is facing slow-down which is being experienced by all the countries and India is no exception.

The Home Minister said that soon after coming to power it was decided that export has to be increased and India's share in world trade should be taken up to some 2.5 per cent from its present 1.6 per cent.

Claiming that ease

various schemes such as 'Make in India', Start ups and skill development' launched by the Modi government for the youth, he said that while coming to power, the Prime Minister had said that such schemes will help double the income of farmers by 2022.

Terming the contribution of construction sector as insufficient, Singh said that it has to be taken to 25 per cent from the present 14 per cent.

PM Theresa May says to be "unashamedly pro-business" as UK leaves EU

LONDON (KCN): The British government will be "unashamedly pro-business" as it seeks to forge the country's future role outside the European Union, but business must also act responsibly, Prime Minister Theresa May will say on Monday. In a speech at Mansion House in the City of London financial district, May will say Britain must be the strongest advocate for free trade, but also manage the forces of globalisation so that everyone benefits from them.

Discontent among those seen as "left behind" by globalisation was considered a key driver of Britain's June 23 vote

to leave the European Union.

"The government



I lead is unequivocally and unashamedly pro-business ... We will do everything we can to make the UK outside the EU the most attractive place for businesses to invest and grow," May will say, according to extracts of the speech released in advance by her office.

"But in return, it is right to ask business

to play its part in ensuring we build a country that works for

must also recognise that the reputation of business can be undermined by those who "appear to game the system and work to a different set of rules".

The government is due to put forward proposals later this year aimed at improving corporate behaviour, including tackling excessive executive pay. May has also previously talked about the responsibility of companies to pay their taxes.

The government will seek to use its new industrial strategy to help ensure that families and communities who may lose out from global trade can actually benefit from it, May will say.

May will say that while businesses play a key role in creating jobs, generating wealth and supporting the economy, Britain

everyone. And that British business, which is so often on the frontline of our engagement with the world ... is seen not just to do business but to do that business in the right way."

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Mr. Kumar has

Samsung to buy car tech firm Harman for \$8 billion, S.Korea's biggest overseas deal

SEOUL (KCN): Samsung Electronics

using its huge cash pile to pull ahead of

curity services, are used in more than 30

tomotive electronics, which has been a



announced a \$8 billion deal on Monday to buy Harman International Industries, marking a major push into auto-related technology and the biggest overseas acquisition ever by a South Korean firm.

The purchase of the Stamford, Connecticut-based maker of connected car and audio systems is part of Samsung's efforts to find new areas of growth as its mainstay smartphone business - scarred by the disastrous withdrawal of the fire-prone Galaxy Note 7 - slows. "Samsung is

rivals in the auto technology market. But it remains to be seen whether it will be able to grow into a company that will be able to compete with the likes of Bosch and Continental," said HDC Asset Management fund manager Park Jung-hoon. Samsung agreed to acquire Harman for \$112.00 per share in cash, a 28 percent premium to the U.S. firm's closing price on Friday.

Harman's products, which provide in f o t a i n m e n t , telematics, connected safety and se-

million vehicles made by automakers such as BMW, Toyota Motor Corp and Volkswagen, according to its website. Samsung said that Harman, which has around 30,000 employees, will operate as a standalone Samsung subsidiary and will continue to be led by its chief executive, Dinesh Paliwal.

"Upon closing, the transaction will immediately give Samsung a significant presence in the large and rapidly growing market for connected technologies, particularly au-

strategic priority for Samsung," it said in a statement.

Samsung created an automotive electronics business team a year ago to identify growth opportunities in the sector. This year it invested \$450 million in Chinese automaker and rechargeable batteries firm BYD Co Ltd.

Separately Samsung has held talks with Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) over a potential sale or partnership for its Magneti Marelli auto parts maker, sources have said. The current status of those talks is unclear.

India to emerge as economic superpower in 15-20 years: Rajnath

LUCKNOW(KCN): Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh today exuded confidence that India will emerge as economic super power in 15 to 20 years following the steps being undertaken by the Centre to strengthen the economy.

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Centre Offers GeM

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Union Government has urged the Odisha Government to start using the Indian e-Commerce space for purchase of all the day to day requirement of the Government Organization.

Like Flipkart, Snapdeal and others, Government of India has floated a new giant -Government e-Marketplace (GeM),

which has been developed by the Directorate General of Supplies & Disposals (DGS&D).

Binoy Kumar, Director General DGS&D has informed the State Government about such an e-Market facility, which has been launched recently and are being utilized by several Government Organizations.

Now the Government Organizations would be able to make routine purchases from cups, saucers to computers, printers and several other major requirements as presently 29 Product Categories with offers for about 1500 products from more than 700 Sellers are available on GeM.

Mr. Kumar has

informed hiring transport services have also been listed on GeM with 140 Plus vehicle offers from 46 Plus Service Providers.

Within a short span of time, procurement worth more than Rs.20 Crore has been made through GeM. And this has helped in substantial savings by the Government See page -2

India vs Bangladesh ICC Champions Trophy warm-up: India bowl out Bangladesh for 84, win by 240 runs

Express Web Desk (KCN): India remain

Yadav and Bhuvneshwar Kumar

and ship for India. Both scored half-century

Champions Trophy warm-up: As it hap-

Singh Bangladesh:



unbeaten in warm-ups before Champions Trophy.

In their final warm-up game before the Champions Trophy, India showed yet another strong all-round display to beat Bangladesh by a massive 240 runs. India bowled out Bangladesh for just 84 runs with Umesh

picking up three wickets each and Mohammed Shami, Hardik Pandya, Jasprit Bumrah and R Ashwin chipping in with a wicket each. Earlier, invited to bat first, India lost two early wickets in Rohit Sharma and Ajinkya Rahane but Shikhar Dhawan and Dinesh Karthik steadied the

and Karthik made 94 before being retired hurt. The late surge to India's innings was giving by Hardik Pandya, who hit unbeaten 80 off 54 balls as India crossed the 300-run mark. Virat Kohli, MS Dhoni and Yuvraj Singh did not bat for India.

India vs Bangladesh, ICC

opened India: R Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Shikhar Dhawan, MS Dhoni (WK), Ravindra Jadeja, Kedar Jadhav, Dinesh Karthik, Virat Kohli (C), Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mohammed Shami, Hardik Pandya, Ajinkya Rahane, Rohit Sharma, Umesh Yadav, Yuvraj

Imrul Kayes, Mahmudullah, Mashrafe Mortaza (C), Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Mosaddek Hossain, Mushfiqur Rahim (WK), Mustafizur Rahman, Rubel Hossain, Sabbir Rahman, Shafiul Islam, Shakib Al Hasan, Soumya Sarkar, Sunzamul Islam, Tamim Iqbal, Taskin Ahmed.

BCCI invites applications for position of head

BCCI has invited applications for the position of head coach for the Indian Cricket Team (Men).

Kumble concludes with the Champions Trophy.

Kumble will be a direct entry for the

guide the team and take Indian Cricket forward. Interested candidates should send their applica-



"Applications are invited for the position of Head Coach for Indian Cricket Team (Men). The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) would like to call upon interested candidates to apply for the position of 'Head Coach' for India and Cricket Team? (Men)."

The process has been initiated since the term of the current coach Anil

process. To ensure a fair and completely transparent process, a nominee of the Committee of Administrators (CoA) will oversee the entire process along with the Cricket Advisory Committee.

The BCCI's three-member Cricket Advisory Committee comprising Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and VVS Laxman will conduct interviews and seek presentations to select the best possible candidate to

tions by e-mail on or before the 31st of May 2017.

Kumble was appointed Indian team's coach in 2016 and his first assignment was India's tour of West Indies for a four-match Test series. India have had pretty good cricketing season under him. The Virat Kohli-led side won the Test series in West Indies while emerged victorious against New Zealand, England, Australia and in one-off Test against Bangladesh.

Air India-Indian Airlines merger, purchase of 111 aircraft collective decision of UPA government: Praful Patel

NEW DELHI (KCN): Former civil aviation minister Praful Patel today termed as "multi-tiered and collective" the decisions to merge Air India and Indian Airlines, and the order to purchase 111 aircraft by the state-run carriers, a day after the CBI decided to launch investigation into these.

The CBI had yesterday registered three FIRs to probe alleged irregularities in purchase and lease of aircraft by the two airlines, and surrender of profitable routes by them to favour domestic and foreign carriers. Besides, it had also registered a preliminary enquiry (PE) to probe the controversial merger.

Patel said the CBI had registered the PE to go into these issues in 2013 when the UPA was in power.

Asserting that "all decisions were multi-tiered and collective," he said "the

aircraft purchase order was cleared by an Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) headed by P Chidambaram and the merger was cleared by an EGoM headed by Pranab Mukherjee."

"Both the decisions were ratified by the Cabinet," the NCP leader said.

The investigative agency had yesterday registered three FIRs and a preliminary enquiry (PE) to go into the controversial decisions made by the erstwhile Manmohan Singh government with regard to the two state-run carriers, including surrender of profitable routes to favour private airlines.

The cases were registered against unidentified officials of Air India, Ministry of Civil Aviation and others under charges of criminal conspiracy, cheating and corruption.

Patel refused to elaborate any further, saying "I do not wish

to comment on the CBI action as it does not name any individual."

The CBI's action followed the Supreme Court's January 5 direction on a petition



filed by the Centre for Public Interest Litigation led by lawyer Prashant Bhushan.

The process for the merger was initiated by Patel on March 16, 2006 when he had sought a concept paper on the merger. A presentation was made before the Prime Minister on March 22 that year. An Empowered Group of Ministers (GoM) had later examined the proposal.

The merger pro-

posal had received the Manmohan Singh Cabinet's approval on March 1, 2007. Indian Airlines officially merged with Air India in April 2007.

The CAG had in

2011 questioned the rationale behind the government's decision to order 111 airplanes for AI and Indian Airlines--48 from Airbus and 68 from Boeing--for about Rs 70,000 crore in 2006.

The government auditor had called the merger of the two national carriers "ill-timed" and said, "the financial case for the merger was not adequately validated prior to the merger."

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