

Under watch of ITBP, no one can encroach into India: Amit Shah

BENGALURU(KCN): Union home minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah on Saturday ruled out an alliance with the Janata Dal Secu-

Speaking at the BJP's booth presidents and booth-level agents convention at the Palace Ground, Shah said the JDs and the Congress



lar (JDS) for the forthcoming Assembly elections in the state, and stated, "JDS is no match for the Bharatiya Janata Party in Karnataka." Speaking at BJP's 'Jana Sankalpa Yatra' in Bengaluru, Shah said the BJP would form government with a two-third majority. He accused the JDS and the Congress of practicing dynastic politics and being corrupt when in power.

"JDS and Congress are two sides of the same coin," Shah said. "There are clearly two sides and it is a straight fight this time. Journalists say there is a triangular fight. I said no, it is a straight fight, because voting for JD(S) means voting for Congress," Shah said.

Accusing the JD(S) of spreading rumours claiming that the BJP will tie up with them, he said: "I have come to tell you that we will not go with any party. We will fight alone and form the government."

Tirumala hundi nets Rs. 1,451.15 crore in 2022

TIRUPATI(KCN): Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which manages affairs at Lord Balaji's hill shrine, had a prosperous 2022 calendar year in terms of hundi collections, darshan numbers and earnings from tonsures and laddu sales.

According to TTD's statistics, the "hundi" at Lord

rangements for devotees who wish to have Vaikunta Dwara Darshan at the hill temple from January 2 to 11. TTD executive officer Anil Kumar Singhal on Saturday reviewed department-wise arrangements for this Darshan.

In particular, he asked medical staff to position doctors, para medics and ambulances near the main temple and other prominent locations. He wanted sanitation staff to prioritise cleanliness and install additional toilets at queue lines from Narayanagiri sheds, VQC compartments, Krishna Teja Rest House and Silathoranam.

Singhal instructed officials to ensure continuous supply of Anna Prasadam, coffee, tea, milk and other beverages to devotees in queue lines and compartments, besides coordinating with police on security and vigilance.

TTD has installed QR code facilities at all nine centres issuing tokens in Tirupati. Devotees will be able to easily go from one area to another by scanning the QR codes on their mobiles after reaching Tirupati. The QR code facility had been successfully tested during last Brahmotsavam at Tirumala. It will now be fully deployed during Vaikunta Ekadasi.



Venkateswara's temple received ₹1,451.15 crore between January 1 and December 30, 2022; against ₹833.41 crore during the same period the previous year. The increase is a whopping 74 per cent.

During the same period, the hill temple saw footfalls from 2,36,88,734 devotees against 1.04 crore in 2021. Total 11.42 crore laddus had been sold throughout 2022 and there were over three crore servings of Anna prasadam (free food for pilgrims). The temple administration has made elaborate ar-

Taliban: Kabul checkpoint bomb blast kills, wounds several

KABUL(KCN): A bomb exploded near a checkpoint at Kabul's military airport on Sunday morning killing and wounding "several" people, a Taliban official said, the first deadly blast of 2023 in Afghanistan. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but the regional affiliate of the Islamic State group - known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province - has increased its attacks since the Taliban takeover in 2021.

Targets have included Taliban patrols and members of Afghanistan's Shiite minority. The military airport is around 200 metres (219

yards) from the civilian airport and close to the Interior Ministry, itself the site of a suicide bombing last October that killed at least four people.

Although Taliban security forces prevented photography and filming directly at the blast site, the checkpoint appeared damaged but intact.

It is on Airport Road, which leads to high-security neighbourhoods housing government ministries, foreign embassies and the presidential palace.

A spokesman for the Kabul police chief, Khalid Zadrani, was not immediately available for comment.



Jharkhand's Palamu forest: Cameras, drones and a 'Shikari' hunt leopard that killed 4 kids

RANCHI(KCN): The Jharkhand forest department has deployed over 50 trap cameras, one drone and a large number of officials to trace a 'man-eater' leopard, which killed four children since December 10 in Palamu division, an official said on Sunday.

The department has now roped in celebrated Hyderabad-based hunter Nawab Shafath Ali

"We are spending sleepless nights in fear of the leopard. Women and children are scared. It appears to be a curfew-like situation in the evening," said Ravindra Prasad, a farmer from Ramkanda block.

The Garhwa forest division had submitted a proposal to state Chief Wildlife Warden on Thursday to declare the big cat a man-eater



Khan to bag the big cat by tranquillising him. It is suspected that all four children including three in Garhwa and one in Latehar district were killed by the same leopard.

The victims were in the age group of six and 12 years.

The leopard has struck terror in more than 50 villages in three blocks -- Ramkanda, Ranka and Bhandariya -- of the district where people have been asked by the forest department not to venture out after sunset.

Odisha govt appoints Kalyani Nayak as new Social Welfare Board chairperson

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): The state govern-

Social Welfare Board and eight persons appointed as members.

The state government reconstituted the spe-



ment has revamped the Social Welfare Board and appointed requisite members to the Western Odisha Development Council and Special Development Councils of tribal districts which were lying vacant for a long time.

As per the government notification, Kalyani Nayak of Dharmagarh in Kalahandi district has been appointed as chairperson of the State

As per the government notification, **Kalyani Nayak** of Dharmagarh in Kalahandi district has been appointed as chairperson of **State Social Welfare Board** and eight persons appointed as members.

cial development councils in nine districts having a 50 per cent tribal population in September. Moreover, the government has appointed expert members to Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts.

Pavel Antov's death case: Russian was not missing at all, says Odisha Police

BHUBANESWAR (KCN): A 58-year-old Russian who was presumed to be missing - amid international spotlight on the unfortunate death of Vladimir Legislative Assembly member Pavel Antov in Rayagada district - was actually shuttling between Bhubaneswar and Puri all this while.

With some sections of the media reporting that his whereabouts were not known, Government Railway Police (GRP) picked up Andrew Glagolev on Saturday to put the record straight. Glagolev of Moscow was at Puri where he stayed as a paying guest for the last three months. Police said the 58-year-old

Russian has overstayed in India after his visa expired in 2016. He was mainly putting up in the ashrams of Vrindavan and visiting Puri.

asylum in India in September 2022 and it is valid for one year, said sources. Over a month back, when Glagolev was spotted in the railway station with a placard message "I am a Russian refugee, please help me, he almost went unnoticed by the media though GRP had approached and offered him to shift to a shelter home in the state capital which he refused."

On Saturday, he arrived from Puri in a bus and visited the railway station to seek financial help from the passengers and locals when he was picked up by GRP again. Police said, Glagolev understands and manages to speak in English for which the Government Railway Police officers were able to communicate and collect the details from him. On verification, GRP officers established that Andrew's passport is valid but his tourist visa had expired back in 2016. Sources said the Special Branch will intimate Glagolev to Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) in Hyderabad.



Politically hot 2023

Bhubaneswar(KCN): Nobody actually knows whether the general elections for the ensuing Lok Sabha and Odisha Legislative Assembly will be held in 2023 instead of its original schedule of 2024. However, the stage is already set and the captains of both the warring parties have already blown the poll bugles. There should be no doubt that 2023 will be a year of rancorous face-offs

spread communal riot in Kandhamal in 2008. The BJP's intention of invoking the Hindu sentiment is clearly visible.

This is not all, the parties have also come out with different strategies. While Naveen has announced that his BJD came to power for five consecutive times in a row due to the blessings of women, he was optimistic that the women will continue to bless his party. Apart from calling people from different walks of life to join the regional party, Naveen gave an open invitation to women to take leadership. Thus women, who constitute around 48 per cent of the state's 3.290 crore voters, are in focus of



ahead of the next elections.

While Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched a scathing attack on national parties, read Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), on the regional party's silver jubilee celebration in Puri, the saffron party chief Jagat Prakash Nadda started his election campaign from VHP leader late Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati's place at Tumudibandh in Kandhamal district. Nadda also made a similar attack on the BJD from Banapur, the place of reigning deity Maa Bhagabati.

Both the party captains preferred to launch election campaigns from religious places. While there is no requirement to explain the spiritual sentiments attached to Lord Jagannath's abode at Puri, Nadda chose the workplace of Laxmanananda, a hardcore Hindu leader whose killing led to a wide-

Naveen's party in the ensuing elections. The state government has already opened up its coffers by announcing several measures for the self help group members under Mission Shakti.

In the process of empowering women, Naveen had already nominated 30 per cent of women in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and he is likely to repeat it in the ensuing elections. In the initial days of BJD, the women were made the vote bank through WSHGs, then he fielded women in elections. Now, the Chief Minister is ready to give the leadership to women. It is, however, another matter, whether the state will get a woman Chief Minister after Nandini Satpathy. Naveen, as it appeared, would not hesitate to hand over the baton to a suitable woman in the coming days. The party insiders have started whispering on the matter

albeit no one dared to broach the matter.

On the other hand, rival BJP, which is bracing to give BJD a fight in the next elections, framed a strategy that focussed on farmers, who constitute 70 per cent of the voters. Beginning its pro-farmer protests from Padampur by-election, the BJP has launched 'Satyagraha', dharna, rallies, block office gheraos over farm issues and has attempted to champion the agrarian causes.

BJP is likely to announce its CM candidate and a new state President to spearhead the poll campaign. Dharmendra Pradhan is the face of Odisha BJP. BJP high command is likely to hand over the campaign baton to him, insiders feel. Pradhan has been in the Union Ministry for seven years and therefore given much importance in the Modi government. Now the party expects rich returns from his political elevation and maturity. The new President is likely to be picked up from coastal zones. With Dhamnagar win, Man Mohan Samal's name is being discussed as the new state saffron chief.

The focus areas of BJD and the BJP are now clear. While the women will be the trump card of the regional party, the saffron outfit will harp on the farmers. There should be no doubt that the next elections will be BJD vs BJP as the Congress in Odisha has been fading from the political arena. The oldest party which ruled over the state for decades is in a derelict state. The Congress candidates lost their security deposits in both the by-polls held in Padampur and Dhamnagar though it secured third place in Brajrajnagar by-poll. Keeping in view the present situation, the Congress may not give a fight to either the BJD or the BJP, but it may become a deciding factor in many assembly segments as it did in Padampur by-poll. The entire Congress votes appeared to have been shifted

to BJD leading to Barsha Singh Bariha's victory by over 40,000 votes. In elections, permutations and combinations matter. The Congress may play the role of a kingmaker in many constituencies though its own position seems to be dwindling.

Before preparing for the next elections, Naveen has already overhauled his Council of Ministers in June, 2022 and speculations are rife that he may also go for another reshuffle before the general elections. He is likely to replace the controversial and 'non-performing' ministers. In the previous reshuffle, Naveen retained nine of the 20 ministers. Of the remaining 12 in the reconstituted council of ministers, five were former ministers and seven were new faces. At first, five women joined the ministry while western Odisha gained prominence with seven ministers.

As BJD has already won in both the local elections - panchayat polls and urban polls, the party expects similar performance in the coming elections even as BJP has meanwhile taken a different view and accelerated its machinery. However, the ruling BJD has a unique problem and the party faces rebels in almost all constituencies. Naveen has to strike a balance between the fractions in the party and while pushing his women empowerment agenda. The BJP is in a better position in many cases. On the other hand, Congress may find it difficult to get suitable candidates for all the 147 constituencies.

As 2023 rings in, the political heat keeps on rising. Both the BJD and BJP are ready for the fight, even in the streets. Time will tell who wins the show and who wins polls. Padampur by-poll showed that BJP wins in terms of gathering of people in public meetings, but not polls. This year is going to be a politically hot year.

India's biggest job fraud busted by EOW, UP youth held in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): A 25-year-old from Uttar Pradesh who had allegedly cheated about 50,000 youths to the tune of Rs 15 crore in promise for jobs was arrested by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Crime Branch in what is billed as India's biggest employment fraud that used technology for the con job. Zafar Ahmed, a native of Aligarh and an engineer by profession, was held by the EOW from UP. He is accused of defrauding youngsters across states such as Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat.

Led by Ahmed, the scam was executed by a group of highly tech-savvy engineers from UP with help of website developers. The core group of fraudsters was assisted by about 50 call centre employees drawn mostly from Jamalpur and Aligarh

who were reportedly paid Rs 15,000 per month. According to EOW IG Jai Narayan Pankaj, the accused used more than 1,000 fake SIM cards and 530 mobile phones to cheat the job aspirants. To keep the police at bay, they contacted the aspirants only on WhatsApp voice calls.

The fraudsters used to save their mobile phone numbers using the names of fake schemes to instil confidence among the job aspirants if they tried to verify the contact details on Truecaller. By opening about 100 mule bank accounts, the group withdrew the cheated money only through Jan Seva Kendras by using quick response (QR) codes. There are many Jan Seva Kendras in UP and the accused withdrew the cash by paying a 10 per cent commission to the officials.

India's biggest job fraud busted by EOW

"The scamsters developed websites which resembled government portals. They uploaded advertisements of employment opportunities which looked similar to government jobs to lure the aspirants. They were mainly promising jobs in health and skill departments. The frauds used names of some fake schemes with Pradhan Mantri as their prefixes to deceive the job aspirants," said Pankaj. They also created fake websites such as 'Jeevan Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (www.jssy.in), Bharatiya Jana Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (www.bjsry.in), Gramin Samaj Manav Swasthya Seva (www.gsmsss.in) to win the confidence of the job aspirants. Advertisements were published in local newspapers of Odisha by using fake identi-

ties and payments were made through mule bank accounts to avoid getting caught. Each job aspirant was charged Rs 3,000 to Rs 50,000 towards registration, interview and training purposes.

The fraud amount could be much more than Rs 15 crore and the investigation is continuing to unearth more details, said Pankaj. "EOW registered a case in this connection in September and has been investigating it for the last three months. The racket was active since 2020 and the accused amassed huge property worth crores of rupees in Aligarh with the ill-gotten money," he said.

Meanwhile, Ahmed, who was arrested with the assistance of UP Police, was produced before a court in Aligarh and brought to Odisha on transit remand.

Arrangements in Srimandir Axe on 3 Co-op Officers

Puri(KCN): The Puri District Administration and Sri Jagannath Temple Administration have made elaborate arrangements for smooth darshan of devotees on New Year Day.

Sources said over 20 platoons of police forces will be deployed in and around the Sri Jagannath Temple while a hundred number of life-guards have been deployed at various designated bathing points along the beach to prevent drowning.

The administration held a series of meetings with hotel owners, taxi, auto rickshaw and travel and tour operators recently and asked them to serve visitors

better. Hotel owners are advised to install CCTV cameras in their facility.



A number of police outposts have been made operational in the beach areas to address the difficulties of visitors, the sources said. This apart all the street vendors operating at Grand Road or Badadanda will be cleared while the

multi row barricades have been extended over one km from the Lions gate of the Sri

Jagannath Temple. The devotees will go through the barricades from the municipal market square and enter into the temple from Lions gate and exit through North gate. Special corridor has been made for the differently abled, stu-

dents and elderly devotees for darshan of the deities. Shoe and mobile stands

have been put in place. Additional parking places have been set up. Similarly, police personnel have been asked to keep a close vigil at places designated for zero night celebration. Police will regulate pilgrim and vehicular traffic.

Bhubaneswar(KCN): The State Government on Saturday issued orders for compulsory retirement of three officials of the Department of Cooperation.

Following the approval of Governor Ganeshi Lal, the Department of Cooperation has issued three different orders to this effect. The transparent process to weed out few officials was initiated by the Department of Cooperation led by Principal Secretary Sanjeev Chadha and Minister Cooperation Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has given green signal for such action, said sources. The officials who have been given compulsory retirement are; Mukteswar Soreng, Sub Asst. AGCS, Office of the Directorate of Cooperative Audit, Asish Kumar Rout, Sub-Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies, and Kedar Gouri Patra, Inspector of Cooperative Societies, Office of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies. "In exercise of the powers conferred un-

der clause (a) of Rule 71 of the Odisha Service Code, the Governor of Odisha is



pleased to retire from Service under the Government, Mukteswar Soreng, Sub Asst. AGCS, Office of the Directorate of Cooperative Audit, Odisha, Bhubaneswar who has already attained the age of 50 years with effect from 31.12.2022 (A.N) allowing him 3 months' pay and allowances in lieu of 3 months' notice, as provided in the First Proviso to the said rule," read one order issued by the Cooperation Department. Similar orders were issued for Asish Kumar Rout, Sub Assistant Registrar and Kedar Gouri Patra, Inspector Cooperation.

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Mahesh Narayanan: Ariyippu is my most satisfying work yet

In today's digital era, where privacy has become a luxury for many, scandalous videos being leaked online is an everyday thing. It's a pertinent, universal subject that has been explored in several films worldwide. With his latest film, Ariyippu, writer-director Mahesh Narayanan also attempts the same by interweaving it with a few other relevant topics like imbalances in marital life, patriarchal conditioning, migration among skilled labourers, and the crumbling economy during the pandemic.

Unlike his previous films, Mahesh has eschewed all the so-called commercial elements in Ariyippu, and as intended, the film has had a successful run in several international festivals across the world. It all started with its world premiere at the 75th Locarno International Film Festival, followed by screenings at the British Film Institute, Busan International Film Festival, IFFI, and IFFK. Despite the successful run at the festival circuit, Mahesh feels that the 'real test' is on December 16, when the film comes out for public viewing on Netflix. "So far, the reception has been great, but unless and until it reaches the common audience, we can't be complacent. December 16 is the D-day."

Mahesh, an editor-turned-filmmaker is known for helming hard-hitting films like Take Off, CU Soon, Malik, and Malayankunju. There's an interesting pattern to all his films—he borrows inspirations from real-life incidents, craftily blends them with fictitious elements and then sets them in distinctive terrains. Mahesh admits that Ariyippu also germinated from a similar thought. "It was sometime in 2015 during the Take Off days when I accidentally came across this news article about a bank employee in Mumbai approaching the high court about a lookalike video circulating through porn websites. She wanted the judge to issue a declaration stating that she wasn't the same woman. The judge was sarcastic saying that it can't be used as a legal document anywhere. But the woman was determined, and she got it issued. This incident sparked an idea."

When asked about how the pandemic and migrant labour issues came into the picture, Mahesh explains in detail the chain of events that lead to the making of Ariyippu. "A certain incident should affect me, and then I'll let it marinate and travel with me for some time. That's how most of my films are born. This incident of a woman's fight for a declaration stayed with me for long. I initially thought of setting the story in a bank, but

changed it later because I'm someone who keeps rewriting my drafts every six months to ensure it stays relevant. During the pandemic, I visited a few factories in Kochi and interacted with the workers there. They were among the first to ring the bell saying that, 'look, there's something ominous coming our way'. They sensed it from the unusually huge quantity of orders and their long work shifts. From there, I also heard stories about how these skilled labourers migrate to other Asian countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. They don't take the usual route through Mumbai or Chennai. They move to places like Delhi, where most of the embassies are, live in the city's outskirts, work there for 6-8 months, attend recruitment programmes and then get the paperwork done. I found their journey interesting. What if such a couple

with the intention to move abroad are caught in this video scandal and get stuck in an alien environment? How would they cope with it? That was my trigger for Ariyippu." Kunchacko Boban and Divyaprabha play the couple, Hareesh and Reshmi, who face a crisis situation. For Kunchacko Boban, Ariyippu is special for more than one reason. It is the maiden production venture of his new banner, Kunchacko Boban Productions. Despite being a leading actor for over two decades, it is perhaps the first time he is part of a film that's gaining such global acclaim. The actor credits it as a result of Mahesh's conviction and some great teamwork. "I've known Mahesh for long, and he has been an integral part in shaping up my career in the second innings. Ariyippu's subject was suited for a gripping commercial film, and we all knew Mahesh was capable of pulling it off. But he wanted to do it in a grounded manner without any cinematic adulterations. We trusted his vision, and that's how Mahesh, Shebin (Becker) and I came together to produce the film. Our intention was to make a pan-Indian film with a rooted Malayali soul, which we could present globally. Thankfully, it all came together well with the efforts of some wonderful artists and technicians."

Over the last few years, Kunchacko Boban's career has seen a remarkable shift. The actor, who was known for his 'chocolate hero' image, had to consciously make some tricky career choices to get rid of that tag. In Ariyippu, he does scenes that one wouldn't have expected from him a few years back. The actor chuckles in delight when I mention it. "These are words that I've always longed for. This is my 25th year in cinema, and in pursuit of trying to reinvent myself, I've been doing a variety of genres and different character shades lately. It's a process that started during my Gulumal (2009) and Traffic (2011) days. Interestingly, Mahesh has been a constant in all my landmark films, mostly as an editor. Naturally, he knows me inside out, as a person and as a performer. In Ariyippu, he wanted to push my limits and make me do a

character which I've never done before." Like Kunchacko Boban, Divyaprabha has also had a long association with Mahesh Narayanan. Her breakout role came in his directorial debut Take Off (2017). Later, she did a noteworthy role as Fahadh Faasil's sister in Malik. Ariyippu marks her maiden film as a lead actor. "As an actor, I always believe in having a healthy rapport with the director. With Mahesh sir, since it's my third film, I'm well aware of what he expects from me."

However, the actor admits that it was not easy to get into the shoes of Reshmi. "She is completely different from me, in terms of the way she talks or walks. I could only connect to her emotions. So I had to prep a lot, which included visiting factories in Kochi and Faridabad and observing the body language and mannerisms of the working class people." Kunchacko Boban also has a similar acting process of observing and learning, but he believes that it's the well-compiled bound script and shooting in chronological order that helped him pull off Hareesh's character. "Hareesh was alien to me when Mahesh first narrated the subject. But when I finally got the bound script, I could understand everything about the character. There were even well-defined backstories for Hareesh and Reshmi, which is not there in the film. Similarly, shooting in chronological order in real locations did wonders to our performances." Mahesh quickly adds that this is the first film where he got the liberty to shoot in chronological order. "Given a chance, I would want all my films to be shot this way, but there's a problem with logistics. With Ariyippu, in which I'm also part of the production, I wanted to shoot it in order to help my actors perform with ease. In that sense, this is my most satisfying work yet."



Another year filled with both great and not-so-great films. It was tricky to pick just 10 but we managed to narrow it down. From the Tamil blockbuster 'Vikram' to Amitabh-Rashmika's tear-jerker 'Goodbye', here are some of our favourites.

Tax Treatment of Unexplained Expenditure-Part 3

10. Some more case laws with respect to section 69C: Some other important cases are given below-

In the case of **P. Rama Gopal Verma v. Deputy CIT [2013] 40 taxmann.com 106 (AP)**, the proviso to section 69C states - "Notwithstanding anything contained in any other provisions of this Act, such unexplained expenditure which is deemed to be the income of the assessee shall not be allowed as a deduction under any head of income. The proviso was inserted w.e.f. 1.4.199 and does not apply retrospectively.

In **Kedarnath Modi v. CIT [1993] 200 ITR 685 (Del.)**: High Court held that Tribunal was justified in sustaining the addition of Rs. 5,000 u/s 69C on account of estimated expenditure incurred by the assessee during holiday in Kashmir for a month with his family and servants after rejecting the explanation of the assessee.

In **CIT v. Bhanwarlal [1997] 225 ITR 870 (Raj.)**, it was held that the decision of Tribunal, deleting addition of Rs. 35000 made on account of low household expenses as also addition of Rs. 15000 made on account of understatement of marriage expenses to be based upon the appreciation of the evidence and, therefore, no question of law arose from the Tribunal's order.

In **CIT v. P.S. Chelladurai [1984] 145 ITR 139 (Mad.)** held that, the assessee, a social worker, was held liable to tax in respect of estimated amount expended on the maintenance of himself and his family.

In **P. Rama Gopal Verma v. Deputy CIT [2002] 76 TTJ 205 (Hyd.)**, it was held that the details collected from loose sheets could be taken as proper evidence in respect of amount representing expenses incurred by assessee outside accounts for renovation of his flat and would be liable as unexplained expenditure u/s 69C.

PWD rate is to be preferred over CPWD rate, as PWD rates are the local rates and CPWD rates are all India rates - **CIT v. Raya R. Govindarajan [2014] 49 taxmann.com 526 (Madras)**.

11. Whether Deduction of unexplained expenditure can be allowed from corresponding deemed income u/s 69C: Hyderabad Bench of the ITAT in the case of **P. Rama Gopal Verma v. DCIT [2002] 76 TTJ 205 (Hyd.)** held that deduction of unexplained expenditure from corresponding deemed income cannot be allowed, as section 69C is a deeming provision by which income is deemed against unexplained expenditure. Therefore, one cannot claim that as the unexplained expenditure u/s 69C is a business expenditure, it should be deducted out of income deemed against the very same expenditure. If this is allowed then the very purpose of section 69C would be futile and any provisions of law cannot be read off as of no use or for no purpose to serve.

12. Where assessee purchased goods from open market and arranged bill from another party and claimed CENVAT credit. Whether entire purchase can be added specifically when there is manufacturing which requires raw material: It is on record that assessee has manufactured goods and sold goods. It cannot be denied that required raw material has to be purchased for said goods. As such the entire purchases should not be disallowed as without purchases there cannot be manufacture. The assessee had agreed to consider CENVAT credit as its income - **Bhushan Power & Steel Limited v. DCIT 61 taxmann.com 284 (ChdTribunal)**.

13. Whether an addition be made merely on the basis of director's statement taken by Excise authorities: In the case of **ITO v. Arora Alloys Ltd. [2011] 12 ITR (Trib.) 263 (Chandigarh)**, the Assessing Officer had worked out unaccounted sales on the basis of unaccounted production calculated by the Central Excise authorities solely on the basis of the statement of the director of the assessee as recorded by them on March 25, 2004. The statement

Narayan Jain

was not recorded by the income-tax authorities but by the Central excise authorities. In these facts the Bench held that the proceedings under the Central Excise Act have relevance only for formation of opinion of escapement of income and thereafter the income-tax authorities had to independently finalise the reassessment irrespective of the final view in excise proceedings. The Assessing Officer reassessed the income and made the additions solely on the basis of statement by the director without bringing any material on record to justify or support the additions. Therefore the additions were liable to be cancelled.

14. Where, during proceedings before the Supreme Court, a VCD was found in which assessee was alleged to have paid money to a witness for becoming hostile, can Assessing Officer treat said amount as unexplained payment: The Supreme Court, found an evidence (i.e. VCD) against the assessee in which it was claimed that the assessee paid money to a witness (Ms. Zahira) for becoming hostile in said case. Consequently, the Supreme Court directed the Income Tax Authorities to take decision for appropriate action against the assessee under the Income-tax law. However, it was held in **Mahendrabhai B. Shrivastav v. Income-tax Officer, Ward - 5(1), Vadodara [2016] 68 taxmann.com 198 (Ahmedabad - Trib.)** that in the present case, there is nothing on record to suggest that the Revenue Authorities could unearth any evidence/tangible material against the assessee, either during the course of assessment proceedings or appellate proceedings, to show that the assessee has paid the money to Ms. Zahira. It is only the version of VCD which is the basis for making the addition in question, on which the enquiry officer gave his finding that there was no acceptable material to establish that the assessee had paid money to Ms. Zahira. In these facts and circumstances, the addition of amount claimed to be paid by the assessee to Ms. Zahira, as unexplained/ undisclosed payment is not justified and same is directed to be deleted.

15. In course of a search in a hospital, the

collection on account of doctors and details of payment made to them were found, can the payment be added u/s 69C: Cases falling u/s 69C are essentially of expenditure accounted as such by the assessee. In this case the entire amount was collected without bringing it into the regular accounts and the payments were also made by the assessee without accounting for them. This was not a case of failure of the assessee to explain the expenditure. In fact the assessee on being confronted with the accounts seized from it, conceded that the entire amounts were collected by it for payment to doctors serving the hospital. The assessee, prima facie, discharged its burden or at least shifted the burden to the Revenue when it gave particulars of payments made to the doctors. The Department should have issued notice to the doctors for confirmation of the payments and if they confirmed receipts, made assessments on doctors and if they denied the receipts, proceeded against the assessee and direct it to prove that payment was made and in the absence of proof of payment, to make assessment of the amount u/s 69C. Since this exercise had not been done, no addition u/s 69C can be made - **CIT v. Lakshmi Hospital [2012] 347 ITR 367 (Ker)**.

16. Where on-money received has been assessed as income, whether expenditure made out of it can be assessed u/s 69C: Where on money received has been assessed as income, expenses made out of it cannot be assessed u/s 69C as it will amount to double addition - **CIT v. Golani Brothers [2017] 85 taxmann.com 355 (Bombay)**.

17. Whether Notice issued u/s 69C can be dropped on ground that claim for expenses in question has been withdrawn: Notice issued u/s 69C cannot be dropped on ground that claim for expenses in question has been withdrawn - **CIT, Mumbai v. Amitabh Bachchan [2016] 69 taxmann.com 170 (SC)/[2016] 240 Taxman 221 (SC)/ [2016] 384 ITR 200 (SC)**.

(Narayan Jain is former Secy General of AIFTP and author of the books "How to Handle Income Tax Problems" and "Income Tax Pleading & Practice" with CA DilipLoyalka).

Minority appeasement and majority's mistrust

Disengaging from all ambiguities, Congress veteran A.K. Antony has come out with a realistic narrative that most of the members in his political enterprise must

have personally marked their disagreement for. Antony, in a party event candidly expressed his view on his party's minority appeasement.

According to him, the appeasement politics that the Congress has been infamous for has indubitably helped the Modi juggernaut to become a reality. This appeasement, he continued, had caused a huge rift to happen between the Congress and the majority, the Hindus in India. And this fissure, according to him, was the space the BJP with all its political intelligentsia intruded into and flavoured and filled and captured with its celebrated Hindu nationalism. The saffron brigade menacingly ensured the ouster of the Congress from India's electoral spectrum turning it into a ramshackle of hope. Today, Antony is the Buddha in Congress whose political wisdom though late cautioned the party for unjustifiably taking the minority alone in its caravan.

Does this cautioning bring any civilisational change in Congress? The party has often been blamed by its right-wing opposition for being a party with minority appeasement in its DNA. Not only the Congress but regional parties and parties with national reach also inexcusably jump into spreading the marzipan of appeasement for the collective vote bank of the minority communities. Inheriting most of the divide and rule policy of the British, the Congress, since the days of Nehru has been echoing this style of political propitiation. Nehru had the least acceptance for the Somnath rejuvenation which he counted as Hindu revivalism.

When 'Uniform Civil Code' was proposed by veterans

in his party, Nehru stressed upon the political compartmentalisation of religions in the country which later defined the Muslims a particularly protected class. Stretching the appeasement further, Indira Gandhi's regime brought the Muslim Personal Law Board into existence. Illegitimately supporting Muslim infiltration from the neighbouring Bangladesh to Assam and West Bengal was another step the Congress calibrated for electoral advantage. Both states since then were pushed into a dangerous demographic trend and the area has become a hotbed of Islamic radicalization.

Though Congress began the appeasement politics, other political parties such as Trinamool Congress, Telangana Rashtra Samithi, Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal and Aam Aadmi Party diligently followed the suit. Modi's entry into the national politics could mostly demystify the narratives of appeasement by the Congress and to a large extent he remodelled the political interventionism that remained a custom in India. That minority appeasement alone would bring electoral dividends and majority, a divided house could be easily silenced as it never became a vote bank. Indeed, secularism has never been an idea that India ideally incorporated in its core political practice. Parties post independence, maybe the BJP an exception, were seen competing to make inroads into minority vote banks and the political gimmicks have gone to the extent of the country's Prime Minister in the UPA regime batting for the Muslims to have the first right to exercise the claim on the country's resources.

A particular community to be rated as the *vote ki mandi ka maal* (vote banks) was a revered approach of the ruling elite in India. Modi's stormy initiatives exposing

M. R. LALU

the Congress' double standard during his election campaign in

2014 went deeper into the conscience of the Hindus and the rattling among the electorate was seen in the results of the general elections. Modi began to dismantle the conventionalism existed in Indian politics one by one. All his schemes were elucidatory on his balancing act among the communities. Not only did he balance but also valiantly struck hard on the hypocritical male dominance existing in the Muslim community by abolishing the Triple Talaq. This move could have serious implications if the government did not enjoy complete majority. Parties are now pressured to find alternatives to the Muslim appeasement to strike a balance between the Hindus and Muslims. Irrespective of the minority emotions simmering against its political agenda and the Muslim orthodoxy's unequivocal opposition to debate the Uniform Civil Code, the BJP in its states began initiative processes.

The success of BJP is seen as counterproductive to the implementation of minority appeasement by other parties and the entry of the Modi era seamlessly proved the power of the majority vote bank that the party excavated from the half buried Hindu consciousness. Antony, while speaking at the 137th foundational day of the Congress at Thiruvananthapuram had proclaimed that the minority alone would not bring the party to power. "Along with the minority we should bring the flock of majority with us in the fight against Modi", he said. Running from temple to temple Rahul Gandhi, affirming his brahminical identity was playing the same card that A.K. Antony avowed in the party conclave. Rahul Gandhi's high visibility halts at Hindu shrines were to sensitise the Hindu sentiments to its side playing parallels with the BJP's Hindutva card. Political pundits

would see this as an attempt of the Congress to change the recipe that it usually ran its political restaurants for decades, a new pattern to garnish its outdated cuisines to an unconvinced clan of people that intellectually stayed away from the Congress' double standard.

The party with its irritable insensitivity questioned the existence of Lord Ram in India where maximum of its populace adores and idealises him to be the supreme. Modi has practically cemented the burrows through which the Congress would thrust its soft Hindutva magic wand. Revamping Hindu heritage sites by strengthening their sanctity was one of the most noticeable things that Modi accomplished. His saffron clad appearance with sandal paste on his forehead and genuine devotion superimpose the clandestine intentions of the Congress and other parties. The Hindu Terror narrative concocted by the Congress months after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack was an outcome of its deep-rooted enmity for the majority. Congress leader Digvijay Singh along with filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt launched a book "26/11: RSS ki Sazish" The book was authored by Aziz Burney, Editor-in-Chief of Urdu Sahara newspaper. Antony's lamentations and the temple visits by Rahul Gandhi would further enable the BJP's saffron camps to sharpen their weapons to extract the Congress double standard. The Ram Temple inauguration before the 2024 general elections would be the best weapon the BJP can use to dig out the Congress hypocrisy. Modi has a garden of success to see his butterflies of political vision flutter and dance around. But for the Congress, the Hindu majority is again going to be a tough nut.

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'Hard to see people die before your eyes', say firefighters on Ukraine's frontline

BAKHMUT: In the war-torn Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, the chief of a small group of firefighters lines up his small team in front of the national flag, and wishes them a happy new year.

For the nine stationed permanently in the city centre fire station, it has been a year of war and fire. They are posted in the eastern region of Donetsk where Bakhmut has become the epicentre of fighting.

But their chief Oleksiy Migrin, jovial and good-natured, does not often complain.

"The year 2022 has been tough on a personal level, and tough for Ukraine," he tells the team.

"Take care of yourself, remember that your families are waiting for you. Next year we will win."

He rounds off his speech with a "Slava

According to the fire chief, thousands of civilians are still hanging on there -- possibly as many as 10,000 living in terrible conditions. "They don't have the means to leave," he said. "Their destroyed houses, their cellars, that's all they have left."

The nine firefighters in the barracks can describe their daily routine in a few words: "Demine, evacuate, put out fires, provide water, clear the rubble," he said.

Others come in to reinforce from across the region, but they are apprehensive about having too many people based in the same place. "It's too dangerous," explains Nikita Nedylko, the second-in-command at the fire station barracks.

Eleven firefighters have been killed in the Donetsk region since the beginning of the Russian invasion, he said.



In Bakhmut, one of his own men was killed when a wall collapsed during a clearing operation after a bombardment.

Now the team do two-day rotations and then take a day out in "safer" towns a few miles away from the frontline.

READ HERE |

Bosnian kids send

gifts to Ukraine for New Year; evoke war-time memories in their parents

Ukrainian firefighters stand with their Christmas gifts.

'The hardest thing'

Thirty-year-old Nedylko -- who is originally from Bakhmut and has a one-year-old son -- says one of the hardest things is coping with the emotional weight of their work in war-time.

"We've had a lot of pain, and suffering. We had no experience of that," he told AFP.

His family has retreated to Dnipro, about 260 kilometres (161 miles) west by car, where he goes every two months to see them.

He recalls a mother and her daughter they found embracing, dead under the rubble, and how they had to break the news to the father. He says they have had to listen to the cries of people calling for help.

For Nedylko, the "slightest wrong move on our part" could cost a life.

"The hardest thing is to see people die before your eyes," he says. "The saddest thing is to see the children who have remained here."

Ukrani!" ("Glory to Ukraine").

The firefighters are in one of the hotspots of fighting in eastern Ukraine, where Russian forces -- and the Russian paramilitaries of the Wagner Group -- have been trying to seize the city for the last six months.

Inside the station, the men drink coffee near humanitarian aid boxes delivered from Kyiv, which are filled with duvets, medical kits, and cake.

There have been heavy losses on both sides here, and enormous destruction in Bakhmut, which had a population of some 70,000 before the war started in February 2022.

What was once "a pretty town full of flowers of trees" now looks like a wasteland.

'Changed radically': How Ukrainian women are fighting for freedom of their nation

A Ukrainian firefighter serves coffee at his fire station in the city of Bakhmut, eastern Ukraine, on December 31, 2022. (Photo | AFP)

'All they have left' "There is no longer any civilisation outside," says Nadya Petrova, who has been living for months in the back of her cellar.

Dalai Lama flags resurgence of Buddhism in China after 'suppression and oppression'

BODH GAYA: The Dalai Lama on Sunday flagged the "growing interest in Buddhism" in China after years of "suppression and oppression" of the faith and its followers.

His Holiness was addressing devotees in

Prize winner said, "The Buddhist tradition of Tibet has gained lots of attention from people in the West. In the past, Buddhism was known to be an Asian religion. But today its philosophy and concepts, particularly

country but there was so much suppression and oppression of Buddhism and Buddhists in China", said the Tibetan leader, who had to flee his homeland in 1959, a decade after Mao Zedong's communist revolution.

"So, there could be much change happening in China and the world. I have always remained optimistic about the possibility of a better world", he added.

As Dalai Lama prays at Bodh Gaya, Chinese 'spy' quizzed, to be deported

"Tibet, which is also called the land of snows, has undergone many tragedies. But it has come as a blessing in disguise. People around the world have now become aware of the

Tibetan Buddhist tradition", said the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama, who has since sought asylum in India and settled at Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh, which has come to be known as "mini Tibet" because of a large number of Tibetan refugees staying there, has come to this international Buddhist pilgrim town in Bihar, which he calls the 'Vajrasthan' (the pure land) after a gap of two years. "It is a coincidence that this ceremony, where prayers are made for my long life, is taking place on the first day of the Gregorian calendar. So, this is in a way an indication that we may be looking at good times ahead", added the renowned leader.



Bodh Gaya, the site where the Buddha had attained Enlightenment two millennia ago, after a "long life offering" ceremony, a traditional prayer made for the longevity of the 87-year-old Buddhist leader.

The Nobel Peace

with regard to psychology have spread throughout the world. Many scientists are taking interest in this tradition". "So, this is not only for Tibet but even for China. It has a direct bearing on China as well because China has been a Buddhist

Though faulted, Benedict turned Vatican around on sex abuse

VATICAN CITY: Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI is rightly credited with having been one of the 20th century's most prolific Catholic theologians, a teacher-pope who preached the faith via volumes of books, sermons and speeches. But he rarely got credit for another important aspect of his legacy: having done more than anyone before him to turn the Vatican around on clergy sexual abuse.

As cardinal and pope, Benedict pushed through revolutionary changes to church law to make it easier to defrock predator priests, and he sacked hundreds of them. He was the first pontiff to meet with abuse survivors. And he reversed his revered predecessor on the most egregious case of the 20th-century Catholic Church, finally taking action against a serial paedophile who was adored by St. John Paul II's inner circle.

But much more needed to be done, and following his death Saturday, abuse survivors and their advocates made clear they did not feel his record was anything to praise, noting that he, like the rest of the Catholic hierarchy, protected the image of the institution over the needs of victims and in many ways embodied the clerical system that fueled the problem.

"In our view, Pope Benedict XVI is taking decades of the church's darkest secrets to his grave with him," said SNAP, the main U.S.-based group of clergy abuse survivors.

Matthias Katsch of Eckiger Tisch, a group representing German survivors, said Benedict will go down in history for abuse victims as "a person who was long responsible in the system they fell victim to," according to the DPA news agency.

In the years after Benedict's 2013 resignation, the scourge he believed encompassed only a few mostly English-speaking countries had spread to all parts of the globe. Benedict refused to accept personal or institutional responsibility for the problem, even after he himself was faulted by an independent report for his handling of four cases while he was Munich's bishop. He never sanctioned any bishop who covered up for abusers, and he never mandated abuse cases be reported to the police.

But Benedict did more than any of his predecessors combined, and especially more than John Paul, under whose watch the wrongdoing exploded publicly. And after initially dismissing the problem, Pope

Francis followed in Benedict's footsteps and approved even tougher protocols designed to hold the hierarchy accountable.

"He (Benedict) acted as no other pope has done when pressed or forced, but his papacy (was) reactive on this central issue," said Terrence McKiernan, founder of the online resource BishopAccountability, which tracks global cases of clergy abuse and cover-up.

As prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for a quarter-century, the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger saw first-hand the scope of sex abuse as early as the 1980s. Cases were arriving piecemeal to the Vatican from Ireland, Australia and the U.S., and Ratzinger tried as early as 1988 to persuade the Vatican legal department to let him remove abuser priests quickly.

Vatican law at the time required long and complicated canonical trials to punish priests, and then only as a last resort if more "pastoral" initiatives to cure them failed. That approach proved disastrous, enabling bishops to move their abusers around from parish to parish where they could rape and molest again.

The legal office turned Ratzinger down in 1988, citing the need to protect the priest's right to defence.

In 2001, Ratzinger persuaded John Paul to let him take hold of the problem head-on, ordering all abuse cases be sent to his office for review. He hired a relatively unknown canon lawyer, Charles Scicluna, to be his chief sex crimes prosecutor and together they began taking action.

"We used to discuss the cases on Fridays; he used to call it the Friday penance," recalled Scicluna, Ratzinger's prosecutor from 2002 to 2012 and now the archbishop of Malta.

Under Ratzinger's watch as cardinal and pope, the Vatican authorized fast-track administrative procedures to defrock egregious abusers. Changes to church law allowed the statute of limitations on sex abuse to be waived on a case-by-case basis; raised the age of consent to 18; and expanded the norms protecting minors to also cover "vulnerable adults." The changes had an immediate impact: Between 2004 and 2014 -- Benedict's eight-year papacy plus a year on either end -- the Vatican received about 3,400 cases, defrocked 848 priests and sanctioned another 2,572 to lesser penalties, according to the only Vatican statistics ever publicly released. Nearly half of the defrocks occurred during the final two years of Benedict's papacy.

"There was always a temptation to think of these accusations of this scourge as something that was contrived by the church's enemies," said Cardinal

George Pell of Australia, where the allegations hit early and hard and where Pell himself was accused of abuse and of dismissing victims.

"Pope Benedict realized very, very clearly that there is an element of that, but the problem was much, much deeper, and he moved effectively toward doing something about it," said Pell, who was eventually acquitted of an abuse conviction after serving 404 days in solitary confinement in a Melbourne lockup.

Among the first cases on Ratzinger's agenda after 2001 was gathering testimony from victims of the Rev. Marcial Maciel, the founder of the Mexico-based Legionaries of Christ religious order. Despite volumes of documentation in the Vatican dating from the 1950s showing Maciel had raped his young seminarians, the priest was courted by John Paul's Curia because of his ability to bring in vocations and donations.

"More than the hurt that I received from Maciel's abuse, later on, stronger was the hurt and the abuse of power from the Catholic Church: the secrecy, ignoring my complaints," said Juan Vaca, one of Maciel's original victims who along with other former seminarians filed a formal canonical case against Maciel in 1998.

Their case languished for years as powerful cardinals who sat on Ratzinger's board, including Cardinal Angelo Sodano, John Paul's powerful secretary of state, blocked any investigation. They claimed the allegations against Maciel were mere slander.

But Ratzinger finally prevailed and Vaca testified to Scicluna on April 2, 2005, the very day that John Paul died.

Ratzinger was elected pope two weeks later, and only then did the Vatican finally sanction Maciel to a lifetime of penance and prayer.

Benedict then took another step and ordered an in-depth investigation into the order that determined in 2010 that Maciel was a religious fraud who sexually abused his seminarians and created a cult-like order to hide his crimes.

Even Francis has credited Benedict's "courage" in going after Maciel, recalling that "he had all the documentation in hand" in the early 2000s to take action against Maciel but was blocked by others more powerful than he until he became pope. "He



was the courageous man who helped so many," Francis said.

That said, Benedict's protocol-bending courage only went so far.

When the archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn, publicly criticized

Sodano for having blocked the Vatican from investigating yet another high-profile serial abuser -- his predecessor as Vienna archbishop -- Benedict summoned Schoenborn to Rome for a dressing down in front of Sodano.

The Vatican issued a remarkable reprimand taking Schoenborn to task for having dared speak the truth.

And then an independent report commissioned by his former diocese of Munich faulted Benedict's actions in four cases while he was bishop in the 1970s; Benedict, by then long retired as pope, apologized for any "grievous faults" but denied any personal or specific wrongdoing.

In Germany on Saturday, the We are Church reform group said in a statement that, with his "implausible statements" about the Munich report, "he himself seriously damaged his reputation as a theologian and church leader and as an 'employee of the truth.'"

"He was not prepared to make a personal admission of guilt," it added. "With that, he caused major damage to the office of bishop and pope."

The U.S. survivors of the Road to Recovery group said Benedict as cardinal and pope was part of the problem. "He, his predecessors, and the current pope have refused to use the vast resources of the church to help victims heal, gain a degree of closure, and have their lives restored," the group said in a statement calling for transparency.

But Benedict's longtime spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, says Benedict's action on sex abuse was one of the many underappreciated aspects of his legacy that deserves credit, given that it paved the way for even more far-reaching reforms. Lombardi recalled the prayers Ratzinger composed in 2005 for the Good Friday Via Crucis procession at Rome's Colosseum as evidence that the future pope knew well -- earlier and better than anyone else in the Vatican -- just how bad the problem was.

"How much filth there is in the church, especially among those who, in the priesthood, are supposed to belong totally to him (Christ)," Ratzinger wrote in the meditations for the high-profile Holy Week procession.

Lombardi said he didn't understand at the time the experience that informed Ratzinger's words.

"He had seen the gravity of the situation with far more lucidity than others," Lombardi said.

Toll, light and sound fees at Dhauli stupa hiked in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR: Next month onwards, tourists visiting the

hiked. As per a decision taken by the state

larly, visitors in cars have to pay Rs 40 as a toll fee and those in

the fees for light and sound shows at the shanti stupa too has been hiked from Rs 25 per person to Rs 50. The fee hikes have been made in wake of maintaining the monument.

Recently, the state government implemented various development works at the Dhauli Shanti Stupa for its golden jubilee celebration. Apart from peripheral development works, the entire structure underwent grouting, waterproofing, micro-concreting and anti-carbonation painting, among other things.



Dhauili Shanti Stupa by public or private transport will have to pay a higher toll fee. The fee for light and sound show at the stupa, too, has been

government, autorickshaws going up to Dhauili will have to pay a toll fee of Rs 20 from January 5 onwards. It was Rs 15 earlier. Simi-

SUVs will pay `70. Twelve-seater vehicles have to pay a toll fee of Rs 120. In a notification on Saturday, the government informed that

Candle march held to pay tribute for "Rosalin"

Barbil(KCN).Her name is Rosalin. Like the fragrance of rose ,her work for helping others reached to the heart of many people. She has learnt to love freely. Hate had never

others. Over time, she has been associated with many social service organizations. She widened the scope of her services. But unfortunately she was seriously injured in a road accident and struggled to survive for a pretty days.Perhaps God wanted to take her . God took her near him. After the news spread, many social workers and organisations were shocked and paid tribute to her across the state. Members of various civil society groups of



touched her. No one ever thought why such a big hearted girl would leave us so soon. Rosalin Sahu of Keonjhar has been committed to social service since childhood. She has never hesitated to help whoever she saw on the street, be it human or animal. She was spending all her pocket money on helping

Keonjhar assembled at Gundicha Mandir ground holding candles and placards that said 'Rosalin, we won't forget your contribution and love to the society'. They too did a candle light procession on the 30th day to pay tribute to Rosalin.The procession started from Gundicha Mandir and then cover the town.

Ambapalli village in Odisha brings out an actor from each family

BARGARH: For the last 75 years since Dhanuyatra is being celebrated in Bargarh, Ambapalli village turns into Gopapura, and has sent hundreds of performers to the stage from each family who have been enacting various roles in Krishna Leela for decades now. Be it as small a role as Gopal Balak and Gopi or as important as Krishna and Balaram, there

come forward themselves. It is overwhelming to see how Dhanuyatra has evolved over the years."

Another resident of Ambapali, Panchanan Birtia has been participating in Krishna Leela for more than 30 years. While he participated for the first time in 1985 and played the role of Krishna for two consecutive years, he has



are times when more than one member of each family participates in the Krishna Leela. Bipin Bihari Birtia, now in his mid-70s, started participating in 'Krishna Leela' at the age of 10. He recalled, "Back in our days, women were hesitant to participate in stage plays. Those characters were also played by men. I have played different roles for over 16 years including that of Gopi, Yashoda and Rohini."

Interestingly, in 1980, Bipin's daughter, Minakhi became the first woman to play the character of Radha. Now in her 50s, Minakhi said, "Everyone voluntarily decides to play a part in Krishna Leela. It has become a tradition over the decades. Children grow up seeing their family members or those in their neighbourhood participating in it and they

donned several other roles subsequently. "Our spirits are at peak during Dhanuyatra. Call it devotion towards Krishna or a custom, we feel fortunate to participate in the enactments of Gopapura. Even if someone does not participate in the play, he/she expresses his/her solidarity by decorating the houses and drawing rangoli to welcome Krishna. The festival binds us together," said Panchanan. This year, Panchanan's daughter Baishnabi is playing the role of Radha. Similarly, Samrat Mahapatra, who is playing the role of Krishna this year, has already played the role of Gopal Balak in the past. While Bargarh town transforms into Mathura during the open-air festival, Ambapali village on the other side of Jeera river, considered Yamuna, becomes Gopalpur.

Change management of Satyabadi High School, Pradhan urges Odisha CM

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): UNION Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Saturday requested Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to hand over the management of Satyavadi Bana Bidyalaya (renamed as Satyabadi High School) at Sakhigopal in Puri district to Lok Sevak Mandal.

In a letter to the chief minister, Pradhan said the aim and objective with which the open-

tiative or common property resource. This would be possible if the school is handed over to Lok Sevak Mandal, a non-profit organisation, which has been successfully managing schools in Delhi and Kanpur," the letter said.

He said the new education policy will play a significant role in the transformation of India. The new policy has been framed keeping



air school was established in 1909 by a group of young nationalists under the leadership of Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das has deviated from its original goal.

He said the school acted as a nerve centre during the Independence struggle and the students and teachers not only participated in the freedom struggle in a most significant way but also actively contributed to the social evolution and services in the state.

The union minister said the school and some rare memorials of Pancha Sakha times are in ruins. "The need of the hour is to free the school from the clutches of the government administration and convert it as a social ini-

the characteristic spirits of Gopabandhu Das and Lala Lajpat Rai to awaken the consciousness of swaraj and self-reliance through education.

"We have to work towards fulfilling the values and objectives for which the Bana Bidyalaya was established. Hope, you will consider my proposal and take the lead in the transformation of the 113-year-old school to fulfil the dreams of these great men," Pradhan said.

After taking over as the union education minister, Pradhan and Union Railways Minister Ashwini aishnaw visited the school last year and paid homage to Gopabandhu Das.

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'The economy, stupid': So, what awaits India in 2023?

The New year brings a season of cheer, even if cakes and credit are costlier than last year. When 2022 began, we hoped to turn a corner, hot-footing Covid-19, low growth and high inflation. But it didn't quite pan out like that. Globally, 2022 acquired a unique place in economic history for ending the decades-old era of low inflation and low-interest rates. Central banks found themselves on the bitter end of an inflation enemy hunt as their credibility plunged without a parachute for misreading price rise as transitory. The year will also go down in history for the unprecedented rise in policy rates, which many fear could end up as a butcher's knife on growth.

We aren't sure if the inflation monster is tightly tied back in the barn. Moreover, the rate hike monetary bonfire isn't over yet, which means, in 2023 they'll likely take us one step closer to the projected global recession.

So, as we draw the curtains, we cannot help but paraphrase the iconic Wodehouse-Jeeves exchange: "There are moments, Jeeves, when one asks oneself, "Do these predictions matter?"

"The mood will pass, sir."

Growth
January 2022 brought with it the most-feared occurrence with the third Covid-19 wave



hitting the country. Thankfully, the economic scarring was relatively lower than in the previous two bouts. But before we could catch our breaths, Russia shocked the world by invading Ukraine in February. And its impact on inflation and growth was felt only months later. Headline inflation was already rising by then, thanks to global supply chain disruptions and even though consumption and investment demand rebound was incomplete, the Indian economy escaped with a whole skin. FY22 GDP grew by 8.7%, lower than initial estimates of 9.2%, but compared to the 6.6% contraction in FY21, it was a much-needed booster shot to the lungs.

But its effect was short-lived and FY23 began on a nervous note as the fallout of the ongoing Ukraine war began to be revealed. Advanced nations were barely recovering from the global supply glut and as inflation rose forcing rate hikes, major economies like the US and UK entered into a technical recession. India though showed signs of stability and was acknowledged by none other than the IMF as the 'bright spot.' Despite the global gloom and doom, Q1 and Q2 GDP grew by a moderate 13.5% and 6.3% over the previous year. All we need is 4.6% growth in Q3 and Q4 each to clock out FY23 with a 7%.

Now comes the cherry on the cake. Just as we were celebrating 75 years of Independence, news trickled in that India emerged as the world's fifth-largest economy. What made it even sweeter was that we broke into the top 5 club in style, dethroning our colonial masters -- the UK. We did achieve this feat earlier too, but couldn't sustain the spot as the India-UK output gap wasn't wide and the subsequent data revisions took us back to number 6. But now, there's a certain ring to it given that the UK is in recession, which its central bank believes will likely last till 2024. It means India will compete with the \$4 trillion Germany, not the UK. Cheers to that!

ALSO READ | USD 5 trillion economy: The curious case of India's rise to the top 5

Oil
2022 delivered a global oil price shocker. With the world's third-largest oil producer Russia invading Ukraine in late February, crude prices shot up to \$130 per barrel by early March and stayed above \$100 for several weeks. Though prices have moderated now and are under \$80, fears of volatility persist. Economists at the IMF projected prices to average \$92 in 2023 and \$80 in 2024, while analysts see oil demand and supply struggling to keep pace in 2023. What's clear though is that oil prices will stay above the five-year average of \$60 per barrel. As the world was battling rising crude prices, India managed to outwit the crowd by striking a cut-price deal with Russia, which began selling oil at discounted prices to counter western economic sanctions. Putting national interests above diplomatic gains, the government played the perfect *jitsugyoka

(*Japanese businessman as a public figure) and prevailed upon the intense pressure from the US to join forces. In just about six months, Russia emerged as our largest oil exporter, ending the decades-long dominance of OPEC producers. It also helped manage the annual import bill from blowing out of proportion and the Indian crude oil basket price is expected to average \$100 in FY23.

Inflation
As oil prices jumped, headline inflation peaked at an eight-year high of 7.9% in April, forcing the RBI to hike the repo rate by 50 bps following the emergency policy review in May. Along with the fiscal measures, inflation moderated to sub-7% now.

Unlike the US and the UK, where inflation touched 40-year highs, India's price rise was relatively modest, though well above the RBI's upper tolerance band. Governor Shaktikanta Das also became the first to send a written explanation for breaching the central bank's legal mandate on price stability for three quarters in a row.

Since adopting the Flexible Inflation Targeting regime in October 2016, RBI never missed the 4% target, with a 2% leeway on either side. It came close in 2020 following the Covid-19 pandemic when headline inflation stayed above 6% for 11 months. But the government came to Das' rescue,

discarding the April-June 2020 inflation data as unsuitable for computational purposes.

Thankfully, Das may not have to repeat writing the letter as he confirmed that the worst was behind us. Headline inflation is pegged at 6.7% for FY23 and expected to ease further to 5-6% in the first half of FY24. But the pesky

little fact is that prices will likely remain above 4% throughout the calendar year 2023, which is why RBI's 'battle is far from over,' forcing Das to keep an 'Arjuna's eye on inflation.'

Interest rates
2022 allowed a 225 bps increase in repo rate, which in turn made loans costly. So far, RBI has raised rates five times since May and markets expect another 25 bps hike in February, taking the repo rate to 6.5%. Like inflation, India's rate hikes too were relatively modest, unlike others that responded with 75 bps and 100 bps jackings. But 2022 will be notable for the historic rate hike blast and for compelling reluctant central bankers like the US Fed, the European Central Bank and the Bank of England to slam on the brakes and end their at least two-decades-old easy money regime.

The top 10 central banks together tightened rates by 2,700 bps in 12 months, according to Reuters. Emerging market central banks raised rates 93 times and by a total of 7,425 bps in 2022 alone.

The central bank's crusade against price rise was to tame inflation and inflation alone. But, now we are being told that such synchronised tightening is just about to land us in a global recession. This, we have from the highest authorities including the World Bank and the IMF.

Rupee
The Indian currency lived a somewhat footloose and fancy-free life in 2022. Unmindful of its commitment to the economy, the rupee touched new lows, tearing into the psychological 80 per dollar to scale upwards of 83. RBI, which has the sole power to lord over the exchange rate, intervened rather prudently, letting the currency find a level of its own liking. Both the government and RBI maintained that it wasn't a sign of the rupee's weakness, but an indicator that the dollar was strengthening. They further reasoned that the rupee was relatively better placed than other global currencies and also when pegged against the basket of other currencies.

It'll be interesting to see how the domestic unit fares against the greenback in 2023.

Unemployment
From January to November 2022, India's unemployment rate shot up by 1.4%. In August, it touched its highest at about 10%, but subsided to 8% by November, according to CMIE. Sparking fresh trouble was the massive tech industry layoffs globally, which had a spillover effect on domestic shores. Analysts, however, believe that India can tide over the crisis better than its global peers.

That said, job creation remains an unfulfilled promise and the government's scorecard will be closely watched ahead of the forthcoming assembly and general elections. For it to keep a lid on joblessness, growth needs to be robust. Will it be? That remains the grand question that 2023 will have to answer.

OMDC workers go on strike demanding pending wages

Barbil(KCN): Demanding regular salary workers of Orissa Mineral Development Corporation staged a demonstration in front of the office of OMDC, Thakurani, on Saturday. It is to note that OMDC operates six iron ore and manganese ore mining leases at Barbil in the district of Keonjhar, Odisha. The leases are Dalki Manganese



Mines, Kolha Roida Iron & Manganese mines, Thakurani Iron & Manganese Mines, Belkundi Iron & Manganese Mines, Bagiaburu Iron Mines and Bhadrasahi Iron & Manganese Mines. The lease rights of all the six mines have expired and therefore, the company's mining operations are under suspension due to non availability of statutory clearances. Recently, one mines at

Bagiaburu is likely to be operational soon as the company has obtained statutory clearances. Workers alleged that since 2010, after the merger of company with Rastriya Ispat Nigam limited, a PSU company, salary of employees and statutory clearance activities are obstructed due to lack of interest. They are getting salary as

per old wages act 1997.No initiative has been taken by the management to revise salary .The workers held a demonstration at Thakurani denouncing the management for not paying their salaries for the last four months. The workers

union led by CPI(M) leader Indramani Behera has given a memorandum to release the salary of employees. It is note that management has given a written assurance to Mr Behera to release their salary for the month of September 2022 soon after the transportation of iron ore starts from the mines and balance of payment due on account of salary will be done as per the availability of the funds.

Rupee falls over 11 per cent in 2022, worst since 2013

NEW DELHI: The Indian rupee depreciated over 11 per cent in 2022 against the dollar -- its poorest performance since 2013 and the worst drubbing among Asian currencies -- as the US Federal Reserve's aggressive monetary policy propelled the greenback. The rupee closed 2022 at 82.61 to the US dollar, down from 74.29 at end of 2021 as the US currency headed for its biggest yearly gain since 2015. The Indian unit, however, fared better than some other global currencies like the Turkish Lira and British Pound. The volatility in the forex market, prompted by a rally in global oil prices following Russia's war in Ukraine, meant the Reserve Bank had to frequently dip into its reserves as imported inflation became a challenge for policymakers.

Since mid-October, the rupee recovered from the bouts of volatility experienced in the earlier part of the year and has been trading close to its long-term trend, as per the RBI's Financial Stability Report. The volatility in the currency market during the year was triggered by the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war in February as it disrupted the global supply chains, fuelling inflation as well as inflationary expectations across the world.

A hawkish US Federal Reserve started raising rates to rein in inflation just as severe geopolitical crises besieged the global economy. It made the dollar a safe haven currency, causing huge investment outflows from other countries.

High crude oil prices in the international market too weighed on the rupee. Foreign investors pulled out a net sum of Rs 1.22 lakh crore from the Indian equity markets and over Rs 17,000 crore from the debt markets in 2022 owing to aggressive rate hike by central banks globally.

As a strong dollar weighed on India's trade, imported inflation became a significant challenge for Indian policymakers.

Though the RBI spent more than a hundred billion dollars to prop up the sliding rupee, it crossed the psychological mark of 83 to a greenback.

Yet, there is hope for the rupee in the New Year. There are indications that the US Fed will further reduce the intensity of rate hikes in the coming year. Also, global investors have not lost confidence in Indian markets, and FII inflows have begun to improve. In addition, declining global energy prices, strong fundamentals of the Indian economy and inflation coming back to the Reserve Bank's comfort level will help the rupee regain some strength against USD.

Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said 2023 could start on a volatile note as resurgent Covid worries could bode well for the dollar, while the second half is expected to be relatively calmer as we see inflation and interest rates peak out.

"We believe the rupee can consolidate between 84 to 79 and could register a small depreciation against the US dollar.

Historically, we have seen whenever there was more than 10 per cent depreciation, the next year remains relatively calmer with average depreciation of around 2 per cent," Parmar added.

Falling value of the rupee has also created concerns on the Current Account Deficit (CAD) front, which coupled with widening trade deficit could put further pressure on the Indian currency going forward. On January 3 (the first trading day of 2022), the rupee closed almost flat at 74.28. It slumped 98 paise on February 24, the day the Russia-Ukraine war started and since then it has been on a downslide.

On October 19, the rupee breached the 83 mark for the first time amid unabated foreign capital

outflows, a strong dollar in the overseas markets, rising crude prices and risk-averse sentiment among investors.

Navneet Damani, Senior Vice President, Currency and Commodity, MOFSL, said the rupee weakened sharply this year and weakness has been to the tune of 10 per cent primarily led by strength in the dollar against its major crosses.

"Major currencies in 2022 have fallen by an average of over 10 per cent including the rupee. But volatility for the rupee has been curtailed by active intervention by the RBI. Reserves have witnessed a bit of erosion but the central bank is now starting to again build up its reserves and that would act as a buffer in times of uncertainty," he said.

In the coming year, Motilal Oswal Financial Services (MOFSL) expects that volatility for the rupee could continue to remain elevated and with central banks at this point of time continuing to remain hawkish, it is likely to be supportive for the dollar across the board.

"We expect that the USD-INR (Spot) could trade with a positive bias and in the next quarter could quote in the range of 81.50 and 84.50," he added. Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA, said the rupee is likely to remain dominated by trends in the dollar index and global sentiment, with the latter likely to keenly guide trends in FPI flows.

The rupee gained 26 paise to close at 82.61 against the US dollar in the last trading session of 2022, as the American currency retreated from its elevated levels. On December 31, 2021, the rupee settled at 74.29 against the greenback.

Jharkhand's Palamu forest: Cameras, drones and a 'Shikari' hunt leopard that killed 4 kids

Continued from page-1
also equipped with latest equipment to identify and control an animal."

Samanta, who is also Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife), said that Khan is expected to arrive in first week of January.

"If capturing was not possible, then we may think of killing the leopard as last option," Samanta said. Speaking to PTI, Khan confirmed that he was approached by state forest officials.

"I was told to visit Jharkhand and help in monitoring and tranquilizing the leopard. However, I am yet to receive any official letter in this regard," he said.

More than 50 trap cameras have been put up in possible route of the big cat in and around Kushwaha village where a 12-year-old boy was killed by the animal on December 28.

"The trap cameras have captured various animals in the region but leopard has not been traced yet. Besides trap cameras, we are also using drone cameras but it has also not found any trace of the leopard," Garhwa Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Shashi Kumar told PTI.

He said that they would change the locations of the cameras on Sunday and make another effort to trace it.

"We have also ordered three cages from Meerut, which is likely to arrive by Sunday evening," he said. On December 10, the leopard reportedly killed its first victim, a 12-year-old girl, in Chipadohar area in the nearby Barwadih block of Latehar district. Then, six-year-old child was killed in Rodo village in Bhandariya block on December 14 in Garhwa district, while another six-year-old girl was mauled to death by the leopard in Sevadih village in Ranka block on December 19 in the same district.

Race to Paris Olympics in focus for Indian athletes in 2023

CHENNAI: THE Tokyo Olympics turned out to be the most successful Games for India with the country's athletes clinching seven medals including a gold, two silver and four bronze. The Covid-19 pandemic postponed the Tokyo Games by a year but India's show at the showpiece event, especially with the first ever top-of-the-podium finish in track and field, by the star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra made everyone sit up and take notice. At the same time, it has also increased expectations. Come the next quadrennial event in Paris in 2024, Indian athletes will once again be the cynosure of all eyes. But before setting the Olympic stage on fire, they need to qualify for the big-ticket event and the quest for the same has already begun. While the qualifying period for a few disciplines including athletics (marathon) and weightlifting has already started, the cycle for the remaining sports is scheduled to start soon.

Wrestlers, shuttlers in demand
Wrestling and badminton are the two disciplines that have consistently fetched Olympic medals for the country this century. And Paris, it seems, would not be different. As far as wrestling is concerned, India won two medals in Tokyo thanks to Ravi Dahiya (57kg silver) and Bajrang Punia (65kg bronze). They are again expected to be the medal contenders accompanied by other male and female wrestlers. The qualification period for the wrestlers starts on September 16, 2023, with the World Championships wherein 90 quotas will be on offer (60 men and 30 women). Medallists in each Olympic weight category (six divisions each in men's freestyle, Greco-Roman and women's wrestling are in the Olympic programme) — a gold, a silver and

als at the Games (silver in Rio and bronze in Tokyo), is expected to spearhead India's challenge with rising shuttler Lakshya Sen and tenacious HS Prannoy also in medal contention.

Can Mirabai make it two in a row?
The period for the Olympic Qualification Ranking (OQR) in weightlifting has already started with the Tokyo silver-medallist Mirabai Chanu winning her second Worlds medal, this time silver, in Bogota, Colombia early in December. A lot will ride on her if India hopes to start their campaign with a bang in Paris as it did in Tokyo. Jeremy Lalrinnunga and Achinta Sheuli, both Commonwealth Games gold-medallists, will have to outdo each other as only one of them can qualify for the Games in 73kg.

Of the 12 athletes in each of the 10 weight categories, five for men and five for women, 10 will earn their places from a ranking list compiled during the qualifying period. Only the best single performance will count, but athletes are compelled to participate in at least five out of seven qualifying competitions. "Those who can make it to the Olympics will now compete only in selected events. Most of them are doing rehabilitation at the moment," Vijay Sharma, India's chief weightlifting coach, told this daily. The Indian lifters are presently camping at the NIS Patiala. "The next qualifying event for Indian lifters is the 2023 Asian Championships in Jinju, South Korea from May 3 to 13. After that we will compete in two mandatory events — the 2023 IWF World Championships in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from September 2 to 17, and the 2024 IWF World Cup in Phuket, Thailand from April 2 to 11. Our lifters will also compete at the 2023 IWF Grand Prix II (Doha, Qatar) early in December and then one event out of five specified tournaments will be chosen," added the coach. Neeraj best bet in athletics
Given the history he has been creating ever since pocketing the gold in Tokyo, reigning Olympic champion Chopra will again be the center of attraction when the track and field competitions start in Paris. Athletes will qualify in two ways for the 2024 Games, with 50 percent of qualification



two bronze — will get a quota each. Besides, a bout will be organised between the two losers of the bronze medal match and the winner will obtain the quota.

The next will be the Asian Qualifier in April 2024 with 36 places (24 men and 12 women) up for grabs. The two highest-placed wrestlers in each Olympic weight category will qualify for the Paris Games. The same will be the process during the World Qualifier scheduled in May 2024.

The only sore spot for wrestlers, however, would be the clashing of dates of the Worlds and Asian Games, which last year was postponed till September 2023 due to rising Covid cases in China. The Asiad is scheduled to be held from September 23 and October 8 even as the Worlds finishes on September 24 forcing wrestlers to choose between the two. With Olympic quotas on offer at the Worlds, it is a no-brainer which event the wrestlers will prefer.

Like previous editions, a lot will be expected from Indian shuttlers. The Ranking Period for the 'Race to Paris Ranking Lists' is from May 1, 2023 to April 28, 2024. The 'Paris Ranking Lists' as of April 30, 2024, will be used to award quota places in men's and women's singles events, as well as men's, women's and mixed doubles events. Once again PV Sindhu, who has won consecutive med-

places based on achieving the entry standard for an event within the qualification period, and the remaining 50 per cent based on the World Athletics Ranking within the ranking period.

The qualification and ranking period for all individual events — other than the 10,000m, marathon, combined events and race walks — will be between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024. For the 10,000m, combined events, race walks and relays, the qualification and ranking period will be between December 31, 2022, and June 30, 2024, while for the marathon, the period will be between November 1, 2022, and April 30, 2024. In the javelin, 32 quotas will be allotted each in the men's and women's sections. The entry standard for male javelin throwers is 85.50m while it is 64.00m for their women counterparts. Boxing is another discipline where India can expect medals. Lovlina Borgohain bagged 69kg bronze in Tokyo and the same will be expected this time with world champion Nikhat Zareen also in the fray. The Indian boxers' pathway to the Games begins with the Asian Games. They then have two world qualification tournaments in 2024 as per the new system approved by the executive board of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). To surmise, it's going to be an action-packed 18 months or so for India's elite as they try to rubber-stamp their Paris ticket.

Arsenal have 'desire' to be champions: Arteta

BRIGHTON: Mikel Arteta said Arsenal's 4-2 win at Brighton proved the Premier League leaders have the "desire" required to lift the title for the first time since 2004.

Arteta's side will go into the new year with a formidable seven-point lead over second placed Manchester City after they powered to a fifth suc-



cessive league victory. Goals from Bukayo Saka, Martin Odegaard and Eddie Nketiah set the Gunners on course to cement their unexpected status as serious title contenders.

Kaoru Mitoma reduced Brighton's deficit before Martinelli raced half the length of the pitch to finish off Odegaard's sublime pass. Brighton substitute Evan Ferguson claimed his first Premier League goal in the closing stages, but Arsenal survived a nervous finish to make it nine league wins from 10 games.

"It's a big win against a really good side. We had big moments, especially attacking the spaces with the way they play. We were ruthless, clinical," Arteta said.

"We had some great moments, and also moments when we have to dig in and suffer. You expect that against Brighton."

After squandering a golden opportunity to qualify for the Champions League with a late collapse in the Premier League last term, Arsenal found themselves written off as also-rans ahead of this season.

But Gunners boss Arteta has worked impressively to revitalise his team, sparking dreams among their fans of winning a first English title since Arsene Wenger's "Invincibles".

Arsenal's haul of 43 points from 16 games is among the five best starts to an English top-flight season, with the other four teams all going on to claim the title.

"You can't expect to not concede anything with the way they play. It's a big test for us, but we win two in a row after the break and now on to the next one," Arteta said.

"I think we have enough desire. We know the other results, but we know our success will be from what we do.

"This is what we want to continue, to improve as a team and play better, to dominate all the areas like today. We had to suffer but we show we could manage the game."

Two-time finalist Ons Jabeur primed for Grand Slam breakthrough

ADELAIDE: World number two Ons Jabeur said on Saturday her pair of 2022 Grand Slam finals have only increased her desire to finally

keen to take her game to the highest podium, starting at the Australian Open in January. "I was ready to win this year (2022), but

Jabeur, the first Arab woman in the WTA top 10, said she and her team laboured during the off-season to fine-tune her powerful game.

said the infamous Australian summer weather would not be a problem for her. "I'm from Tunisia and used to the hot weather -- that's a



lift a major trophy. The Tunisian top seed at the Adelaide International lost in three sets to Elena Rybakina at Wimbledon last July, then reached the US Open title match two months later, going down to Iga Swiatek. She said she was

it didn't happen," she said. "I'm doing everything possible to win a Grand Slam. I'm just going to go for it. "This year, 2023, is about just being free and playing my game. I'm glad I got the experience from two finals in a Grand Slam."

"We've worked really hard to improve a lot of things, we are more aware of my game," she said. "I feel like this year is going to be very special for me. I gave it all, I put in the hard work during practices, and I'm hitting the ball well." And the 28-year-old

good thing," she said. "The most important thing is to be ready, to hydrate better and do (your) routine for hot weather." Jabeur will open in Adelaide after a first-round bye against the winner from Romania's Sorana Cirstea and a qualifier.



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