

BJP MPs urge Union minister K. Rammohan Naidu to establish airport at Puri, revive Odisha's airstrips

BHUBANESWAR, DEC 21

A delegation of BJP MPs from Odisha urged Union civil aviation minister K. Rammohan Naidu to establish an airport at Puri, and to revive the state's airstrips.

The legislators cited that a new airport in Puri will ease the flow of international tourists and Lord Jagannath devotees to the town. It will also augment the economic growth of the pilgrim city of Puri, the delegation claimed.

The delegation, led by Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan, met the Union civil aviation minister Naidu on Thursday. It demanded the revival of the airstrip at Cuttack, used during the Indo-China war, and the Rasgovindpur airstrip in Mayurbhanj, used in World War II, as full-fledged airstrips to be used for civil aviation purpose.

The Rasgovindpur airstrip was made during the Second World War (1939-45) as a forward airfield against the Japanese conquest of Burma. The strip was used as a landing ground for planes and a training space for special bombing missions.

For Puri, the central government plans to develop the airport in three phases at an



estimated cost of ₹5,631 crore. As per the plan, a six-lane, high-speed corridor will connect Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar with that of Puri.

The proposed airport will come up in an area of 1,164 acres. However, the progress of work on this project has been halted due to various reasons, including getting the no-objection certificates from different authorities.

The delegation also demands the development of Charbatia airstrip in Cuttack into a full-fledged airport. The British built the aerodrome during World War II, and it was abandoned after the war. During the Indo-China War, the airstrip played a major role and was used as a base between 1964 and 1967. The air base is spread over 2000 acres.

In 2011, the Centre, which controls the airbase, announced that it would be converted into a full-fledged station of the Indian Air Force. However, the plan was shelved after the proposed Air Force station was shifted to Panagarh in Bengal.

Now, Odisha MPs demand that the Charbatia airstrip be developed into a full-fledged airstrip. The delegation impressed upon the minister the need to expand the Jeypore and Rourkela airstrips and develop the Tusura airstrip in Balangir district.

The delegation also demanded to include at least 10 places in the state under the Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) scheme to boost regional air connectivity and fulfill the aspirations of the people of the state.

As per the demand, the places

to be connected under the UDAN scheme are Barisal in Dhenkanal, Hirakud in Sambalpur, Rangeilunda in Ganjam, Paradip in Jagatsinghpur, Utkela in Kalahandi, Kalinganagar in Jajpur, Raisuan in Keonjhar, Padmapur in Bargarh and Rasgovindpur and Rairangpur in Mayurbhanj. Rairangpur is the hometown of president Droupadi Murmu.

The delegation also demanded the second development of Veer Surendra Sai Airport at Jharsuguda, considered as western Odisha's economic hub. They argue that the development of the Jharsuguda airport will also help promote the region's industrial development.

On the issue of setting up an airstrip in Paradip, the BJP MPs argued that Paradip is strategically located and close to major industrial hubs like Angul, Talcher and Kalinganagar in Jajpur district.

Considering the increased flow of passengers and volume of business at the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) and subsequent workload, the delegation has also urged the Civil Aviation Minister to set up a new terminal building at BPIA.

Arrest warrant issued against former cricketer Robin Uthappa in EPF deposits fraud case

BENGALURU, DEC 21

An arrest warrant has been issued against former India cricketer Robin Uthappa in connection with alleged fraud related to Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) deposits, officials said on Saturday.

The warrant of arrest issued by Shadakshara Gopala Reddy, Regional Provident Fund Commissioner - II and Recovery Officer, K R Puram stated that Rs 23,36,602 is to be recovered from Uthappa, the defaulter.

The former cricketer is the director of Centauries Lifestyle Brands Pvt Ltd, Indiranagar.

In his order to the Station House Office of Pulakeshinagar Police Station, the senior officer stated, "Due to non remittances of dues, this office is unable to settle the Provident Fund accounts of the poor workers. In view of the above, you are kindly requested to execute the enclosed warrant of arrest through the Thana in-charge under whose



jurisdiction Sri Robin Uthappa resides.

"In this connection it is kindly requested to arrest the employer under Rule 73 of IInd Schedule to Income Tax Act 1961 and Income Tax (CP) Rule 1962 and Section 8B of Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, and produce him before the undersigned on or before 27.12.2024 for further proceedings through your official." The order stated, "In exercise of the power conferred on me under section 8B of the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, I command you to arrest the said defaulter and bring him before the undersigned as soon as practicable and in any event within 24 hours of his arrest (exclusive of the time required for the journey) unless the defaulter pays the said amount of Rs 23,36,602 and Rs 5,000 for the cost of executing this process." However, a senior police officer said, "The address mentioned in the arrest warrant issued by the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner is an old one and the concerned person does not stay at this address anymore. Our team had gone to the given address and verified. As per information, he vacated the mentioned address over a year ago. We have informed the same to the concerned officer. Further decision will be taken by the concerned authority which issued the arrest warrant."

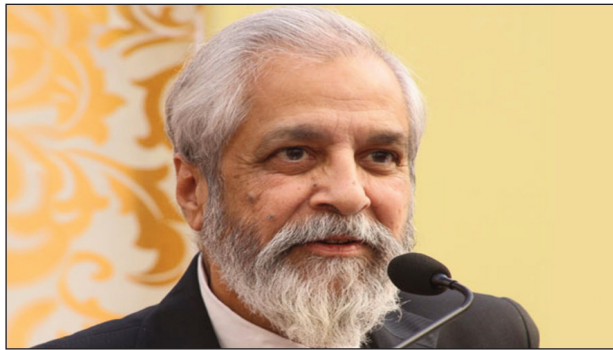
Former Supreme Court judge Justice Madan Lokur appointed chairperson of UN Internal Justice Council

NEW DELHI, DEC 21

Former Supreme Court judge Madan B Lokur has been appointed as chairperson of the United Nations Internal Justice Council for a term ending on November 12, 2028.

In a communication to Justice Lokur, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the retired top court judge would head the council which also comprises other distinguished jurists.

"I have the pleasure to appoint you, with immediate effect, as a member of the Internal Justice Council, in the capacity of chairperson, for a term ending on 12 November 2028," the communication dated December 19 said.



"The other members of the Council (in alphabetical order) are: Ms. Carmen Artigas (Uruguay), distinguished external jurist nominated by staff; Ms. Rosalie Balkin (Australia), distinguished external jurist nominated by management; Mr. Stefan Brezina (Austria), staff representative; and Mr. Jay Pozenel (United States of America), management representative," it added. Born in 1953, Justice Lokur was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court on June 4, 2012. He demitted office on December 30, 2018, upon attaining the age of superannuation. In 2019, Justice Lokur was appointed to the Supreme Court of Fiji as a judge of its non-resident panel. He was the first Indian judge to be appointed as a judge in the Supreme Court of another country.

Mumbai: Search operation continues for 7-year-old boy missing after ferry-Navy craft crash

NEW DELHI, DEC 21

The search operation launched by naval boats to locate a seven-year-old boy missing after a Navy craft rammed into a ferry off the Mumbai coast three days ago continued on Saturday, an official said. The SAR (search and rescue) operation will continue at least till Saturday evening, the official said. With the recovery of the body of a 43-year-old man on Thursday evening, the death toll in the December 18 tragedy rose to 14.

The Navy has launched a probe into one of the deadliest crashes in the city's harbour area. A naval helicopter and boats of the Navy and Coast Guard were deployed to look for the missing passengers as part of the SAR operation, the official said.



Of the 113 persons on board both the vessels, 14 died and 98, including two injured, were rescued.

There were six persons on board the Navy craft, of which two survived, the official said.

The tragedy struck when the speeding Navy craft undergoing engine trials lost control and collided with passenger ferry 'Neel Kamal' off near Mumbai coast. The ferry with more than 100

passengers was on its way from the Gateway of India to the Elephanta Island, a popular tourist attraction which has a collection of ancient caves.

According to the documents issued by the Maharashtra Maritime Board (MMB), the boat had permission to carry 84 passengers and 6 crew members, but it was overloaded, a police official said.

The MMB, which is

conducting an investigation into the accident, has cancelled the licence of the ferry as the vessel was overloaded, thus violating the Inland Vessel Act. The ferry had a capacity of 90 persons, an official said.

A case has been registered against the Navy craft driver at the Colaba police station, the official said.

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections invoked in the FIR included those related to causing death by negligence, actions that endanger the personal safety or life of others, rash or negligent navigation of a vessel and acts of mischief that cause wrongful loss or damage to individuals or the public.

The accident-affected craft is in the custody of the Navy and police will demand it whenever needed for investigation, the official said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) might go 'solo' for BMC polls, Uddhav consulting with others: Raut

MUMBAI, DEC 21

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Saturday hinted that his party might go solo in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) election without exiting the Maha Vikas Aghadi. Talking to reporters, Raut said party workers were insisting the organisation go solo in the local body polls, as there were more aspirants than for the Lok Sabha or state assembly polls. "Talks are on between Uddhav Thackeray and other party leaders (about whether to go solo) for the BMC polls. Workers want the party to contest the polls solo," he said. The undivided Shiv Sena controlled the cash-rich BMC for 25 consecutive years — from 1997 to 2022.

The term of the previous elected representatives of the BMC ended in early



March 2022, and fresh polls are due for nearly three years now. Raut said the party's power in Mumbai is undisputed.

"If we had more seats to contest in Mumbai (during the assembly polls), we would have won them," he said, claiming that it was necessary to win Mumbai or else the city would be separated from Maharashtra.

The Shiv Sena contested 24 seats in

Mumbai and won 10, while the Congress fielded candidates for 10 seats and bagged four, and the NCP (SP) contested two seats unsuccessfully.

"Even when the (undivided) Shiv Sena was (in an alliance) with the BJP, we contested the BMC and other civic body polls independently. We are trying to find ways to do it. The MVA will exist in the Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad and Nashik civic bodies," he said.

Last week, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had said the Shiv Sena will contest the BMC polls, likely to be held next year, as part of the ruling Mahayuti.

"The BMC polls will be contested as Mahayuti (alliance) in all 227 civic wards," said Shinde, who heads the Shiv Sena.

The BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP are part of the Mahayuti alliance.

Enforcement Directorate conducts raids on ex-Odisha Congress chief Niranjana Patnaik

BHUBANESWAR, DEC 21

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted raids at former Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee president Niranjana Patnaik's residence and his three other offices.

However, the agency is yet to issue any release regarding the raids on the house of Patnaik. Sources said a team of ED officials on Friday reached Patnaik's Nayapalli residence, and returned



after a 10-hour-long raid. business.

The agency also simultaneously conducted raids at three other places.

Patnaik's family has a mining business. However, Patnaik is not directly involved in the

IIM Bangalore director and seven others booked over caste discrimination against Dalit professor

BENGALURU, DEC 21: A case has been registered against the director and seven professors of the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIM) for allegedly discriminating against a Dalit associate professor on the basis of his caste, police said on Saturday.

Based on the complaint from the associate professor, a case was

registered on Friday against the director and other faculty members of IIMB under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

"We received the complaint and filed a case. However, those named in the FIR claimed that they obtained a stay order from the court the same

evening. But we are yet to receive the order," a senior officer said. Based on an investigation report of the Directorate of Civil Rights Enforcement (DCRE), the Social Welfare Department directed the state police chief to initiate legal action on the complaint of the said associate professor.

According to police, Gopal Das,

an associate professor at IIMB, has received all forms of support from the Institute since his recruitment in 2018, starting with his applying for the position of Assistant Professor, but being offered the role of Associate Professor based on his qualifications and experience.

He further alleged that he was also threatened and mentally harassed.

In a statement issued earlier, the IIMB claimed that rather than harassment or discrimination, Das

has received all forms of support from the Institute since his recruitment in 2018, starting with his applying for the position of Assistant Professor, but being offered the role of Associate Professor based on his qualifications and experience.

According to IIMB, he has received significant incentives since he joined IIMB for his research and

teaching, in addition to his salary as Associate Professor as per the 7th central pay commission of the Government of India. He has been given positions of responsibility including Chairperson, Institutional Review Board; Member, Career Development Services Committee and Member, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.