

Imperative to amplify justice needs of under-represented: CJI

NEW DELHI, Nov 27 (PTI)

ACCESS to justice cannot be secured only by crafting pro-people jurisprudence in judgments but requires active progress on the administrative side of the court such as improving infrastructure and enhancing legal aid services, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said on Monday.

Speaking at the first Regional Conference on Access to Legal Aid organised by National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) here, Chandrachud said the challenge for judges is not to do justice in the facts of the individual case but to institutionalise the processes and look beyond the immediate as well.

"Access to justice is not a right that can be secured only



by crafting pro-people jurisprudence in our judgments rather it requires active progress on the administrative side of the court as well," Chandrachud said.

The CJI said the discourse about human rights and access to justice has historically been monopolised by voices from the Global North (industrialised nations) which makes such dialogues unsuitable.

He said it is imperative to amplify the justice needs of the

under-represented populations in our country.

Chandrachud said the concept of justice has historically been construed as applicable solely within the confines of a sovereign state.

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant also spoke on the occasion.

LEGAL AID HAS FUNCTIONAL ROLE IN STRENGTHENING JUSTICE SYSTEM, SAYS JUSTICE SANJIV KHANNA: Legal aid has a functional role in strengthening the justice system and it needs to be understood beyond the aid to the needy, Supreme Court judge Justice Sanjiv Khanna said on Monday.

Giving an overview of the

conference, he said this is the first time the heads of the judiciary, heads of law and justice ministries, heads of legal aid bodies and civil society representatives from 70 countries of the Global South came together at an international platform dedicated to the cause of legal aid.

"Legal aid needs to be understood much beyond the aid to the needy. Legal aid has a functional role in strengthening the justice system. It empowers individuals to participate and engage with public institutions and become active and equal stakeholders," Justice Khanna said.

He said, "Indian Constitution imposes an obligation on the state to provide free legal aid to ensure access to justice to

all citizens. In India, the Legal Services Authority Act, 1987 forms a backbone of how legal aid accessibility and awareness is structured."

LAWYERS TREATING LEGAL AID AS STEP CHILD CAUSE OF CONCERN: AG VENKATARAMANI: Legal aid is not an alternative charity and the "sin" of lawyers treating the pro bono work as a "step child" remains a cause for concern, Attorney General R Venkataramani said on Monday and condemned such an attitude.

The law officer said those who think that the progress in legal profession is through corporate or Governmental work alone are blind to the fundamentals of their professional calling.

Need to strengthen ports infra: President

PARADIP, Nov 27 (PTI)

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu on Monday said there is a need to further strengthen the infrastructure of ports in the country and increase their efficiency. Murmu said this while gracing the 'Boita Bandana' (boat worship) ceremony, organised by the Paradip Port Authority here. Boita Bandana is an annual festival observed in Odisha, remembering the ancient maritime glory of the state, earlier known as 'Kalinga'.

Stating that the Government's Sagarmala programme is a commendable step to strengthen the port activities, Murmu said the Government of India is working to realise the vision of 'Ports for Prosperity' and 'Ports for Progress'. The President said that maritime trade has been playing an important role in the trade and economic develop-



President Droupadi Murmu being welcomed during the 'Boita Bandana' ceremony organised by the Paradip Port Authority in Paradip on Monday. (PTI)

ment of the country. "I am told that 95 per cent of India's total trade in terms of volume and 65 per cent in terms of value

are done through sea transport," she said.

Stating that India's ports need to function with greater effi-

ciency in line with global standards, she said: "That is why there is a need to further strengthen the infrastructure of Indian ports and increase their efficiency." The President said that historic Baliyatra is a symbolic boat trip of merchants to the islands of Java, Sumatra and Bali. Baliyatra is a unique festival celebrated in memory of Odisha's glorious past.

"Celebrated since time immemorial, this festival is a symbol of the prosperity of maritime trade of Odisha. It also highlights the rich cultural consciousness of the people of Odisha," Murmu said.

Noting that the sea has been a major means of strengthening India's trade, commerce and international relations, the President said that literature based on the sea has also enriched Indian culture.

Murmu said Odisha and other coastal states had a long and

prosperous tradition of naval commerce. Apart from trade and commerce, those merchants also played an important role in spreading Indian art and culture abroad, the president pointed out.

The President expressed her pleasure that Paradip Port's cargo handling capacity has doubled in the last decade. It is poised to become the largest port on the East Coast, she said, adding that it also got the 'Port of Operational Excellence Award' at the Global Maritime India Summit - 2023.

Murmu also inaugurated the Multi-Modal Logistics Park which she hoped will give a new direction to the transparent development of trade.

She said that the Vessel Traffic Management and Information System (VTMIS) enabled new modern signal stations will make navigation through this port safer and orderly.

Authentic: Merriam-Webster's word of the year for 2023

NEW YORK, Nov 27 (AP)

IN AN age of deepfakes and post-truth, as artificial intelligence rose and Elon Musk turned Twitter into X, the Merriam-Webster word of the year for 2023 is "authentic."

Authentic cuisine. Authentic voice. Authentic self. Authenticity as artifice. Lookups for the word are routinely heavy on the dictionary company's site but were boosted to new heights throughout the year, editor at large Peter Sokolowski told The Associated

Press in an exclusive interview.

"We see in 2023 a kind of crisis of authenticity," he said ahead of Monday's announcement of this year's word. "What we realise is that when we question authenticity, we value it even more."

Sokolowski and his team don't delve into the reasons people head for dictionaries and websites in search of specific words. Rather, they chase the data on lookup spikes and world events that correlate. This time around, there was no particularly huge boost at any giv-

en time but a consistency to the increased interest in "authentic." This was the year of artificial intelligence, for sure, but also a moment when ChatGPT-maker OpenAI suffered a leadership crisis. Taylor Swift and Prince Harry chased after authenticity in their words and deeds. Musk himself, at February's World Government Summit in Dubai, urged the heads of companies, politicians, ministers and other leaders to "speak authentically" on social media by running their own accounts.

"Can we trust whether a student wrote this paper? Can we trust whether a politician made this statement? We don't always trust what we see anymore," Sokolowski said. "We sometimes don't believe our own eyes or our own ears. We are now recognising that authenticity is a performance itself."

Merriam-Webster's entry for "authentic" is busy with meaning. There is "not false or imitation: Real, actual," as in an authentic cockney accent. There's "true to one's own personality, spirit or character."

There's "worthy of acceptance or belief as conforming to or based on fact." There is "made or done the same way as an original." And, perhaps the most telling, there's "conforming to an original so as to reproduce essential features."

"Authentic" follows 2022's choice of "gaslighting." And 2023 marks Merriam-Webster's 20th anniversary choosing a top word. The company's data crunchers filter out evergreen words like "love" and "affect" vs. "effect" that are always high in lookups.

Christopher Luxon sworn in as New Zealand Prime Minister

WELLINGTON, Nov 27 (AP)

CHRISTOPHER Luxon was sworn in as New Zealand's Prime Minister on Monday and said his top priority was to improve the economy.

The 53-year-old former businessman leads a conservative coalition after his National Party struck a deal on Friday with two smaller parties following a general election last month.

After the swearing-in ceremony, which was presided over by Governor-General Cindy Kiro, Luxon told reporters the job was an "awesome responsibility." He said he would hold

his first Cabinet meeting on Tuesday and look to quickly finalise a 100-day plan. He said he also planned a visit to Australia before Christmas Day.

Luxon said he needed to get a Treasury briefing on the state of the Government's finances.

"We are concerned and worried that it's been a deteriorating picture for a number of months now," Luxon said.

Under the coalition agreement, Luxon has promised to deliver tax cuts and train 500 more police officers within two years. He has also promised less Government bureaucracy, including a 6.5 per cent cut to the public service.

Luxon said it would be up to Ministry chief executives to figure out how to make the cuts, whether by stopping programmes, not filling vacancies or laying off some workers.

The new Government also plans to repeal tobacco restrictions approved last year by the previous Government, including requirements for low nicotine levels in cigarettes, fewer retailers and a lifetime ban for youth.

Luxon said his Government disagreed with parts of the policy, including concentrating distribution. He said smoking rates had been coming down for 30 years.

India looking to seal landmark 31 MQ-9B Predator drone deal with US by March

■ By Manash Pratim Bhuyan
NEW DELHI, Nov 27 (PTI)

INDIA is looking at sealing a landmark deal to procure 31 MQ-9B Predator long-endurance armed drones from the US under a Government-to-Government framework by March with the US Congress expected to clear the supplies in the next few weeks, people familiar with the matter said.

American and Indian Government officials will hold the final series of negotiations on the procurement after



Washington responds to India's Letter of Request (LoR) for the acquisition of drones from US defence major General Atomics (GA), they said.

India is procuring the long-

endurance 'hunter-killer' drones to crank up the surveillance apparatus of the Armed Forces, especially along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. Though the price

of the drones will be finalised in the negotiation process, it is estimated that the procurement would cost around USD 3 billion.

The people cited above said New Delhi and Washington will depute their respective teams to firm up the deal including finalising the cost and other nitty-gritties.

The aim is to seal the deal by March next year, they said.

As part of the laid down process, the agreement will be between the Indian

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TUNNEL RESCUE

Manual horizontal digging soon

- Rat-hole miners will start manual digging
- Vertical drilling reached a depth of 36 metres, said NDMA member Lt Gen (retd) Syed Ata Hasnain
- Broken parts of the auger machine have been removed

UTTARKASHI/NEW DELHI, Nov 27 (PTI)

RESCUERS had bored 36 metres into the hill above the Silkyara tunnel by Monday evening in their effort to reach 41 workers trapped inside for 15 days as rat-hole mining experts also reached the disaster site to help tackle the challenge simultaneously from another front.

Twelve rat-hole mining experts will be involved in manual drilling and excavation horizontally through the last 10- or 12-metre stretch of debris of the collapsed portion of the under-construction tunnel on Uttarakhand's Char Dham route.

This drilling was earlier being



Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Pramod Kumar Mishra talks to rescue officials at the collapsed Silkyara tunnel where an operation being conducted to extract the 41 workers trapped inside it, in Uttarkashi district on Monday. (PTI)

carried out by a huge auger machine that got stuck in the rubble on Friday, forcing officials to focus on an alternative option -- drilling down from above the tunnel. About 40 per cent of the 86-metre vertical drilling required is now done.

For the horizontal through-the-rubble option, officials decided that the final stretch would be handled through a

manual approach in which individual workers will go into the escape passage with drills, as well as gas-cutters to tackle obstacles like iron girders.

By Monday evening, the last bit of the stuck auger had been cut out piece by piece and a steel pipe inserted further into the partially complete escape passage.

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PM's Secy oversees ops

UTTARKASHI, Nov 27 (ANI)

A DELEGATION led by Principal Secretary to Prime Minister, Pramod Kumar Mishra took stock of ongoing efforts to rescue 41 trapped workers in Silkyara tunnel in Uttarkashi on the 16th day of the operations.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla and Uttarakhand Chief Secretary SS Sandhu along with Pramod Kumar Mishra inspected the work inside the tunnel.

The Principal Secretary also enquired about the food items sent to the workers trapped inside the tunnel. PK Mishra also spoke to the trapped workers and their families.

Vouching for the manual method, former Army Engineer-in-Chief, Lieutenant General Harpal Singh (Retd), told ANI that there is no other way left except the manual method to reach the trapped workers.

Singh said that he reached the site to provide technical inputs and further aid the ongoing rescue operations.