



## HONEST CONFESSIONS

Actor Bhumi Pednekar opens up on her superstitions while appearing on Kapil Sharma's comedy show

LEISURE P2



## KIWI CHURCH SHOCKER

An inquiry has found that a New Zealand priest abused kids and showed them a corpse to keep them quiet

INTERNATIONAL P10



## INDIA SEAL SERIES

Prasidh Krishna's brilliant spell and Suryakumar Yadav's knock help India seal ODI series against Windies

SPORTS P12

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## CLOSE SHAVE FOR 70 PASSENGERS

**Mumbai:** An Alliance Air flight from here to Bhubaneswar, carrying 70 passengers, flew without engine cover that was later retrieved from the runway at the city airport Wednesday. The incident has prompted aviation regulator DGCA to start a probe. Sources said that the aircraft landed safely at the Bhubaneswar airport, but it was a close shave for the passengers as an accident could have happened anytime. "Mumbai ATC informed the airport that Alliance Air ATR aircraft, operating flight 91-625 (Mumbai-Bhubaneswar) took off without the left engine cowling (Cover)," said an official. "It could have led to a lot of malfunctions, but luckily nothing happened," he added. P9



## HC RELIEF FOR MINISTER TUDU

**Cuttack:** The Orissa High Court granted anticipatory bail Wednesday to Union Minister Bishwesar Tudu in connection with the assault of two state government officials last month. A single-judge bench of Justice SK Sahoo also directed the Minister of State for Tribal Affairs to appear before the investigating officer at 10.00am March 4 for interrogation. The court said Tudu would not be arrested till the next date of hearing March 8. Tudu had allegedly assaulted January 21 two government officials at the BJP office in Baripada, a charge which has been denied by the BJP leader.

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## Voters list on BMC website

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** In a first, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to take the digital route in the upcoming urban elections. It will publish the final list of voters on its official website for convenience of the citizens.

With the Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department earlier submitting the final ward delimitation and reservation lists for three municipal corporations (including BMC), to the State Election Commission (SEC) the city is all set to see the urban local body (ULB) elections after a gap of three years. "The draft and the final list will be uploaded on the BMC website. This will help voters to point out errors if any and request us to rectify those. Moreover, once the final list is uploaded, citizens can identify their voting booths in their particular wards," a BMC official said Wednesday.

It should be stated that the BMC will submit the final list of voters, February 28, following which the SEC will issue the notification for elections. The polls will be held in 67 wards. Sources said that 11 lakh voters will exercise their franchise in 700 booths that are to be set up in BMC jurisdiction.

Moreover, this will also be the first time that Odisha capital will have a female mayor. The BMC will also see two separate elections, one for the post of mayor along with post of corporators for each ward. Out of the 67 wards, 29 have been reserved for women.

The parties will nominate one candidate each for the post of mayor. Election to the position will be conducted separately.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Producing doctors, engineers, architects, etc is our job. But the party also needs loyal voters

# 25,000 DIE BY SUICIDE

In the period from 2018 to 2020, bankruptcy and unemployment have led to large numbers dying by suicide. While 9,140 persons died due to unemployment, 16,091 perished due to bankruptcy

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 9:** More than 25,000 people have died by suicide from 2018 to 2020 due to unemployment and bankruptcy, the government informed Wednesday in the Rajya Sabha. The data provided by the Centre said 9,140 people died by suicide due to unemployment while 16,091 perished due to bankruptcy or debts.

The information was given in the Upper House by Minister of State (Home) Nityanand Rai in a written reply to a question on the issue. He said that the government figures are based on data provided by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). Keeping in mind this figure, the death rate must be quite high as people die by suicide for other issues too along with the reasons mentioned above.

The government has been cornered by the Opposition on the issues of unemployment in the past few weeks. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had Monday hit out at the government on the issue of unemployment and cited a survey to say that the good days are elusive.

With the onset of the pandemic, the suicide rate among the unemployed has gone up drastically. In 2020 a total of 3,548 perished, in 2019 it was 2,581 while a total of 2,741 people without jobs died by suicide in 2018.



The data also said that in 2018, a total of 4,970 persons died by suicide due to bankruptcy. The figure increased to 5,908 in 2019, but dropped to 5,213 in 2020.

While admitting that the figures were alarming, the minister said that the Centre is trying to address the problem by focusing on mental health and creating employment opportunities. "To address the burden of mental disorders, the government is implementing the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in 692 districts of India," Rai informed.

"The programme aims to provide suicide prevention services, workplace stress management, life skills training and counselling in schools and colleges. It also provides mental health services including prevention, promotion and long-term continuing care at different levels of district healthcare," the minister added.

The minister said that various flagship programmes of the government such as Make in India, Digital India, Swachh Bharat Mission and many others will generate many more employment opportunities in the near future. Hence the government is optimistic

## Trader blames PM before suicide bid

**Baghpat (UP):** Local trader Rajiv Tomar allegedly attempted suicide Tuesday along with his wife on 'Facebook' Live by consuming poison. He survived, but his wife died. He accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his poor financial condition and said that it forced them to take such a drastic step. A top police official said Wednesday the condition of Tomar, 40 who ran a shoe shop is 'very serious'. Rajiv's wife Poonam tried to stop him, but when she failed she also consumed poison. Tomar said, "Modiji will be responsible for my death. If Modi ji has any shame, he will change things. I am not saying he is wrong on everything but he is not a well-wisher ('hitaishi') of small traders and farmers.

that the suicide rate will decrease in the years to come.

It should also be stated here that the pandemic has caused widespread mental stress among the people of India. A large number of people since 2020 have died by suicide due to depression leading out of Covid-19.

## Blast kills youth

Close on the heels of the death of a journalist, the incident has sparked panic in the locality

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Phulbani, Feb 9:** An 18-year-old youth was killed Wednesday after an IED, suspected to have been planted by Maoists near their posters calling for boycotting the upcoming panchayat elections, exploded in Kandhamal district, police said.

The incident took place in Sadingia village in Phiringia police station area when Priya Ranjan Kanhar, a resident of Kiamunda village, was going to the forest, officer-in-charge P Shyam Sundar Rao told mediapersons. The body will be recovered from the spot after clearance from the bomb squad and forensic team, he said.

Locals are apprehensive that there might be more explosives in

the area. They said that police had defused two Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) from near the posters Tuesday. However, one IED remained undetected around 50 metres from the spot and it claimed the life of Kanhar.

The explosion took place barely four days after **DHARITRI** journalist Rohit Biswal was killed in Kalahandi district in a similar manner when he was examining Maoist posters opposing the panchayat elections. Rohit was well aware about the methods of the Maoists, but even then failed to protect himself.

Police suspect that members of the Kalahandi-Kandhamal-Boudh-Nayagarh (KKBN) division of the banned CPI (Maoist) had planted the IEDs. Besides calling for a boycott of the upcoming rural polls, the hand-written Maoist posters also demanded the withdrawal of CRPF camps in the both Kalahandi and Kandhamal districts, and payment of adequate wages to labourers, Rao informed.

## 3-judge bench to hear Karnataka hijab controversy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Feb 9:** The hijab row with its epicentre in Karnataka echoed Wednesday across India. However, the situation was peaceful in Karnataka.

All eyes were on the Karnataka High Court which heard the matter Wednesday for the second day in succession. Justice Krishna S Dixit was hearing since Tuesday a batch of petitions against the hijab ban in classrooms filed by Muslim students from Udupi district.

"In view of the enormity of questions of importance which were debated, the court is of the considered opinion that the Chief Justice should decide if a larger bench can be constituted," Justice Dixit said.

Later, Karnataka HC Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi formed a three-judge bench comprising himself, Justice Dixit and Justice JM Khazi. The bench will hear the matter Thursday. **MORE P7**

## FLYING HIGH



(From left) Stacy Gaskill and Lindsey Jacobellis of the US, Chloe Trespeuch (France) and Italy's Michela Miolliti compete in the women's snowboard skating semifinals at the Beijing Winter Games, Wednesday. PHOTO: OLYMPICS.COM

# 'Crocodile of Wall Street' nabbed in Bitcoin heist

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES HAVE REVEALED THAT THE COUPLE COMMITTED A BITCOIN SCAM IN 2016 WHICH IS NOW WORTH \$4.5 BILLION

**New York, Feb 9:** She billed herself as 'The Crocodile of Wall Street' and 'Razzlekhan', a surrealist artist and rapper with tattooed hands. He assumed a tamer persona: that of a 'tech entrepreneur' and 'occasional magician'.

However, early morning in the bitter winter cold here Tuesday, their world collapsed around them when they were arrested by federal law enforcement officials. Heather Morgan, 31, and her husband Ilya Lichtenstein, 34 were accused of a crime that would've seem preposterous in a halcyon, pre-cryptocurrency era. The two have been accused of enriching themselves off a cache of stolen Bitcoin that is currently about USD \$4.5 billion.

Both were detained on charges of conspiring to launder 1.19,754 Bitcoin tokens, but later granted bail in spite of objections by the prosecution.



Ilya Lichtenstein (Left) and Heather Morgan

authorities said, came from the 2016 hack of 'Bitfinex', a cryptocurrency exchange owned and operated by 'iFinex Inc'. If proved guilty, this would turn out to be the biggest cryptocurrency fraud ever-recorded.

At an initial appearance in a Manhattan federal court Tuesday

evening, the judge granted both bail, setting a bond of USD 3 million for Morgan while for Lichtenstein, the amount was USD 5 million.

The Department of Justice said that the Bitcoin stolen during the 2016 hack was sent to a digital wallet controlled by Lichtenstein and

then to one the couple controlled via a complex laundering scheme. The cryptocurrency was worth \$71 million when it was spirited away in 2016. Now the stash is worth \$4.5 billion as Bitcoin prices have skyrocketed, of which \$3.6 billion worth of tokens has been recovered by federal agents.

Until Tuesday, Morgan and Lichtenstein lived lives made for social media. Even Lichtenstein's 2019 proposal appeared to be aimed at boosting his future wife's career as 'Razzlekhan', an artist specialising in collage, sculpture, painting and fashion design.

As 'Crocodile of Wall Street', Morgan also rapped about investment strategies, calling herself a risk-loving moneymaker who was 'sly as a gator'. She also gave frequent talks on investment. Now however, both face lengthy prison terms.

In a recent talk show, Morgan showed a slide of two 'cuffed hands behind bars'. Now it seems to be turning into a reality for her:

# 26K ACRE LAND BANK FOR AFFORESTATION

The land has been identified in 18 districts of Odisha. It has been decided to increase the land bank to 50,000 acre by March end

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** With an aim to speed up proposals for diversion of forests, the Odisha government has created a land bank of 26,500 acre in 18 districts to undertake compensatory afforestation works.

Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) Revenue & Disaster Management, Satyabrata Sahu gave this information Wednesday after attending a meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra to discuss forest diversion related issues.

The land for afforestation has been identified in the districts of Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Bolangir, Jajpur, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Sambalpur, Angul, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Jharsuguda, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Subarnapur

and Nayagarh during the month of January, Sahu informed. The maximum amount of land (10,800 acre) was identified in Keonjhar district.

A target was set to increase the size of the land bank to 50,000 acre by March, 2022 and to one lakh hectare of land within a year, Sahu stated.

It was also decided in the meeting that Additional Chief Secretary R & DM would be the nodal officer for allotment of land for compensatory afforestation (CA).

Old forest issues in housing areas of Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) and Odisha State Housing Board (OSHB) where people are staying for nearly four decades ago were resolved in the meeting.

Considering the different problems faced by people who live in Barmunda, Paikanagar, Kanan Vihar and Jayadev Vihar areas of Bhubaneswar from the 1970s, Mahapatra directed BDA to complete the forest diversion proposals with a month. He also directed officials to undertake compensatory afforestation (CA) against the forest land to be diverted.

**MARKET WATCH**

| INDEX  | VALUE    | VARIATION |
|--------|----------|-----------|
| SENSEX | 58465.97 | ↑ 657.39  |
| NIFTY  | 17463.80 | ↑ 197.00  |
| DOLLAR | 75.52    | ↑ ₹0.02   |
| EURO   | 85.51    | ↑ ₹0.26   |
| GOLD   | ₹48,525  | ↑ ₹96     |
| SILVER | ₹62,499  | ↑ ₹132    |

**WEATHER**

|          | BHUB   | CTK    |
|----------|--------|--------|
| TEMP MAX | 30.9°C | 30.6°C |
| TEMP MIN | 17.1°C | 17.5°C |
| Humidity | 83%    | 83%    |
| Rainfall | Nil    | Nil    |

Forecast: Fog or mist in the morning



# leisure

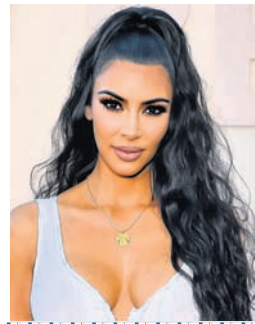


## WHEN PATTINSON'S SKIN TURNED GREEN

Hollywood star Robert Pattinson says he spent so many hours filming *The Batman* in the dark that he turned green. The *Twilight* star plays the Caped Crusader in a film shot mostly at night, reports *mirror.co.uk*.

## KIM'S FAMILY UNFOLLOWS KANYE ON INSTAGRAM

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian's sisters have unfollowed rapper Kanye West following his constant attack on his estranged wife. As of Tuesday, February 8, Khloe Kardashian, Kourtney Kardashian and Kendall Jenner are no longer following Ye on the photo-sharing platform, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
So, busy bee, you finally realise you've been ignoring your near and dear. And now, it's going to cost you a lot of effort to make it up to them. Dinner at the finest restaurant, a trip to the theatre, shopping at a posh boutique... be ready to splurge, says Ganesha!

**TAURUS**  
Today you are going to focus on enhancing your looks and appearances, says Ganesha. Instead of trying to seek satisfaction from within yourself you will be flaunting your fine clothes, your hairstyles. A visit to a beauty parlour cannot be ruled out.

**GEMINI**  
The day promises sensitivity and compassion for you, predicts Ganesha. You may plan a trip with your family members. You may also invest your money in various financial companies, as securing the future of your family will be foremost on your mind. Moreover, you will also save some hefty amount to meet future needs.

**CANCER**  
It is high time that you dedicated yourself to your work. If you are looking to try new things, today may not be a very good day to do so. Stick to doing things the way you have been doing them so far, advises Ganesha. All you need is a little attitude adjustment.

**LEO**  
When it comes to maintaining a balance in any relationship, you set an example for others to follow. It is like an inner light guides you towards joyful coexistence, though, at times, it may entail making certain acts of sacrifice, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
Open the mind gates and let your imagination flow, says Ganesha. At your creative best, you will pursue innovation and creativity today. Luck will be on your side and even those things that you took a risk on may mean your way. You energy levels will be unusually high and you will feel passionate about all that you undertake.

**LIBRA**  
Everyone has a dream, but only few have the fortune to realise them. Be among the lucky ones today as you see your dream project materialise and take its first steps towards a successful future. But all good things have humble beginnings. What matters is that you had a dream, and dreaming it was the hardest part, reminds Ganesha.

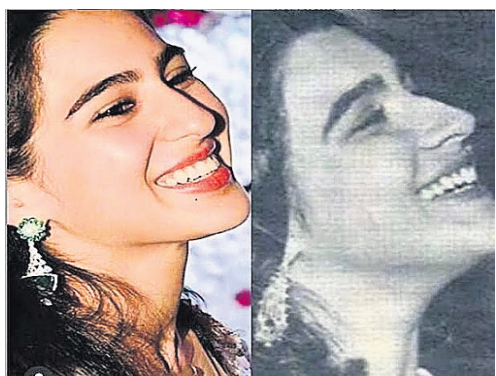
**SCORPIO**  
You are a visionary and today you work towards building a successful future. But, expecting an instant result would be unfair. You need to have patience to bring in those dynamic changes in your life. Wait and watch, the patience would reap sweet fruits!

**SAGITTARIUS**  
As Ganesha foresees, you will be religiously inclined today. Listening to soft, instrumental music will soothe your nerves. You also feel like going back to school days and dig into detective and suspense stories of Nancy Drew or Hardy Boys. It was fun being kid, isn't it?

**CAPRICORN**  
Not everyday is the same day. And, today is one of those days when you feel extremely confused, feels Ganesha. While you won't be able to get rid of negative emotions, your hard work will be paid off and lay a strong foundation for future. You'll not understand whether to feel good about your achievements or experience sadness of confusion.

**AQUARIUS**  
Bursting with new ideas, you want to make the world a better place! You will give your best in a team and will come up with great schemes and solutions. At gatherings and social dos, says Ganesha, you will remain your charming self, impressing people with an amazing social grace.

**PISCES**  
Home is where the hearth is, in which the troubles you need to deal with today are smouldering. Running away from your problems will simply have you out of breath; it would be wiser to take a stand and find solutions to petty conflicts without losing your perspective.



## Fans call Sara photocopy of her mom

**Mumbai:** Senior actress Amrita Singh was showered with love and wishes on social media as she turned a year older Wednesday. Her daughter and actress Sara Ali Khan also took to social media to share a heartwarming wish along with juxtaposed images of the two striking similar poses.

The Atrangi Re actress shared multiple juxtaposed images comparing her pictures with old pictures of her mother where the duo is seen striking similar poses. As soon as she posted the pictures, fans started calling Sara a photocopy of Amrita as the actress looks exactly like her mother used to look in her younger days.

Sharing the post, Sara wrote, "Happy Happy Birthday Mommy Thank you for always showing me the mirror, but still always motivating me, encouraging me and inspiring me. I promise to always try my hardest to make you happy and proud and I will try everyday to imbibe a fraction of the strength, beauty, grace and brilliance you exude."

AGENCIES

## Bhumi's candid confession

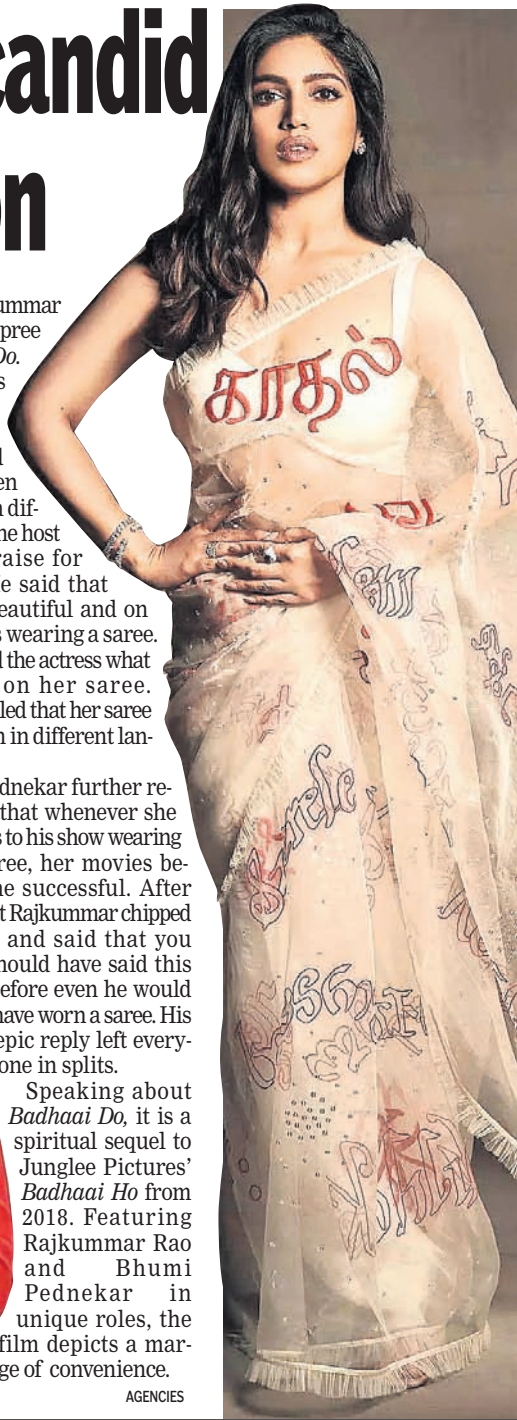
**Mumbai:** Bhumi Pednekar and Rajkumar Rao are currently on a promotional spree for their upcoming film *Badhaai Do*. While appearing on Kapil Sharma's comedy show the actress wore a customised saree.

Her saree featured the word 'love' woven with a red thread in different languages. The host Kapil was all praise for Bhumi's look. He said that she is already beautiful and on top of that she is wearing a saree. He further asked the actress what was written on her saree. Pednekar revealed that her saree has love written in different languages.

Bhumi Pednekar further revealed that whenever she comes to his show wearing a saree, her movies become successful. After that Rajkumar chipped in and said that you should have said this before even he would have worn a saree. His epic reply left everyone in splits.

Speaking about *Badhaai Do*, it is a spiritual sequel to Junglee Pictures' *Badhaai Ho* from 2018. Featuring Rajkumar Rao and Bhumi Pednekar in unique roles, the film depicts a marriage of convenience.

AGENCIES



## Gauhar lands her dream role in Bestseller

**New Delhi:** Actress Gauhar Khan calls her role in the web series *Bestseller* as a dream role for her.

She says: "It's a dream role. If you think about the length of my character, Mayanka, she is there everywhere, in all the episodes and all the happen-

ings of the story. If you see from a performance point of view, Mayanka has a multifaceted character; you can say she is the craziest graph of the show. And she is somehow related to all the other characters of the show."

Gauhar's character is not simple and it has a lot of complexities. And making these kinds of roles appealing and realistic is always a challenging job for an actor.

*Bestseller* is a psychological thriller, which features actors such as Mithun Chakraborty, Shruti Haasan, Arjan Bajwa, Gauhar Khan, Satyajit Dubey and Sonalee Kulkarni in prominent roles.

The *Badrinath Ki Dulhania* actress shares her working experience with co-actors and especially with Mithun Chakraborty.

"Mithun da is fabulous to work around. He is a school actually, there's so much to learn from him. He actually teaches everyone around what it is to be an absolute natural actor.

He is such a big star but he is just so friendly. Always keeps cracking jokes around us. I just loved working with him."

Directed by Mukul Abhyankar, *Bestseller* will be streaming from February 18 on Prime Video.

AGENCIES



## Post Oscar nomination glacial Lunana makes Bhutan newest film destination

**BHUTANESE FILM LUNANA: A YAK IN THE CLASSROOM IS A CELEBRATION OF THE ABILITY OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT TO TRIUMPH OVER THE MOST FORMIDABLE CHALLENGES THAT LIFE MAY THROW AT IT**

**New Delhi:** Even by the challenging standards of Bhutan, the landlocked Himalayan nation famous for its gorgeous topography, Lunana is remote.

It's certainly not the place for a young, aspiring schoolteacher, growing up in Bhutan and nur-

ture the dream of migrating to Australia, to relocate for his mandatory year of service before getting his degree.

It is the story of this city-slicker, music-loving teacher, Ugyen Dorji, played with conviction by Sherab Dorji in

*Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom*, which has become the second film from Bhutan to be nominated for the Best International Feature Film category in the 94th Academy Awards, to be held March 27 at the Dolby Theatre, Hollywood.

This inspirational, eye-moistening film, shot with the help of solar-powered batteries at one of the most inhospitable locations in the world, was rejected by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences on a technicality last year, but Bhutan's Ministry of

Information and Communications persisted with it and its efforts have paid off.

Commenting on the nomination, the film's director, Pawo Chonying Dorji, said in an interview with *Variety*: "The shortlisting has meant so much because it's a historic moment for our little Himalayan kingdom. It has captivated the whole country, from city dwellers to yak herders in the glacial mountains, from schoolchildren to Buddhist monks in isolated monasteries."

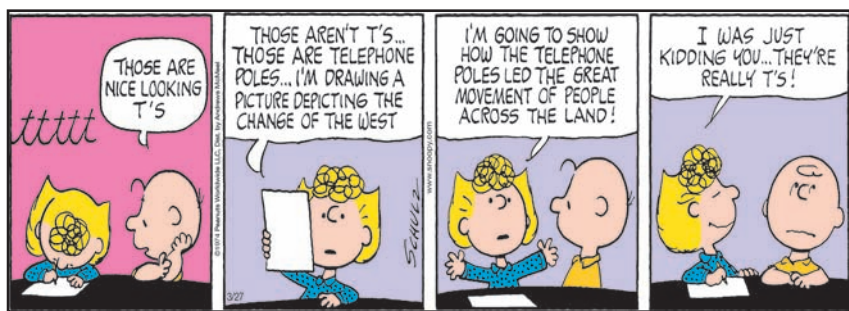
Recalling how he went about

his directorial debut, Dorji added: "I made this film with a crew who are mostly all amateurs, with a cast of yak herders who hadn't even seen the world beyond their village. We shot the film in one of the most remote human settlements in the world using only solar energy to power our production."

It is a celebration of not only a heart-warming story set in a glacial, inhospitable setting, but also the ability of the human spirit to triumph over the most formidable challenges that life may throw at it.

AGENCIES

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

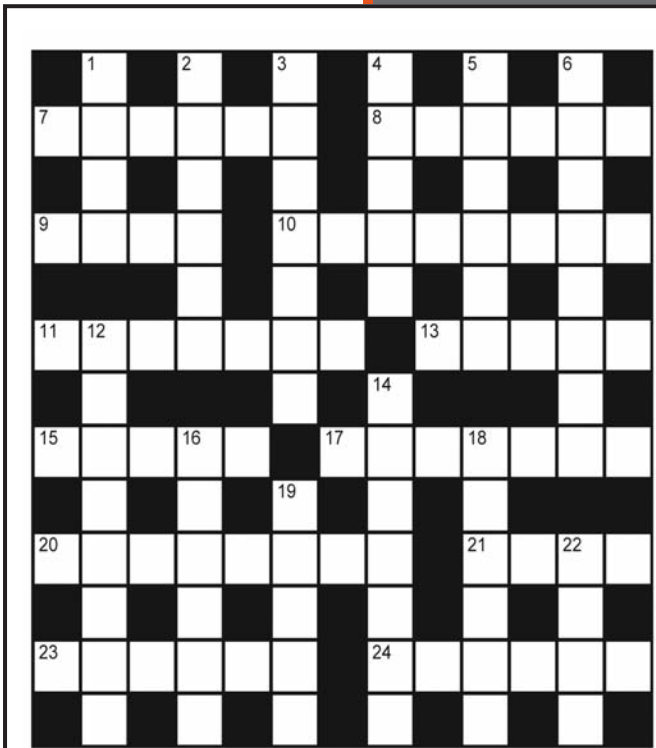


### BREVITY



### FUN post

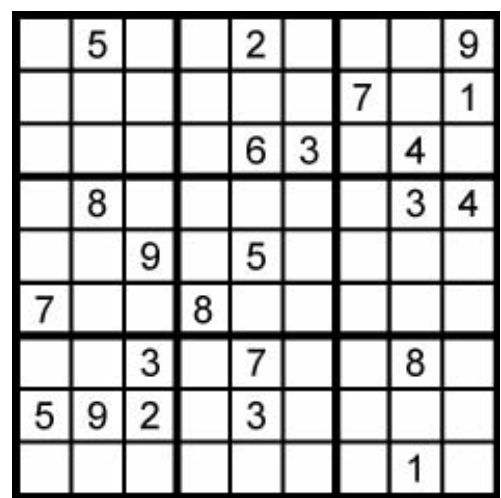
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Come up with
  - 8 Young man
  - 9 Predicament
  - 10 Martini ingredient
  - 11 Delivery aid (3,4)
  - 13 Out of kilter
  - 15 Incursion
  - 17 Spurns
  - 20 Pitiful
  - 21 German automaker
  - 23 Anise cordial
  - 24 Mal de mer, e.g.
  - 5 Rotten to the core
  - 6 Kick around
  - 12 Out in the boonies
  - 14 Church officers
  - 16 Greek capital
  - 18 Uris novel
  - 19 Opus
  - 22 Land west of Nod
- Down**
- 1 Stumble
  - 2 Plan of action
  - 3 Permeate
  - 4 Argus-eyed

### SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

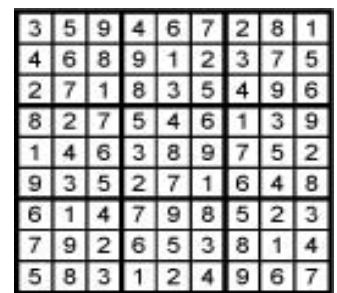


### SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# downtown

## Rename Orissa HC as HC of Odisha: Acharya



POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Feb 9:** Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP Prasanna Acharya Wednesday urged the Centre to bring a legislation to change the name of Orissa High Court to High Court of Odisha.

Speaking during the Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, the senior BJD MP said the name of the state was changed from Orissa to Odisha in 2011 through 111th Constitution (Amendment) Bill as per the demand of Odia people. But the name

of the High Court still continues to be Orissa High Court and not Odisha High Court.

"As the people in Odisha are sentimentally and emotionally attached to the word 'Odisha' and our language is Odia, not 'Oriya', there has been a constant demand to change the name of the Orissa High Court to 'High Court of Odisha'," Acharya said.

He also apprised the house about the demand to change the names of the High Court of Bombay, High Court of Calcutta, High Court of

### HISTORY OF HC

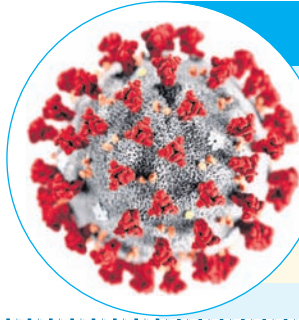
A separate state for Odia speaking people was created April 1, 1936. However, the newly-created state, Odisha, did not have a High Court. The state was put under the jurisdiction of Patna High Court for several years.

A separate High Court for Odisha was inaugurated by then Chief Justice of the Federal Court of India HJ Kania July 26, 1948. Bira Kishore Ray was appointed as the first Chief Justice of Orissa High Court. It was set up at Cuttack as the city was the capital of erstwhile Orissa.

Madras and High Court of Allahabad. "I would urge the Law Minister to kindly bring in a bill in this house to change the name of Orissa High Court to the High Court of Odisha and also other High Courts where there has been a demand to change the names," Acharya said.

### EVICTION IN CITY

Civic authorities demolish illegal structures in Forest Park area of Bhubaneswar, Wednesday



### COVID-19 TRACKER

|        | INFECTED     | RECOVERED    | DEAD      |
|--------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| World  | 40,21,02,357 | 32,18,12,892 | 57,85,836 |
| India  | 4,24,10,976  | 4,10,12,869  | 5,05,279  |
| Odisha | 12,71,523    | 12,48,152    | 8,797     |

### HOMeward JOURNEY



Fishermen pull their boat to the shore after a successful outing in the sea in Puri, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

## Red menace down to 46 dists in 2021 from 96 in 2010

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 9:** The geographical influence of Maoists contracted to 46 districts in the country in 2021, a sharp reduction from 96 such districts in 10 states in 2010. Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityananda Rai said in the Rajya Sabha Wednesday.

During the Question Hour, the minister said there has been a "sharp reduction in geographical influence of Maoists in the country" due to the Modi government's policy to end Left Wing Extremism (LWE).

"The number of Naxal-affected districts, which stood at 96 in 2010, has come down to 46 in 2021," he said. The incidents of LWE violence have reduced by 70 per cent to 509 in 2021 from over 2018 and 2019. As a result, the number of deaths has drastically reduced to 147 in 2021 compared with 1,005 in 2010, he added.

The minister further said that the Modi government in 2015 had framed a policy and chalked out a plan of action to end LWE and development of the affected districts in the country.

The development of LWE-af-



PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

ected districts was kept in focus and as a result, there has been a sharp improvement, he added.

Noting that the Maoist ideology in India has always been influenced by global organisations, the minister said, "When we probe them, international bodies raise the issue and come forward to help them. CPI-M international organisation is also part of the Maoist ecosystem."

The LWE is destructive and against humanity whereas since the beginning, Indian culture and thinking has been creative and humanistic. Raising slogans against India and Indian heroes can never be part of the Indian ide-

ology, he said.

The MoS also said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a "messiah of India's humanistic culture" at the global level. "The Maoist ideology came to India and grew here. However, it is fast declining under the leadership of Modi," he added.

With regard to urban Naxalism, the Minister said the Maoists' activities are well planned which obstruct the security and development of the nation. The policies are in place to address such issues.

Responding to a query on steps taken to curb use of arms and foreign funding for Maoist activities, the minister said a broad policy is in place under which there is a

## GOVT SKIPS REPLY TO COPTER SERVICE PLEA

POST NEWS NETWORK

**NEW DELHI:** Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai Wednesday evaded a direct response to the demand of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) seeking deployment of uninterrupted helicopter services in Odisha for evacuation of casualties in left wing extremism (LWE) affected areas.

During the Question Hour in Rajya Sabha, BJD MP Prashant Nanda said the Centre has been requested to consider provisions of dedicated helicopter service to Odisha, stationing at Koraput to cater for the operational requirements of LWE-affected dis-

tricts like Malkangiri, Kandhamal and Kalahandi.

The Chief Minister of Odisha had also raised this issue in the review meeting on LWE by the Union Home Minister in September last year, he added. The BJD MP sought to know about the action taken by the Centre in this regard.

While replying to the BJD MP, the Union minister said the Centre provides helicopter service to states whenever there is a need for the same. However, the minister did not divulge whether the Centre is considering deploying uninterrupted helicopter service in Odisha.

provision to seize arms from Maoists and cases referred to the National Investigation Agency among others.

Responding to another query

on making available a dedicated helicopter to states to tackle Naxal issues, the minister said the BSF and air force helicopters are made available as per the need.

## CITY RECORDS SPURT IN CRIME IN JANUARY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** The capital city has seen an increase in the registration of various criminal cases in January. The data shared by the commissionerate police revealed that 832 cases have been registered at different police stations of the city during last month.

Meanwhile, as many as 792 cases were reported at City police stations in December, 2021. With the registration of 70 cases, Mancheswar police had reported maximum number of cases in December 2021.

On the other hand, the Capital police station recorded the registration of maximum number of cases in January. As many as 69 cases were reported at the Capital police station while the Nayapalli police registered 60 cases last month.

Similarly, 53 cases have been filed at Jatni police station in January. Meanwhile, the City managed to finish investigations into more cases in January than the preceding year. In January, 1148 cases were closed with the submission of charge

A total of 832 cases have been registered at different police stations of the city during last month

sheets or final reports in the concerned courts as compared to 951 cases in December, 2021. As many as 149 cases were closed by Nayapalli police in January.

Notably, the Chandrasekharpur police succeeded in finishing the investigation in 111 cases in January. Saheed Nagar police closed 90 cases during last month. On the other hand, the Khandagiri police closed 102 cases which was the highest in December, 2021.

The case closure unit established at the office of the DCP helped the police in closing cases in 312 cases out of a total of 1148 cases closed in January. The city has recently witnessed a significant rise in criminal incidents. As many as three murder cases were reported along with other crimes in January this year.

## BJD worried over low health allocation

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, Feb 9:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Wednesday raised concern over low allocation of funds to health sector and highlighted the dilapidated state of health service in the country.

Taking part in the general discussion on the Union Budget 2022-2023, BJD Rajya Sabha MP Amar Patnaik said the allocation to health is 0.33 per cent of the GDP, which is less than the allocation made last year. He said the country currently has one bed for a thousand



people against global average of 2.9, lower than even the BRICS countries.

"We have one doctor for 1,500 people when the requirement is one doctor for 1,000 people. We have one nurse for 670 people when the

requirement is one nurse for 300 as per the 15th Finance Commission report. So, we need more investment in health sector," he said.

Taking a jibe at the Centre, the BJD MP said the Budget doesn't talk about doubling the farmers' income by 2022. He demanded implementation of the Swaminathan Committee report.

"The government has spent only ₹6,627 crore in two years from the Agriculture Investment Fund. However, it was supposed to spend around one lakh crore rupees in six years," Patnaik said.

## State receives ₹5,970 cr under PM-Kisan

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** The Centre has released ₹5,969.61 crore to the bank accounts of over 39.36 lakh farmers of Odisha under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar recently said in Lok Sabha.

While replying to a question asked by BJP MP Basanta Panda, Tomar said the scheme is effective from December 1, 2018. In Odisha, ₹5,969.61 crore has been released to

39,36,731 till February 3, 2022, he said.

Under the scheme, an income support of ₹6,000 per annum, in 3 equal instalments, is provided to all eligible farmer families directly into their bank accounts through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode.

As per the reply of the Union Minister, highest ₹451.43 crore has been released to 2,90,717 farmers of Mayurbhanj district while lowest ₹59.74 crore was distributed among 37,045 farmers of Jharsuguda district under the scheme.

Similarly, ₹222.29 crore has been

released to 1,50,806 farmers of Angul district, ₹225.28 crore given to 2,10,523 farmers of Bolangir, ₹367.09 crore to 2,42,834 farmers of Balasore, ₹234.74 crore to 1,55,239 farmers of Bargarh, ₹223.24 crore to 1,52,289 farmers of Bhadrak and ₹91.12 crore to 58,449 farmers of Boudh district.

The Centre has also released a fund to the tune of ₹290.27 crore to the eligible farmers of Cuttack, ₹67.98 crore for Deogarh district, ₹173.11 crore for Dhenkanal, ₹91.15 crore for Gajapati, ₹177.14 crore for Jagatsinghpur, ₹221.79 crore

for Jajpur, ₹230.87 crore for Kalahandi, ₹140.45 crore for Kandhamal, ₹219.40 crore for Kendrapara and ₹337.12 crore for Keonjhar district.

Moreover, Khurda district farmers have received ₹133.90 crore while ₹158.75 crore released to Koraput district farmers, ₹90.11 crore transferred to Malkangiri farmers, ₹347.69 crore for Ganjam district, ₹183.01 crore for Nabarangpur, ₹136.26 crore to Nayagarh, ₹135.26 crore to Nuapada district farmers.

### AGED BUT AGILE



An elderly man weaves a bamboo basket at Rajmahal Square in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

### GENETIC ENGINEERING & NANOTECHNOLOGY TO THE RESCUE

## Chemo-induced pain can be mitigated: Study

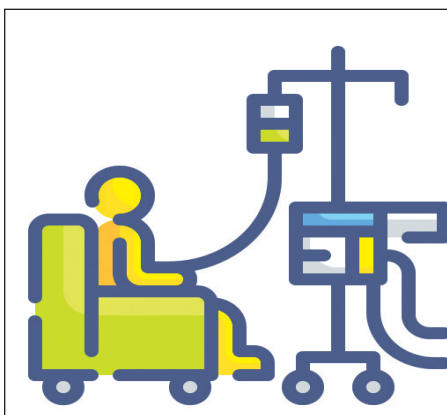
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Varanasi, Feb 9:** A research conducted by a team of the Institute of Medical Sciences and IIT, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), has found that it may be possible to cure chemotherapy-induced neuropathic pain (CINP) by genetically manipulated and delivered siRNA to target sites by nanotechnology.

The research was conducted by Dr Nimisha Verma of the Department of Anaesthesiology, IMS-BHU and Dr Vinod Tiwari of the department of Pharmaceutical Engineering, IIT (BHU).

This study has been published in January 2022 edition of the globally reputed Life Science Journal.

Dr Tiwari said that cancer patients suffer from severe pain. Not only the disease, but the treatment of cancer can also cause unbearable pain.



One such type of pain is chemotherapy induced neuropathic pain (CINP), which is among the most common clinical complications associated with the use of anti-cancer drugs.

It is a significant dose-limiting and treatment-limiting side effect

of treatment.

The CINP occurs in nearly 68.1 per cent of the cancer patients receiving chemotherapeutic drugs.

The therapeutic glory of TRPV1 is well recognised in clinics which give a promising insight into the treatment of pain.

Cancer patients suffer from severe pain. Not only the disease, but the treatment of cancer can also cause unbearable pain

One such type of pain is chemotherapy induced neuropathic pain (CINP), which is among the most common clinical complications associated with the use of anti-cancer drugs

The CINP occurs in nearly 68.1 per cent of the cancer patients receiving chemotherapeutic drugs

Dr Nimisha Verma and Dr Vinod Tiwari came up with a novel solution to this problem through genetic engineering and nanotechnology. According to them, the research involves the blocking of expression of TRPV1 receptor through a small interfering RNA molecule (siRNA)

plays a critical role in chemotherapy-induced pain.

This unrelenting pain responds poorly to common analgesics and even opioids. The available treatment for CINP has some severe side-effects.

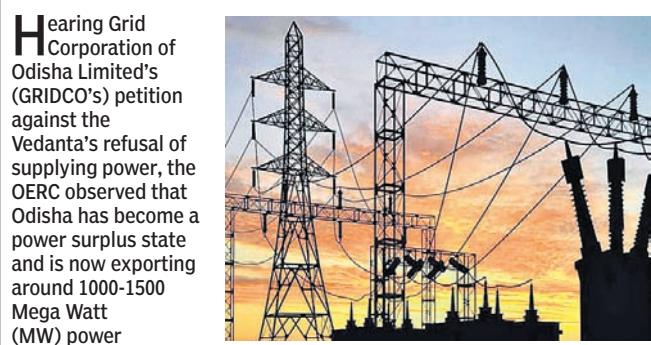
This was the triggering question when scientists ventured into research on TRPV1 siRNA formulation.

For this, Dr Nimisha Verma and Dr Vinod Tiwari came up with a novel solution to this problem through genetic engineering and nanotechnology. According to them, the research involves the blocking of expression of TRPV1 receptor through a small interfering RNA molecule (siRNA).

The novel siRNA formulation suggested by the ongoing research has shown quick management of pain without side-effects which would be very effective for the patients.



# Betting big on pvt players can push up power tariffs: OERC



**H**earing Grid Corporation of Odisha Limited's (GRIDCO's) petition against the Vedanta's refusal of supplying power, the OERC observed that Odisha has become a power surplus state and is now exporting around 1000-1500 Mega Watt (MW) power

**H**owever, the OERC compelled GRIDCO to find alternative and cheaper sources of power generation owing to delay in execution of the order

However, the OERC compelled GRIDCO to find alternative and cheaper sources of power generation owing to delay in execution of the order.

"GRIDCO is paying fixed charges to plants like Farakka (West Bengal), Kahalgaon (Bihar) and Barh (Bihar) without off-taking power from these plants. Even though GRIDCO does not draw power from these stations, it has to pay the fixed cost to NTPC stations as per existing PPAs. However, if GRIDCO surrenders M/s Vedanta power, they won't have to pay the fixed cost of Rs 399.42 crore at 85 per cent of availability," the OERC said.

According to sources, Vedanta's actual tariff is Rs 2.80 Kilo Watt Hour (kwh) as per the rates determined for 2021-22 financial year. However, GRIDCO has been paying only at Rs 2.5/kwh on an ad-hoc basis. Moreover, sourcing of power from alternate sources is expected to cost only Rs2.5/kwh or less.

Moreover, experts suggest GRIDCO can further unburden the consumers and reduce power tariffs by surrendering and non-requisitioning of power from surplus PPAs.

The loss on fixed charges could be checked by surrendering surplus PPAs from private operators like Vedanta's Unit II, which would save around Rs 277 crore annually to the public exchequer.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** The Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC) has observed that the state government could bring down power tariffs and save more than Rs 300 crore by reducing its dependency on private power plants.

Hearing Grid Corporation of Odisha Limited's (GRIDCO's) petition against the Vedanta's refusal of supplying power, the OERC observed that Odisha has become a

power surplus state and is now exporting around 1000-1500 Mega Watt (MW) power.

The OERC stated that the GRIDCO has surplus power and it is purchasing more power than the actual demand.

The OERC made this observation after GRIDCO appealed to the regulatory body against Vedanta's denial to draw power of about 600 Mega Units (MU) from its Unit-II plant as per an earlier order under a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA).

## YOUTH 'KIDNAPPED' IN CITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** Another kidnapping was reported in the city as a student was allegedly abducted and tortured by miscreants at Chandrasekharpur area of the city here Tuesday. A case has been registered in this regard on the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim, Shivaji Sarkar.

Shivaji along with his family has been staying at Chhunkoli slum under Chandrasekharpur police limits of the city. The victim alleged that some miscreants intercepted Shivaji while he was going towards a petrol pump Tuesday af-

ternoon. They forcefully abducted him and kept in an isolated place. They thrashed him demanding Rs 7000 allegedly taken by one of his relatives from the abductors. The miscreants even attacked the victim with broken glass bottles.

The victim who managed to flee the spot later narrated his ordeal before the police Tuesday night.

Meanwhile, Chandrasekharpur police rubbished the kidnapping claims. Police said the accused had thrashed Shivaji as he had promised them to repay Rs 7000 in case his relatives failed to repay the same. Police asserted that all the accused were identified and would be arrested soon.

## Show cause notice to City school

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Directorate of Secondary Education Wednesday served a show cause notice on DAV School at Chandrasekharpur here for violation of guidelines issued by the SRC on reopening of schools. The school has allegedly given notice to students and parents regarding conduct of periodic assessment from February 12, 2022 in offline mode. "Conducting the examination in offline mode may be a cause of stress for students who might be lacking the preparedness to face the offline examination immediately," the notice said.

## Goods train derailed: 2 trains controlled

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** A wagon of an iron ore-loaded goods train from Nayagarh (Keonjhar) to Hubli in Karnataka got derailed at about 4.35 pm Wednesday between Solari Station and Balugaon Station in Khurda Road-Brahmapur railway section under Khurda Road Railway Division of ECoR in Howrah-Chennai Main Line.

As a result, 11020 Bhubaneswar-Mumbai CSMT Konark Express has been controlled at Gangadharpur Railway Station from 4.42 pm. Similarly, 12703 Howrah-Secunderabad Falaknuma Express has been controlled at Kalupadaghat from 5 pm.

Divisional Railway Manager Khurda Road and his team have reached the spot and an accident relief train has been ordered to clear the track. Coaching train movements will be allowed in down line with caution order. However, coaching trains may get delayed slightly in the section. Passengers are requested to cooperate with the railways.

## Book on voluntary organisations launched

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, in the presence of Principal Secretary School and Mass Education & Information and Public Relations unveiled a book titled Voluntary Organisations and Rural Development in South Asia: Assumptions and Realities authored by Dr Umakanta Mohapatra, PRO to Chief Secretary. The book was published recently by a global publisher Springer Nature. Mahapatra also launched the e-version of the book.

### RURAL DEVPT

The book is an independent and multi-pronged assessment of the role of voluntary organisations (VOs) in rural development. It addresses the existing knowledge gap for developmental task sharing with non-government civil society players in the developing nations, more particularly South Asian nations. The volume running over 228 pages delineates the locale of the VOs among civil society players; provides evidence-

## Utkal varsity asked to submit UCs for ₹125cr



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** The Higher Education (HE) Department Wednesday directed Utkal University here to submit utilisation certificates for funds to the tune of Rs 125 crore.

In a letter, HE department additional secretary Manoranjan Nayak said utilisation certificates for Rs 125 Crore are pending against Utkal University for the period 2014-15 to 2020-21 as per the statement received from the Accountant

General of Odisha. The funds were meant for infrastructure development and modernisation work, sources said.

In the monitoring committee meeting December 12 last year, the matter was reviewed by the HE department principal secretary, who expressed his displeasure over such pendency. Therefore, the department requests the university to submit the UCs by February 22, failing which no further grants will be released to the university, read the letter.

## HITTING THE STREETS



Plus-II students burning tyres near Master Canteen Square in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, demanding cancellation of examination

OP PHOTO

## Stir for cancellation of Plus-II exam continues

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** Mass protests for cancellation of the Plus II Board examinations continued in the state Wednesday as several students Wednesday held a demonstration in Bhubaneswar to press

for their demand for cancellation of the exam.

The students organised the protest near Master Canteen Square in the Capital city. The agitating students demanded cancellation of the annual Plus II examination and award of marks

on the basis of three quarter-end examinations. "We want our examination to be cancelled. As our courses have not been completed, what we will do in the examination," said students.

"If the government does not cancel the examination, it should

allow the conduct of offline classes for one year to finish all our courses so that we can prepare well and appear for both first-year and second-year examinations. If not, we should be awarded marks on the basis of three quarter-end examinations," they demanded.

## 22 Cov deaths, 1,712 fresh cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** Odisha's Covid-19 death toll rose to 8,797 Wednesday as 22 more fatalities were reported, while 1,712 new infections pushed the caseload to 12,71,523, a Health department bulletin said.

The state had reported 1,503 new Covid-19 cases and 21 deaths Tuesday. Of the 22 new Covid-19 fatalities, 14 were from Khurda district, it said.

Khurda district reported 257 new Covid-19 cases followed by Cuttack (104), Angul (79), Balasore (54), Jajpur and Mayurbhanj (53 cases each).

## The daily positivity rate declined to 2.59 per cent as 1,712 infections were detected out of 66,021 samples tested in the last 24 hours

The daily positivity rate declined to 2.59 per cent as 1,712 infections were detected out of 66,021 samples tested in the last 24 hours.

Odisha currently has 17,647 active Covid-19 cases, including 3,910 in Khurda district, which is in the

## Panchayat polls: 1.13L litre liquor seized between Jan 19 & Feb 6

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** The state police has seized a total of 1,13,686.19 litre of liquor and 27 illegal arms ahead of the panchayat polls 2022, an official said Wednesday.

Since the enforcement of Model Code Conduct from January 19, 2022 to February 6, 2022 ahead of the panchayat polls, the Odisha Police seized 1,13,686.19 litres of liquor in bulk quantity. The maximum amount of 70,536.965 litres of liquor were seized in Balasore district. In DCP, Bhubaneswar area

2,470.87 litres of liquor and in DCP Cuttack, 1,950.715 litres of liquor were seized during the said period. As many as 27 illegal arms were seized during the period. Maximum eight illegal arms were seized in Rourkela. Also, 471.86 grams of drugs were seized under the NDPS Act in the state. A total of 1,492 warrants were executed from January 19, 2022 to February 6, 2022 in the State. In Balasore district alone, 201 warrants were executed.

The three-tier panchayat elections in the state will held February 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24 in a phased manner.

## Drug drive to put paid to filariasis begins today



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** The Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) Department will begin the first phase of mass drug administration (MDA) campaign to eliminate lymphatic filariasis (LF), commonly known as elephantiasis, in eight of the 15 endemic districts starting Thursday, an official said Wednesday.

Addressing a media sensitisation workshop here, State Program Officer of Vector-Borne Diseases, Shubhashisha Mohanty, said keeping in view India's commitment to eliminate filariasis by 2030, the state government will undertake MDA campaign in 15 LF endemic districts in phases with strict adherence to Covid protocols.

"The first phase of the MDA campaign, which will begin February 10 and culminate February 19 this year, will cover eight districts—Angul, Balasore, Cuttack, Ganjam, Dhenkanal, Jharsuguda, Nuapada and Nayagarh. The second phase of the drive that is scheduled to start

**The first phase of the MDA campaign, that will begin February 10 and culminate February 19 this year, will cover eight districts—Angul, Balasore, Cuttack, Ganjam, Dhenkanal, Jharsuguda, Nuapada and Nayagarh. The second phase of the drive that is scheduled to start March 7 and end March 16, 2022 will cover Bargarh, Keonjhar, Kandhamal, Mayurbhanj, Sonepur, Sundargarh and Sambalpur districts**

**SHUBHASHISHA MOHANTY** | STATE PROGRAM OFFICER OF VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

March 7 and end March 16, 2022 will cover Bargarh, Keonjhar, Kandhamal, Mayurbhanj, Sonepur, Sundargarh and Sambalpur districts," Shubhashisha added in the workshop organised by the H&FW department in collaboration with Global Health Strategies. Public Health Director Niranjana

Mishra highlighted the severity of filariasis and the importance of anti-filaria drugs.

"Commonly acquired in childhood but manifest in adulthood, this infection damages the lymphatic system and if left untreated, it causes abnormal swelling of the body parts which is irreversible. People with filariasis often suffer from manifestations such as hydrocele (inflammation of the scrotum), lymphoedema (swelling in the limbs) and chyluria (milky white urine). The condition affects the livelihood, opportunities and working capacity of those suffering from LF and they often become a subject of stigma. It's a disabling disease which can be prevented by consuming anti-filaria drugs (DEC and Albendazole) administered by trained health workers," Mishra added.

Special Secretary of H&FW department, Ajit Kumar Mohanty, highlighted the importance of community participation in eliminating filariasis. "We'll ensure that everyone except for children below two years, pregnant women and seriously ill people in the endemic districts must consume anti-filarial drugs in the presence of trained health workers," he said, adding that participation of the community is key to eliminating filariasis.

Notably, lymphatic filariasis is a neglected tropical disease. Infection occurs when filarial parasites are transmitted to humans through mosquitoes. Infection is usually acquired in childhood causing hidden damage to the lymphatic system.

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RABI SEASON



Farmers trying to lift a power tiller which got stuck in the mud while preparing a farmland for rabi crops in Hirakud ayacut area of Sambalpur district, Wednesday

In a first, Jumdang to vote in panchayat elections

ANDHRA PRADESH HAD EARLIER PLAYED A DIRTY TRICK BY SHOWING JUMDANG AS PART OF ITS TERRITORY IN GOOGLE MAP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Feb 9: Residents of Jumdang, a non-descript village in Swabhimhan Anchal of Malkangiri district, are on cloud nine as they are all set to exercise their franchise in the upcoming panchayat elections in Odisha for the first time since Independence.

Significantly, the landscape of the village has changed remarkably with a lot of development works undertaken after the launch of 'Gurupriya Setu'. Once inaccessible, the hill-locked village now has roads. Earlier, people used to commute by riding horses in hilly foot tracks.



WELCOME MOVE

- AP has built schools and is providing education to the children in Telugu language, apart from providing free electricity and other welfare measures to the locals
Unmoved by the lure of host of facilities by the neighbouring state, Jumdang villagers are inclined towards Odisha and have assured to take part in the panchayat elections in Odisha

Unmoved by the lure, the villagers are inclined towards Odisha and have assured to take part in the Odisha panchayat polls.

The neighbouring state has built schools and is providing education to the children in Telugu language, apart from providing free electricity and other welfare measures.

Earlier, AP had played a dirty trick by showing Jumdang as part of its territory in the Google map. Jumdang residents used to take part in all the elections held in Pedabaylu mandal of Visakhapatnam district.

However, they have apparently decided to say goodbye to Andhra Pradesh and are no longer to fall in the trap of the neighbouring state.

EAST COAST RAILWAY tender notices including (1) e-Tender Notice No.: e-Tender-Elect-G-39-21, (2) e-Tender Notice No.: e-Tender-Elect-G-47-21, and (3) e-Tender Notice No.: e-Tender-South-KUR-260-2021.

EAST COAST RAILWAY tender notices including (1) Tender No. e-tender-North-KUR-260-2021, (2) Tender No. e-tender-South-KUR-267-2021, (3) Tender No. e-tender-South-KUR-268-2021, and (4) Tender No. e-tender-Estate-KUR-269-2021.

SHORT TAKES

Man hacks wife to death in Ganjam

Digapahandi: A woman was hacked to death by her husband with a sharp weapon over alleged family dispute at Chaitanyapur village under this block in Ganjam district, late Tuesday night.

60-year old held for raping minor

Laxmipur: A 60-year-old man was arrested on charge of raping a 6-year old girl at Odiapentha under this block in Koraput district, Wednesday.

Rourkela Assistant Collector arrested

Rourkela: Vigilance sleuths Wednesday arrested Rourkela Assistant Collector Manoranjan Nayak in connection with a disproportionate assets case.

COMING UP: ECONOMIC CORRIDOR IN GANJAM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Feb 9: The state government has decided to construct an economic corridor from Tata Steel project site to Gopalpur Port in Ganjam district, said sources.

The state government will acquire 25,922 acre land for construction of the economic corridor in order to boost overall economic and industrial development of the region, the sources added.

Ganjam Collector received a letter in this regard from State Revenue and Disaster Management department, Tuesday. The construction of the economic corridor will be undertaken by Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO).

The 25,922 acre land required for establishment of the corridor will be acquired from two villages in the area. According to sources, 4,270 acre land will be acquired in Badaputi village while 21,652 acre will be acquired in Basnaputi village.

Moreover, efforts will be made to reduce the adverse impact on the land losers due to loss of land and use of infrastructure for development.



Govt will acquire 25,922 acre land for construction of the economic corridor in order to boost economic and industrial development of the region

the land belonging to 19 people will be acquired in Basnaputi village.

Moreover, efforts will be made to reduce the adverse impact on the land losers due to loss of land and use of infrastructure for development.

Sandalwood mafia on the prowl in Keonjhar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Feb 9: Smuggling of sandalwood in Keonjhar district is rampant as the mafia have smuggled 20 such precious trees from various places in the last two weeks.

However, forest and police officials have failed to make any major breakthrough in such cases. According to reports, an old sandal tree close to the district planning and coordination office on the premises of the Collectorate was a recent target.

Three sandalwood trees were cut down by the mafia a few days ago. Recently, four such trees were cut down on two temple premises under Anandapur police station.

Moreover, 11 sandalwood trees were chopped off and taken away from Nicolson Forest Training school under Champua police limits.



- Sandalwood smugglers have felled five trees in Keonjhar town during the last few days
Three sandalwood trees on the premises of Sri Sri Baladevjeev temple were cut down by the mafia a few days ago
Recently, four such trees were cut down on two temple premises under Anandapur police station

VOLLEYBALL TOURNNEY



A volleyball tournament in progress at the Mini Stadium in Khunta of Mayurbhanj district

Scrap trader 'hacked to death by mutt chief'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Feb 9: A scrap trader was hacked to death allegedly by the head of a mutt on the premises of Sri Chaitanya Gosain mutt at Mandar village under Gondia block in this district, Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Uddhab Patra, 32, a resident of ward no-14 under Bhuban NAC area in the district. The accused mutt chief was identified as Dasarathi Behera.

Police recovered the body and began a probe. However, the reason behind the murder is yet to be ascertained. Family of the deceased alleged that Dasarathi has killed Uddhab with a sharp weapon. Locals termed it as a case of human sacrifice as police seized an axe, new clothes and puja materials from the the mutt premises.

WOMAN STABS HUBBY TO DEATH

Athagarh: In a shocking incident, a woman allegedly stabbed her husband to death in an act of self-defence at Harijan Sahi under Ward No-4 of Athagarh Notified Area Council in Cuttack district.

PANCHAYAT POLLS IN BARGARH

Tough time for 3 parties to resolve internal rift

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Feb 9: With the campaigning for the panchayat elections hitting a feverish pitch here, the three major political parties have been struggling to sort out internal squabbles among their cadres, said some political observers.

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) is apparently pulling out all the stops to repeat the 2012 results in Bargarh Assembly constituency. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is also leaving no stone unturned to retain all five zilla parishad zones while Congress is trying to improve its tally in the segment.

According to sources, there are four zilla parishad (ZP) zones under Bargarh block and one zone under Barpali block. Leaders of all the three parties looking after campaign



affairs are reportedly worried about the growing dissidence and rift within the organisations.

In 2007, Congress had won the Bargarh ZP zone-1 and 2 while it went to the BJD in 2012 and the BJP in 2017. All the three parties have attached importance to the ZP zone-1

and 2. Puspabhoi of the BJD, Mukta Sahu of the BJP and Droupadi Bhoi of Congress are in the fray for ZP-1 seat. Besides, two other candidates - one from BSP and an Independent - are contesting from this seat.

The BJD had won ZP zone-3 in 2007 and 2012, but it went to the BJP

in 2017. The BJD is trying hard to win it back. There are also five candidates who have thrown their hats into the ring in this seat.

In 2007, Congress had won the ZP zone-4 while it went to the BJD in 2012 and the BJP in 2017. There are four candidates for the seat.

THE BJD IS APPARENTLY PULLING OUT ALL THE STOPS TO REPEAT THE 2012 RESULTS IN BARGARH ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY

THE BJP IS ALSO LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED TO RETAIN ALL FIVE ZILLA PARISHAD ZONES WHILE CONGRESS IS TRYING TO IMPROVE ITS TALLY IN THE SEGMENT

The BJP had wrested the zone-1 seat from the BJD in 2017. According to poll pundits, it may be difficult for BJP to retain the seat as Gourahari Mishra, who played a key role in the victory of BJP candidate in 2017, had joined the BJD during Bijepur by-election.

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, RAMBHA Rambha N.A.C., Ganjam, Odisha-761028. Includes contact info and a notice in Odia regarding a meeting.



FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

# RUSSIA'S REVENGE



Whether Putin's version of history is accurate is immaterial. There is hardly a country that has not reinvented the past to serve the needs of the present

Empires never fall quietly, and defeated great powers always develop revanchist aspirations. This was the case for Germany after World War I: a humiliating peace agreement and the offer of former German territories to the country's weaker neighbours helped to lay the groundwork for the awful revisionist adventures of World War II. And it is the case for Russia today.

In 2005, Russian President Vladimir Putin called the Soviet Union's collapse "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century." So, under the pretext of protecting ethnic Russian minorities outside Russia's borders, he is attempting to reverse it.

Ultimately, Putin seeks a return to the post-WWII order, with a new Yalta-style agreement enshrining Russia's recovery of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. In his view, this approach is essential to "peaceful development." Through its heroic victory over fascism - which the West seeks to diminish with its "historical revisionism" - Russia earned its place in the top echelon of the global power hierarchy.

Of course, in practice, Russia already maintains a sphere of influence. It does so, for example, by sustaining "frozen" conflicts in former Soviet republics, from the clash between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh to the dispute over Transnistria, an unrecognised breakaway region of Moldova.

Russia also intervenes to help Kremlin-friendly governments quell domestic dissent, such as in Belarus and Kazakhstan. And it has brought most of the former Soviet republics into the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, under which it keeps military bases in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. Tajikistan is also home to Russian military bases, as are Abkhazia and South Ossetia, secessionist regions of Georgia that Russia recognised as independent sovereign states after its 2008 invasion, which effectively ended Georgia's bid for NATO membership.

But a prized piece of Russia's sphere of influence might be slipping away. The focus of the current standoff between Russia and the West over Ukraine reflects the country's size and strategic value. But there is also a historical and emotional component to Putin's commitment to keeping the country in the Russian fold.

As Putin told a boisterous crowd after annexing Crimea in 2014, Ukraine represents the Orthodox-Christian kingdom of Rus, the basis of Russian civilization. Crimea has "always been an integral part of Russia in the hearts and minds of people," he said, and Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, is "the mother of Russian cities." More recently, he has repeated his longstanding claim that "Ukraine is not even a country"; the "greater part" of its territory "was given to us."

Whether Putin's version of history is accurate is immaterial. There is hardly a country that has not reinvented the past to serve the needs of the present. What matters is his commitment to the goals he is pursuing - and the context in which he is pursuing them.

Putin is clearly willing to go to great lengths to keep Ukraine out of NATO. What he may not have accounted for, however, is that the stakes are also high for the United States, whose global reputation has been severely eroded recently, not least by the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan and the country's subsequent takeover by the Taliban.

Allowing Russia to make a mockery of the 1994 Budapest

Memorandum (to which Russia is a signatory) guaranteeing Ukraine's territorial integrity would upend the European security system and deal a death blow to America's global standing. Why would South Korea, Taiwan, or Japan trust American security guarantees against China's designs in East Asia?

Although US President Joe Biden has ruled out direct military intervention, a full-scale invasion - or even a "minor" one aimed, say, at creating a territorial corridor between Russia and Crimea by annexing land in eastern Ukraine - could well trigger a resolute American response. Even if it did not, and Russia managed to defeat Ukraine's military - the third largest in Europe - pacifying the country would not be easy. An invasion of Ukraine could turn out to be as damaging for Russia today as the invasion of Afghanistan was for the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

Putin might have realised this by now, and thus may welcome a face-saving diplomatic solution to the crisis he has created. But the standoff will nonetheless have a lasting impact. After all, Putin has already reaffirmed that Russia is a revisionist power capable of disrupting the security arrangements Europe built in the aftermath of the Cold War.

In particular, the crisis has exposed the divisions in the transatlantic alliance. Plagued by a "double addiction" to US security guarantees and Russian gas, and

weighed down by the ghosts of its history, Germany has avoided a commitment to a NATO response. In fact, most European countries were unhappy with the sanctions imposed on Russia after the annexation of Crimea, and still disagree with the US about what should trigger new sanctions. And none of America's European allies is eager for Ukraine to join NATO anytime soon.

The origin of Russia's resentment toward NATO enlargement can be traced to February 1990, when then-US Secretary of State James Baker assured Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that NATO would expand "not one inch eastward." In September of that year, as part of the Two Plus Four Agreement that permitted German reunification, the Soviets consented only to NATO membership for Germany. Robert Gates, who became CIA director the following year, admitted that the Russians were "misled." As a result, while Leningrad was 1,200 miles from NATO's eastern edge at the end of the Cold War, St. Petersburg is now less than 100 miles away.

When the current showdown ends, the US should reconsider plans for NATO's expansion. As George Kennan, the architect of America's Cold War "containment" strategy, predicted in 1997, NATO's eastward expansion inflamed Russia's "nationalistic, anti-Western, and militaristic tendencies," restored "the atmosphere of the Cold War to East West relations," and drove "Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to [the West's] liking." This, he believed, could turn out to be "the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era."

The US needs to take Russia more seriously. Dismissing the country as a "regional power," as then-US President Barack Obama did, is dangerously counterproductive. For all its weaknesses, Russia is a power to be reckoned with, and its legitimate concerns must be respected.

*The writer, a former Israeli foreign minister, is Vice President of the Toledo International Center for Peace.*

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Shlomo Ben-Ami

### AN INVASION OF UKRAINE COULD TURN OUT TO BE AS DAMAGING FOR RUSSIA TODAY AS THE INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN WAS FOR THE SOVIET UNION IN THE 1980S



Margrethe Vestager

### The more digitised our societies become, the more we need to improve awareness and enforcement of our rights online

**The cup has to be left clean and empty for the divine liquor to be poured into it.**  
SRI AUROBINDO

## Our Digital Rights

Whether it's a place to do business, study, shop, keep in touch, find a partner, or sustain a lifeline to family and friends, we did not need a pandemic to show us why the internet matters. But the pandemic has reminded us that when we act to shape the online experience, we need to get it right. How we manage the digital world says a lot about who we are.

But how should we manage it? For starters, it helps to know specifically what we hope to achieve. For example, we want people to have access to affordable networks and the skills to use technology. We want to choose which data we share, and when and with whom we share it. We want to know the carbon footprints of our tablets and the videos we stream. We want to be protected as much online as we are offline. And we want to be able to disconnect.

Everyone in Europe - and in the rest of the world - should be able to rely on these basic principles. Everyone should know that these rights exist and deserve protection. In addition to national governments and members of the European Parliament, 82% of people across all 27 EU member states say they want the European Commission to define and promote a common framework of digital rights and principles.

And now we have done precisely that. The Commission's proposed declaration of digital rights and principles, released late last month, puts people first. Digital policies should be human-centric and designed to leave no one behind. At a time when digital technologies play an increasingly prominent role in social, economic, and political life, we want safe tools that work for everyone, and that respect our rights and values.

Building on this vision, we grouped our proposed principles and rights into six chapters. First, technology should have a worthy purpose: to serve us, the people, who are at the center of the digital transition. We should be able to pursue our aspirations knowing that we are secure, and that our fundamental rights will be respected.

Second, social solidarity is key. Everyone must be able to feel like they belong and can benefit from becoming more digital. That is why our proposed framework includes commitments on digital education, connectivity, and digital public services. Reliable access to digital health care across the European Union (which would have helped us immensely during the pandemic) also falls under this heading.

The third chapter focuses on freedom of choice. Artificial-intelligence technologies must not predetermine people's decisions, algorithms must be transparent, and data samples must be as unbiased as possible. These principles are necessary to protect not only our rights and personal agency but also our health and safety. Fourth, we must ensure widespread participation in the digital public sphere. This implies efforts to safeguard our democracies, whether through measures to protect freedom of expression or rules against illegal content or disinformation. We want the online information ecosystem to stimulate democratic debate, not create filter bubbles or foment division and polarisation. People should have access to diverse sources of information in a language they know.

Fifth, safety, security, and empowerment are crucial. Everyone should have access to digital technologies, products, and services that are safe from cyber attacks and designed to protect user privacy. We especially must protect our children from crimes committed through, or facilitated by, the internet.

A final priority is sustainability. We must ensure that users have access to information about a technology's environmental footprint, and we must promote technologies that will help us achieve our most ambitious climate targets. Fortunately, digital technologies have the potential to help us cut more emissions than they cause, by enabling more innovative business models, more efficient services, and better resource management.

In short, our declaration captures what matters most in Europeans' daily lives. It is about empowerment, participation, accessibility, resource use, and security. It is about using technology in ways that unite, rather than divide, people. By articulating these principles and rights, we have a clearer point of reference - a blueprint for the digital transition. That is the first step for policymakers who are developing new initiatives, and for businesses that are working on new technologies.

With our digital principles, we are setting a European standard that we hope will anchor similar approaches around the world - just as we did with data protection and consumer rights. Many of our international partners are holding similar debates, and when I recently discussed our approach in Washington, DC, I could see that it has a lot in common with proposals in the United States for a digital Bill of Rights.

To give the declaration the visibility it deserves, we want the declaration to be signed this spring by the presidents of the European Parliament, the European Council, and the European Commission. We also intend to include it in our annual monitoring of progress toward the EU's 2030 digital targets, and we will be consulting Europeans about their digital concerns and priorities every year.

When we polled Europeans a few months ago, we found that eight in ten expected digital tools to bring at least as many advantages as disadvantages. But a significant share of the respondents (almost 40%) were unaware that they have the same fundamental rights (freedom of expression, privacy, nondiscrimination) online as offline.

Our consultations tell us that we are hitting a nerve. The more digitised our societies become, the more we need to improve awareness and enforcement of our rights online. The declaration of digital rights and principles should become our default thinking. The human-centric approach to the digital transition must underpin everything we do. It is as simple as that. Respect for fundamental rights - both online and offline - is at the very core of what it means to be European.

*The writer is Executive Vice President of the European Commission.*

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### WISDOM CORNER

- The fabled musk deer searches the world over for the source of the scent which comes from itself. RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHANSA
- The two most powerful warriors are patience and time. LEO TOLSTOY
- In the long run, the sharpest weapon of all is a kind and gentle spirit. ANNE FRANK

### WORDSWORTH

#### Sabrage

Imagine opening a bottle with great ceremony by striking off its neck with one sweep of a blade. That's sabrage. Traditionally the bottle contains champagne and the implement is a sabre. You might think the result will be lots of broken glass and mess, but the skill of sabrage lies in hitting the bottle hard just at the bottom edge of the annulus, the glass ring at the top of the neck. The blow breaks the neck off cleanly, complete with cork. Experts advise you chill the bottle very well and avoid shaking it, remove the foil and wire cage, hold it away from you at an angle of about 40 degrees and strike with the bottle seam uppermost. Do not try this at home, kiddies. In truth, a sabre is optional: almost any hard object with an edge will do it. At least one organisation, the Confrérie du Sabre d'Or, maintains this tradition at its champagne parties. But otherwise, both it and the term are rarely encountered.

### SPECTRUM ECONOMY

## Digital rupee amid a digital divide



DV Ramana

### CLARITY ON IMPLEMENTATION OR EFFORT TO INVOLVE ALL STAKEHOLDERS IS MISSING IN THE ENTIRE NARRATIVE OF THE DIGITAL RUPEE

It is often said, "If you can't beat them, join them." It seems that this is precisely what is happening in the world of crypto currencies. When governments of different countries realised that they are not able to regulate the private players, who are creating and destroying millions of dollars by launching different avatars of crypto currencies, they too joined the fray by launching central bank digital currencies (CBDCs).

CBDCs are defined as a type of digital money issued by the central bank (the RBI in India), denominated in the same way as its currency. CBDCs can be used by individuals, business houses, and government entities to make or receive payments. As of now, it is being positioned as a complement and not as a substitute to cash. As CBDC would be the RBI's liability it will not carry market risk, credit risk, or liquidity risk. Moreover, its value would be guaranteed by the State, so one may not see the usual wide fluctuations in price as witnessed in other crypto assets such as Bitcoin.

As per a report by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), more than 85 per cent of central banks around the world are now exploring the possibilities of launch-

ing CBDCs to address the limitations of the existing crypto currencies. Bahamas is the first country in the world with a CBDC. It is called the "sand dollar" and was issued in October 2020. Although China has been developing its digital currency since 2014, it rolled out a virtual currency only in 2021.

How can India remain behind? Lots of things happened in 2021. In February, the RBI released a report describing the pros and cons of a digital currency. In March, the RBI Governor said: "As the underlying technology is still developing, we are exploring ways for a clear, safe, and legally certain settlement finality, which is most crucial for a secure and efficient payment system." In July, the RBI announced that it is considering a series of pilot studies for an eventual "phased" rollout of a CBDC. Finally, the Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman announced in Budget 2022 that the digital rupee will be issued by the RBI using block-chain technology starting from the financial year 2022-23.

So what's next? It all depends on the sincerity and commitment of our government. The announcement by the FM has sent a signal that we are also thinking like other developed countries on

the issue of CBDCs. However, clarity on implementation or effort to involve all stakeholders is missing in the entire narrative of the digital rupee. The latest Economic Survey did not even mention anything about it. So its inclusion in the Budget speech surprised many.

We need to learn from others. For instance, the Federal Reserve of the USA initiated a national level dialogue with all stakeholders as a first step to understand the relevance of its CBDC in January 2022, even though the policymakers and staff have studied CBDC for several years. In Europe, Sweden launched a year-long sovereign digital currency project called 'e-krona'. Similarly, the G7 countries agreed that no global digital currency project should begin until all legal and regulatory issues are adequately addressed.

But, it seems we are in hurry to launch the digital rupee. The FM in her post Budget interactions mentioned that its introduction will help in reducing financial and physical efforts required for money management. Such statements may not have much relevance, if not supported by rigorous research. Hope our government and the RBI will initiate conversations at dif-

ferent levels with different stakeholders before rolling out the CBDC.

Will India follow the model of China, or will it allow the digital rupee to evolve with more people friendly features? Will the digital rupee be retail or wholesale (exclusively for inter-bank payments)? Hope the policymakers are aware that the absence of a robust regulatory mechanism may lead to many unwanted consequences. Will the digital rupee maintain a balance between the anonymity and confidentiality while protecting the individual privacy? Will people be allowed to hold the foreign CBDCs? Many such issues and questions need to be understood and answered before the RBI issues the digital rupee. As of now, no such clarity has been provided.

Last but not the least, the supply side of digital rupee dominated the entire conversation. Not much discussion has been held on its demand side. The digital rupee will be meaningful if and only if, all citizens have earnings to spend, save, and share. The digital rupee with the existing digital divide may further widen the economic and social inequality.

*The writer is a Professor in XIMB. Views are personal.*

### Uniform in essential

**Sir,** India is a secular country. Regardless of race, religion, creed or class, we all are Indians. The Constitution of India is its soul and its ideology is far from communal. But often communal incidents damage the nation. An example of this is the latest 'hijab' row in Karnataka where a group of students comes to school wearing hijab while another group wears saffron stoles. Everyone is equal in school, regardless of race, religion or creed, and everyone is a student, so all students need to wear uniforms. Whether rich or poor, saffron or black, uniform is essential for a student.

*Chittaranjan Barik, JAGATSinghpur*

### Stop maligning Gandhi

**Sir,** The country would never tolerate any humiliation to the Father of the Nation. It needs to be mentioned here that some wicked people having a clear link with a particular party and an organisation are busy making false propaganda against Mahatma Gandhi with fabricated stories. But ultimately they would be discarded by the people as not only Indians but people across the world know well Gandhi. Any attempt to glorify Godse at the cost of Gandhi would not be successful. Gandhi is not an individual, he is an institution. He showed the strength of non-violence to the whole world. Such a person can't be eliminated by cheap propaganda of the people who idolise Gandhi's killer.

*Manohar Mohanty, UMERKOTE*

### Pandemic violence

**Sir,** This refers to "The pandemic of violence against women", *Orissa POST* Feb 9. The world was already facing a crisis of domestic violence with women and children being the major victims. And now the pandemic is only exasperating the problem. The rampant spread of the virus has forced the victims to stay indoors with the abusers, leaving them with little opportunities to seek refuge. With workplaces closed and visits of friends and relatives to houses dissuaded, abusers easily take control over the victims' milieu. The United Nations Population Fund has released a report, which says that pandemics increase the risk of gender-based violence. The report adds that during the Ebola outbreak, women and children had experienced higher rates of sexual violence. International development organisations must speed up their efforts to prevent and address the issue of pandemic violence seriously.

*Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI*

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

Readers of *Orissa POST* are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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# national

## of the day quote

Channi claims he has done everything in 111 days. He is fooling the people. Every project has a gestation period and takes months to start

**AMARINDER SINGH**  
PUNJAB LOK CONGRESS CHIEF

All political parties from north to south have become family parties while the Indian National Congress has turned into 'Indian Family Party'

**J P NADDA** | BJP PRESIDENT

I understand elections. I have been a seven-time MP and three-time Chief Minister. I also know India. This time, division of votes is not going to happen in Uttar Pradesh

**MAMATA BANERJEE** | WB CM

### SHORT TAKES

#### Naravane speaks to top Saudi commander

**New Delhi:** Chief of Army Staff Gen MM Naravane Wednesday spoke to Lt Gen Fahd Bin Abdullah Mohammed Al-Mutair, the Commander of Royal Saudi Armed Forces of Saudi Arabia, focusing on ways to deepen bilateral military ties. The Army said various aspects of bilateral defence cooperation figured in the talks. "General MM Naravane #COAS had telephonic interaction with Lieutenant General Fahd Bin Abdullah Mohammed Al-Mutair, Commander, Royal Saudi Armed Forces, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and discussed aspects of bilateral Defence Cooperation," the Army tweeted.

#### MEA to visit Oz, Philippines

**New Delhi:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will begin a six-day visit to Australia and the Philippines beginning Thursday. His visit to Australia from February 10 to 13 will be his first trip to that country as external affairs minister.

#### Rly police bust 'hawala' racket

**Mumbai:** The Railway Protection Force (RPF) has busted a 'hawala' racket at Dadar station in Mumbai and seized ₹67.47 lakh from a person, officials said Wednesday. Hawala denotes illegal transaction of funds by skirting the legal banking channels. On the basis of inputs, the RPF's crime intelligence branch laid a trap on Tuesday and arrested Sendharam Khumaram, who had arrived from Amravati, the Central Railway said in a release.

#### 20 scrap godowns gutted in Thane

**Thane:** A fire broke out in the powerloom town of Bhiwandi here Wednesday, gutting nearly 20 godowns where scrap items were kept, civic officials said. No one was injured in the blaze, which erupted around 6.30 am in the warehouses located in Fatima Nagar area, Bhiwandi Nizampur Municipal Corporation's chief fire officer Rajesh Pawar said. More than 100 godowns are located in the area and about 20 of them were destroyed in the fire, officials said.

#### Man kills wife

**Latur:** A 26-year-old man allegedly killed his estranged wife by slitting her throat with a sharp weapon in the presence of his toddler son in Maharashtra's Latur city, police said Wednesday. The incident took place in Awanti Nagar area of Barshi road around 5 pm Tuesday, an official said. Reshma Abdul Shaikh (22) was living with her parents following constant harassment by her husband Abdul Unus Shaikh, resident of Islampur Chowk area, he said.



The government promised two crore jobs a year, they should report to us, how many jobs were created?

**P CHIDAMBARAM**  
CONGRESS LEADER & FORMER FINANCE MINISTER

#### FB, INSTAGRAM PAGES OF CHINAR CORPS RESTORED

Facebook and Instagram restored handles of Chinar Corps, the army's strategically located formation in the Kashmir valley, February 9, after a week of being blocked. While the handles are now restored, there is no clarity on why they were blocked initially



# Students block roads as hijab row mounts

AGENCIES

**Kolkata, Feb 9:** Hundreds of students in the eastern Indian city of Kolkata Wednesday chanted slogans and blocked roads in protest of a hijab ban in the southern state of Karnataka, as a row over wearing the head covering in schools intensifies.

The row has drawn in Malala Yousafzai, the campaigner for girls' education and Nobel Peace Prize laureate who survived being shot aged 15 by a Taliban gunman in her native Pakistan in 2012, who asked Indian leaders in a tweet to "stop the marginalisation of Muslim women".

Local media reported last week that several schools in Karnataka had denied entry to Muslim girls wearing the hijab citing an education ministry order, prompting



Aliyah University Muslim Students Federation activists holding a banner raise slogans, during a protest rally in Kolkata

protests from parents and students. Hindu students mounted counter-protests, flocking to schools in recent days in support of the ban, forcing the Karnataka state government to shut schools and colleges for

three days to ease tensions between the two communities. In one incident in a video widely shared online, a lone Muslim student wearing the hijab is surrounded by Hindu male youths shouting reli-

College is forcing us to choose between studies and the hijab. Refusing to let girls go to school in their hijabs is horrifying. Objectification of women persists - for wearing less or more. Indian leaders must stop the marginalisation of Muslim women

**MALALA YOUSAFZAI**  
NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATE

gious slogans while trying to enter her school in Karnataka.

The protesting students in Kolkata Wednesday were predominantly women wearing hijabs, a Reuters eyewitness said, adding the demonstrations were without incident.

The students told Reuters that they plan to reconvene Thursday.

Protests have also been planned Wednesday in India's capital New Delhi.

"Refusing to let girls go to school in their hijabs is horrifying. Objectification of women persists — for wearing less or more," Yousafzai said in a tweet late Tuesday. The government of Karnataka, where 12% of the population is Muslim and which is ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has said in an order that students should follow dress codes set by schools.

Opposition parties and critics accuse the BJP government at federal and state level of discriminating against the minority Muslim population.

Modi has defended his record and says his economic and social policies benefit all Indians.

# Youth trapped in mountain cleft rescued



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Palakkad (Ker), Feb 9:** A trekker trapped in a cleft on a mountain face in Kerala's Palakkad district for nearly two days was rescued on Wednesday by Army teams, which provided him food and water and then hauled him up to safety.

After the rescue, the Army's Southern Command tweeted, "#OP\_Palakkad In a daring mission Indian Army Team from #SouthernCommand has rescued the stranded trekker, Mr Babu to safety from the dangerous cliff, across the treacherous rocky mountain face. #WeCare @adgpi."

"#OP\_Palakkad In a spectacular action, highly qualified Teams of Indian Army have successfully rescued Mr Babu who slipped off a cliff & was stranded in a steep gorge for over 48 hours. The operation was coordinated by #DakshinBharatArea under the aegis of #SouthernCommand @adgpi."

After his rescue, the efforts to airlift him to a hospital also saw some drama with the Mi-17 Helicopter of the Indian Air Force, which arrived to take him, being unable to land on the mountain top, as per the visuals on news channels.

The visuals showed the chopper attempting to land on the mountain top and when that could not be done, it gained altitude and circled the mountain before coming back for a second landing attempt.

When the second attempt at landing also did not fructify, Babu was lifted onto the chopper by strapping him to a stretcher-basket of sorts which was then pulled into the aircraft using a pulley in the helicopter.

According to locals, the youth, along with two others had on Monday decided to climb to the top of Cherad hill there, but the other two abandoned the effort halfway.

## APEX COURT GRANTS PRE-ARREST BAIL TO MAMATA POLL AGENT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 9:** The Supreme Court Wednesday granted pre-arrest bail to SK Supiyan, the election agent of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in a murder case probed by the CBI, directing him to fully cooperate with the investigating agency.

A bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and Abhay S Oka said: "Considering the peculiar facts of the case, we are of the view that the appellant deserves to be granted pre-arrest bail. However, the appellant will have to fully cooperate with the respondent-CBI for investigation and will have to remain present for investigation as and when called upon by the investigating officer."

The bench noted that two chargesheets - one October 5, 2022 and the other on January 9, 2022 - have been filed but Supiyan has not been named as an accused. It further added that the CBI is relying upon statements of 5 witnesses recorded under Section 164 of CrPC. "The statements of the first two witnesses were recorded on September 7, 2021 and November 11, 2021 respectively. But the appellant was not named in both the charge sheets filed thereafter," said the bench.

The bench added that statement of Manoj Kumar Bera was recorded on November 18, 2021, but he was not cited as a witness in the first two charge sheets and the statements of the other two witnesses have been belatedly recorded January 24, 2022.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing Supiyan, had casted doubt on Bera's statement and claimed that the CBI tried to implicate his client for political reasons, as he was the election agent of West Bengal Chief Minister. He submitted that most of the witnesses are workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party and for obvious political reasons, and his client has been falsely implicated.

The CBI had pressed for custodial interrogation of Supiyan and relied on statements of the witnesses recorded under Section 164 of CrPC.



Labourers work at a construction site, at Dadar in Mumbai

## COURT TO START HEARING ON QUANTUM OF SENTENCE FEB 11

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, Feb 9:** A special court here Wednesday said it will begin hearing arguments on February 11 for deciding on the quantum of sentence for convicts in the case of 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts.

The hearing was deferred on Wednesday after a defence lawyer requested some time to gather documents before the court begins further proceedings in the case.

The court had Tuesday convicted 49 people in the case related to the blasts which had claimed 56 lives and left over 200 injured. In the verdict, which came 13 years after the deadly blasts, special judge A R Patel

acquitted 28 accused, giving them the benefit of doubt.

On Wednesday, a defence lawyer submitted an application before the court, seeking three weeks' time to collect relevant documents from the convicts before the hearing on the quantum

of sentence, special public prosecutor Amit Patel said. Various documents, like medical papers and educational qualifications, will be used by the defence to present a case for seeking minimum sentence for the convicts. The convicts can attract a maximum punishment of death or imprisonment for life, and the prosecution will argue for the maximum punishment.

Two earlier manifestos - "Shakti Vidhan" for women and "Bharti

## Cong releases manifesto for UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Feb 9:** The Congress Wednesday promised to waive farm loans within 10 days and provide 20 lakh jobs if the party forms the government in Uttar Pradesh.

The poll manifesto released by party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also vowed to provide ₹3,000 as compensation to farmers for crop damage by stray cattle, a problem gripping cultivators in many parts of the state.

The manifesto - "Unnati Vidhan" - was termed by Priyanka as "Jan Ghoshna Patra" (people's manifesto). The vision document was brought released a day before voting starts in 58 assembly seats in the state.

Two earlier manifestos - "Shakti Vidhan" for women and "Bharti



Vidhan" for youth - have already been released by the party. The BJP and the Samajwadi Party released their manifesto for the UP election Tuesday.

Releasing the manifesto, Priyanka said, the Congress will waive loans of farmers within 10 days of government formation, and also purchase wheat and paddy

at ₹2,500 per quintal as well as sugarcane at the rate of ₹400 per quintal, after coming to power.

She said in Chhattisgarh, her party's government had written off farmers' loans within three hours of being sworn-in. The issues of unemployment and inflation have been taken care while formulating the manifesto of the state, she said.

She said, "Rs 3,000 compensation will be given to farmers for crop damage by stray cattle. 'Godhan Nyay Yojna' will be started under which cow dung will be purchased at ₹2 per kg," she said.

Priyanka said the Congress wanted to end outsourcing in the government, and will regularise those, who are on contract or are being outsourced, in a phased manner.

# Most Indians adopt hybrid lifestyles in pandemic: Google

INTEREST IN HEALTH INSURANCE FOR FAMILIES GREW BY ABOUT 44%

PEOPLE HAVE ALSO BECOME MORE CONSCIOUS ABOUT ONLINE SAFETY IN 2021

2021 ALSO SAW A REEXAMINATION OF LIFESTYLE CHOICES WITH PEOPLE FURTHER PRIORITISING QUALITY TIME, FAMILY TIES, AND OVERALL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 9:** While the Covid-19 pandemic imposed several constraints, the majority of Indians became adept at leveraging internet access to make more informed choices and better de-

isions, and seek support for their hybrid lifestyles, according to a report by Google.

The Google annual Year in Search report for 2021 showed accelerated expansion of the internet user base in India over the past two years. It has also led to millions of new Google searches per day across user segments, channels, and needs making Search a key touchpoint for relevant and helpful information.

"This year's report is headlined by a surge in searches across a spectrum of existing and emerging trends and provides a unique insight into the connected Indian's preference for a digital-first life," said Sapna Chadha, Vice President, Marketing, Google India & Southeast Asia, in a statement.

"As people become increasingly adept online, Search has become their 'go-to' for making sense of a hybrid world in which more and more services and solutions are also now online," she added.



Representational image

Even as mobility was limited, the year saw an acceptance of a blended lifestyle with an approximately 350 per cent growth in interest in "hybrid workplace"

alongside about 80 per cent increase in "online doctor consultation", the report showed.

Increasing user comfort for online commerce has led to a record

533 per cent growth in search interest for "D2C brands" and a 55 per cent increase in "virtual try on".

The report also signals that

people are broadening their interest in wellness to be more holistic with searches across physical, emotional and mental health wellbeing growing by 27 per cent.

Search interest in "pet-friendly" also grew by more than 70 per cent as people seek to have their furry friends join them on their staycations and dine outs.

Further, the demand for local language has also continued to grow. YouTube searches for songs and videos in local languages doubled in 2021. "Businesses will need to take a proactive role in responding to this consumer transition that's well underway by providing seamless paths to purchase across online and otherwise. Along with convenience, brands will need to continuously build trust and confidence amongst their consumers as they make more choices and decisions online," Chadha said.



# BSF foils drone-drop plans, recovers RDX near Indo-Pak border



**THREAT FROM ABOVE**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, Feb 9:** In an attempt to strike by the Pakistan-based groups ahead of the election in Punjab, the Border Security Force (BSF) early Wednesday foiled an attempt to smuggle weapons, ammunition, detonators and approximately 5 kg of RDX, a highly explosive chemical compound, through drone dropping close to the India-Pakistan border in Amritsar district.

A total 4.70 kg RDX, one Chinese pistol, two magazines, 22 rounds of ammo, two timers, and six detonators among others were seized from two packets dropped by the drone, an official statement by the BSF said.

It said the alert forward troops in the Panjgrain area heard a buzzing sound of a suspected flying object coming from Pakistan to India around 1am. The BSF troops subsequently fired upon the drone. An Indian currency of Rs 1 lakh was also recovered from one of the packets.

**A TOTAL 4.70 KG RDX, ONE CHINESE PISTOL, TWO MAGAZINES, 22 ROUNDS OF AMMO, TWO TIMERS, AND SIX DETONATORS AMONG OTHERS WERE SEIZED FROM TWO PACKETS DROPPED BY THE DRONE**

**AN AMOUNT OF ₹1 LAKH IN INDIAN CURRENCY WAS ALSO RECOVERED FROM ONE OF THE PACKETS**

**THE RECOVERY SPOT IS APPROXIMATELY 2,700 METRES AWAY FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BORDER**

It is suspected that the drone dropped both the packets. During the search in the area of Ghaggar and Singhoke villages by the BSF along with a dog and a handler, two yellow colour packets with contraband were recovered. The spot where the packets were found is approximately 2,700 metres away from the International Border.

# Properties of 610 Kashmiri Pandits restored in J&K: Govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 9:** As many as 610 Kashmiri Pandits were given back their properties left behind in Jammu and Kashmir following eruption of militancy there in the late 1980s and early 1990s, informed Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai to the Rajya Sabha.

Rai also said that 3,000 state government jobs were created for Kashmiri migrants under the Prime Minister's Development Package-2015 (PMDP-2015) with an outlay of ₹1,080 crore.

The Jammu and Kashmir government has appointed 1,739 migrants and selected additional 1,088



migrants under PMDP-2015. "As per the information provided by the government of Jammu and Kashmir, the land of 610 applicants (migrants) has been restored in the last five

**The government has taken several measures to rehabilitate Kashmiri migrants back to the valley that include construction of 6,000 transit accommodations in the Kashmir Valley at an estimated cost of ₹920 crore in order to provide accommodation to employed Kashmiri migrants**

NITYANAND RAI | UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR HOME

years," the Union Minister said in a written reply to a question. The Union Minister said as per the Jammu and Kashmir Migrant Immovable Property (Preservation, Protection and Restraint on Distress Sales) Act, 1997, District Magistrates (DMs) of the districts concerned in Jammu and Kashmir are the legal custodians of the immovable properties of the migrants. The DMs are empowered to take all steps for the

preservation and protection of such properties. "The government has taken several measures to rehabilitate Kashmiri migrants back to the valley that include construction of 6,000 transit accommodations in the Kashmir Valley at an estimated cost of ₹920 crore in order to provide accommodation to employed Kashmiri migrants," he said.

# University lecturer quits job to contest poll on SSM ticket

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Feb 9:** An English literature lecturer at a Delhi college, Anuroop Kaur Sandhu quit her job to plunge into politics after being part of the farmers' movement and is contesting the Punjab assembly polls on a Sanyukt Samaj Morcha ticket.

The Sanyukt Samaj Morcha (SSM), headed by Balbir Singh Rajewal, is a political front launched by 22 farmer unions in December 2021 for the February 20 elections to the 117-member Punjab Assembly. It has fielded candidates from varied backgrounds, including agriculturists, activists, teachers and doctors.

Kaur said following her association with the farmers' movement, she applied for the ticket from Muktsar when the SSM was floated and was selected. She is actively campaigning in the assembly segment these days.

During the farmers' stir against the Centre's now-repealed farm laws, Sandhu got in touch with the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha and visited the protest sites at Delhi borders. She helped create awareness about the agitation on social media.

Asked whether she would have contested the elections if the SSM had not been floated, Sandhu said, "Considering that elections were round the corner and I had been associated with this protest from the farmers' end, I would have only contested if there was a farmers' party or a workers' party."

She used to teach English literature as an assistant professor at the Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College affiliated to the Delhi University. "I recently resigned from my job to contest," she said.

Sandhu, who is pursuing MPhil in comparative Indian literature from DU, compiled a list of farmers who died during the agitation in her blog "Human Cost of Farmers Protest".

"For long, I had been looking at how Punjab was being destroyed by drug abuse and other burning issues prevalent here. But all these traditional parties are the same; they don't want people to know what the issue is. If anyone of them wins, they will not bring change, their factories, businesses are still going to be there," she said.

Sandhu said she worked in Delhi but never lost the connection with her hometown Muktsar. "I belong here, this is my own



**I have been deeply attached to the farmers' cause and was concerned how because of traditional parties they had to sit on roads for more than a year and many even lost their lives. I decided to contest so that I can raise their voice more effectively**

ANUROOP KAUR SANDHU | ASSISTANT PROFESSOR (ENGLISH), SHRI GURU TEGH BAHADUR KHALSA COLLEGE, DELHI UNIVERSITY

town, my ancestors have lived here," she added.

"In the Malwa region, we usually have relatives scattered around. A lot of villages that I visited during campaigning remember my grandfather or my father. I was in a village and the place where I was giving my speech, a woman came out and said someone from that village was married to my great-grandfather. That's how people connect to you in villages and that is very prevalent here, and I think that helps a lot," Sandhu said.

"My grandfather was also a well-known figure in Muktsar. A very well-educated man, he completed his education from FC College, Lahore, and he used to do a lot of social work," added the Muktsar candidate who comes from a farmers' family in Kanianwali village.

With 13 candidates in the fray, including the SAD's Kanwarjit Singh, Congress' Karan Kaur Brar, AAP's Jagdeep Singh and the BJP's Parijat Pathela, Sandhu said she might be a greenhorn in politics, but she was here to bring a change.

Taking on the AAP over its claims to have done a lot for farmers, Sandhu said, "Let them mention what they have done. Actually, they have done nothing. They were the first to notify one of the farm laws. When our farmers reached Delhi as part of their agitation, what support did they extend?"

# 'People unhappy with draft delimitation commission report'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Feb 9:** The people in Jammu and Kashmir are not happy with the draft delimitation commission report. All India Women Congress General Secretary Nagma Morarji said Wednesday, as she lashed out at BJP over its alleged anti-people policies and "dividing the country on communal lines".

The actress turned politician also condemned the heckling of a hijab-clad girl by a group of men sporting saffron scarves at a college in Karnataka and said, "Such diversionary tactics are employed to hoodwink the public from the real issues." She also paid tributes to seven army personnel who lost their lives in an avalanche in Arunachal Pradesh recently.

"People (in Jammu and Kashmir) are not happy with the proposed draft delimitation commission report. You have seen hundreds of BJP workers protesting and submitting their resignation to protest the proposed merger of Suchetgarh assembly constituency Monday.



**We regret snatching the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir and transforming it into a Union Territory. They talked about Naya Kashmir, normalcy and development. We do not see the development on the ground, while frequent militant attacks expose their claims of normalcy**

NAGMA MORARJI | GENERAL SECRETARY, ALL INDIA WOMEN CONGRESS

When the report is out, you will see more protests," the Congress leader told reporters at the conclusion of her three-day visit to Jammu.

Nagma said she visited Suchetgarh sector near the International Border in the outskirts of Jammu on the first day of her three-day party programme and interacted with the people there. "They are feeling neglected and consider the snatching of the assembly constituency as grave injustice," she added.

On a question about the heckling of a hijab-clad girl in a college in Karnataka, she said, "When the

government has no developmental agenda to show to the public, they use such diversionary tactics to hoodwink the people. What happened to the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' slogan? Education of the girls is bound to get affected by such incidents and therefore we should not pay heed to diversionary tactics and stand up together against this hooliganism."

She said it was Congress governments in the past which had always tried to empower women while the Narendra Modi led government only makes promises. "Congress gave 50 per cent reser-

vation to women in panchayats and a bill to provide 33 per cent reservation for women in Lok Sabha is pending in the Parliament as the BJP, despite enjoying majority, is not willing to pass it. They do not favour empowerment of women," Nagma said, adding that women are half of country's population and should get maximum representation in the legislature.

"The inflation is all time high and it is very difficult to run a household. Asha workers and Anganwari workers are on the streets for enhancement of their monthly remunerations and timely payments," she said and demanded sanctioning of window pension to women below 40 years who have lost their husbands.

Claiming the growing unemployment in the country, the Congress leader said J&K is one of the regions which top the list with 22 per cent unemployment as a result of which you can see the protesting youth on the roads. "BJP is only making hollow promises as every section of the society has been affected by the policies of the

Modi-led government over the past seven years. They failed to transfer promised money and create two crore jobs annually. The statistics show that 23 crore people lost their jobs and 700 farmers died during anti-agri law agitation, while only Rs 50 lakh compensation was given to people hit by Covid-19," she said. She said they only know how to blame Congress for its failures.

The Congress leader also blamed the ruling party for dividing the people of the country and said "Hindu never felt their lives are in danger over the past 70 years but now they are made to think on these lines. The communal forces are spreading disturbance by pitching Hindus against Muslims for winning elections. The people need to think before voting and show the door to such communal forces for a better future," she said.

Without naming Asaduddin Owaisi, she referred to the recent firing on his vehicle in Meerut and said "the attackers are affiliated with BJP who are disturbing Hindus and Muslims."

# A RIDE TO RULE

Chief Minister of Punjab Charanjit Singh Channi rides a motorcycle during a road show in Jalandhar Tuesday night for the upcoming Punjab Assembly polls

PTI PHOTO



# Preacher striving for revival of Sufism in J&K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, Feb 9:** Undeterred by a terror attack that left him partially disabled in 2018, 51-year-old Moulvi Mohammad Ashraf has dedicated his life to strengthen 'Sufism' as he believes it can successfully counter radicalism and ensure peace in militancy-hit Jammu and Kashmir.

Ashraf, a resident of Guree village in south Kashmir's Bijbehara Township, has been working for the revival of Sufi culture since 1994 and has played a key role in the introduction of 'Sufi syllabus' in the University of Kashmir; Islamic University, Awantipora, and the Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University in Rajouri district of Jammu region.

"Sufism believes in co-existence, preaching spirituality, brotherhood and communal harmony and love for all - the cornerstone of Kashmiriyat. However, it faced neglect over the years, both from Central and state governments, and the lack of focus on the subject in the educational institutions resulted in radicalisation of the so-



Author of two books on Sufism, Ashraf organised the first Sufi conference, 'Back to Paradise', in the militancy hotbed of Shopian in 2016, which was attended by hundreds of people, including 80 preachers

ciety," Ashraf, who has to use a walking stick now, told PTI.

Ashraf said his family has been one of the worst victims of radicalisation. "I had a narrow escape in a terrorist attack which left me bedridden for two years, while one of my relatives was burnt to death and another critically injured by a mob protesting beef consumption in Udhampur in 2015," he said.

Founder of an NGO running 100 madrassas (religious seminaries) that teach Sufism across Jammu and Kashmir, Ashraf said 50 of these are registered with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)

"Radicalisation is not restricted to a single community or religion. I am a victim of Muslim radical elements, while my relative fell to radicalised persons from the other religion. All of us, irrespective of religion, creed and caste need to stand up and fight the radicalised elements together," Ashraf added.

Living in a single-storey house with his parents, wife and three

children, Ashraf said no one came forward to provide any kind of assistance to him. He said he has not received any support from the central or the Jammu and Kashmir government till date and what he has achieved is because of his faith in Sufism and people's support.

Ashraf said his efforts saw Kashmir University, Islamic University (Awantipora) and Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University adopting the Sufi curriculum besides over 40 affiliated colleges.

"I personally met the VCs of these universities and heads of Islamic studies and Arabic departments. I gave representations to the authorities concerned to invite the attention of the government to the need for the revival of tourism to counter radicalisation," he said.

Ashraf was highly critical of the Waqf boards which manage the important Sufi shrines in Jammu and Kashmir and said, "Politicians in the past always misused the boards for their personal interests rather than using it for the upliftment of the people and spreading the message of Sufism."

# JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES

## Army's Naushera Gunners help Rajouri women realise entrepreneurship dream

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Feb 9:** In its continuous efforts to improve the living standards of the people in border areas, the Army has come forward and helped a group of women realise their dream of becoming entrepreneurs in a village along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesman said.

Known as 'Ganiya Entrepreneurs', the women of Ganiya village prepare and deliver homemade pickles, Jammu-based defence PRO Lt Col Devender Anand said.

He said Ganiya village falls in the area of responsibility of 'Naushera Gunners' of the Army. He said Ganiya has been a model village with enterprising and hard-working residents. The local residents have been trying very hard to improve their standard of living

**The Naushera Gunners under the aegis of 'Ace of Spades Gunners' provided necessary assistance to these women entrepreneurs in purchase of raw material, preparation and the delivery of these pickles to various units and establishments of the 'Ace of Spades Division'. The army's assistance enabled them to realise their dream of skill development in addition to revenue generation**

LT COL DEVENDER ANAND | JAMMU-BASED DEFENCE PRO

by starting small scale industries for additional income apart from agriculture and animal husbandry as main occupation, he added.

"On realising the aspirations of the local population of Ganiya and limitations they face in real-

isation of their dreams, the Naushera Gunners came forward and lent a helping hand by setting up a local initiative for multiple commercial ventures called 'Ganiya Entrepreneurs'," Lt Col Anand said.

He said this setup's first venture is preparation and delivery of homemade pickles with the ultimate aim to empower local women.

"The Naushera Gunners under the aegis of 'Ace of Spades Gunners' provided necessary assistance to these women entrepreneurs in purchase of raw material, preparation and the delivery of these pickles to various units and establishments of the 'Ace of Spades Division'," the officer said, adding the army's assistance enabled them to realise their dream of skill development in addition to revenue generation.



# national

## of the day quote

There is a danger from China and Pakistan and this is a serious issue. This is no joke. The country is being weakened. The Prime Minister said nothing on these things

Karnataka is one of the states which is going to suffer very badly, even for drinking water. That is going to be the major issue when the present Budget indicates linking of rivers

People realise the BJP has a corporate mindset and will make it meet the same fate as the Congress party

## SHORT TAKES

### India rejects Pak, China statement

New Delhi: India Wednesday strongly objected to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is proposed in the illegally occupied parts of Jammu and Kashmir. The Indian government also rejected the reference of Kashmir in the joint statement released by Pakistan and China. "We have noted references to Jammu & Kashmir and the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in the joint statement between China and Pakistan issued February 6, 2022. We have always rejected such references and our position is well known to China and Pakistan. In this instance too, we reject reference to Jammu and Kashmir in the joint statement", said MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi.

### Two get life term in gangrape case

Vadodara: A special court in Gujarat's Vadodara city Wednesday sentenced two men to life until last breath for the gang-rape of a 14-year-old. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act court of judge R T Panchal sentenced Kishan Mathasuriya and Jasha Solanki to life till last breath, after finding them guilty of raping the minor. Special public prosecutor Pravin Thakkar said that the duo was convicted on charges under relevant provisions of the IPC and POCSO Act.

### MP: Six killed in separate accidents

Bhopal: Six persons, including two brothers, were killed and two others injured in separate road accidents in Madhya Pradesh, police said Wednesday. These accidents occurred in Bhind, Sagar and Sidhi districts during the past 24 hours, officials said. An 18-year-old man, who was driving the motorcycle on late Tuesday night on Sagar-Rehli Road, some 11km from the district headquarters, Dhana police post in-charge Satya Bharat Dhakad said.

### NDA cadet dies

Pune: An 18-year-old cadet of the National Defence Academy (NDA) died after collapsing in the hostel of the tri-service training institute in Maharashtra's Pune, a day after he joined the training course, police said Wednesday. A Court of Inquiry (CoI) has been ordered to investigate the incident, the NDA said. According to the police, Cadet G Prayush had reported to the academy Monday.



The pandemic has taught us that the mode of education can't be status quoist anymore. With digital classrooms, smart devices and micro-courses on offer on many online platforms, private and public institutions should adopt these new hybrid standards in education

M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

### 'VICTORY OF STUDENTS'

With Delhi University resuming physical classes from February 17, student bodies protesting for the last three days over the matter called it a "victory of students" who sat on hunger strike and boycotted online classes to press for their demand



## Abhorrent nature of crime can't be basis for death sentence: SC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 9: The Supreme Court Wednesday commuted the death sentence of a man, convicted for raping and killing a seven-year-old girl, to life imprisonment, contending that the abhorrent nature of crime alone cannot be the decisive factor for handing down capital punishment.

A bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar, Dinesh Maheshwari and CT Ravikumar said: "It would have been immensely useful and pertinent if the High Court, while taking up the question of confirmation of death sentence and making several comments in regard to the abhorrent nature of crime and its repulsive impact on society,

would have also given due consideration to the equally relevant aspect pertaining to mitigating factors before arriving at a conclusion that option of any other punishment than the capital one was foreclosed."

The bench noted that the accused committed brutal rape and murder of a minor, but at the same time, it is noticeable he has no criminal antecedents, comes from a very poor socio-economic background, has a family comprising of wife, children and aged father; and has unblemished jail conduct.

Justice Maheshwari, who authored the judgment on behalf of the bench, said: "When all these factors are added together and it is also visualised that there is nothing on record to rule out the prob-



ability of reformation and rehabilitation of the appellant, in our view, it would be unsafe to treat this case as falling in 'rarest of rare' category."

The bench said it could readily be seen that while the top court has found it justified to have cap-

ital punishment on the statute to serve as deterrent in response to the society's call for appropriate punishment in appropriate cases, but at the same time, the principles of penology have evolved to balance the other obligations of the society.

"The delicate balance expected of the judicial process has also led to another mid-way approach, in curtailing the rights of remission or premature release while awarding imprisonment for life, particularly when dealing with crimes of heinous nature like the present one," it said in the 98-page judgment.

On trial court awarding death sentence to the accused, affirmed by the high court, the bench said that these orders could only be said to be of assumptive conclu-

sions, where it has been assumed that death sentence has to be awarded because of the ghastly crime and its abhorrent nature. "The approach of the trial court and the high court in this matter while awarding sentence could only be disapproved; and we do so in no uncertain terms," said Justice Maheshwari.

The top court judgment came on an appeal filed by Pappu challenging the 2016 Allahabad High Court order affirming the death sentence awarded by the trial court.

Commuting the death sentence, the court said that the accused will not be entitled to premature release or remission before undergoing actual imprisonment for a period of 30 years.

## CBSE term-2 board exams for Classes X, XII in offline mode from April 26



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: The Central Board of Secondary Education will conduct second-term board examination for classes 10 and 12 in offline mode from April 26, officials said Wednesday.

"The board after discussion with various stakeholders and taking into consideration the Covid-19 situation in the country has decided to conduct second-term board exams in offline mode only. The theory exams will begin from April 26, 2022. The datesheet for classes 10 and 12 will be released soon," CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj said.

"The pattern of the question papers will be same as that of sample question papers hosted on the board's website. The students will appear in the examinations from the allotted examination centres as done during the preceding years," he added.

The academic session was bifurcated into two terms after the board exams could not be conducted last year in view of the pandemic and the results had to be announced using an alternative assessment scheme. The first-term exams were conducted in offline mode in November-December last year. The result of the first-term exams is yet to be announced.

The board also warned the students that messages and information spreading on social media may be considered only after verifying the facts available on its website.

## FREAK INCIDENT FLIGHT TAKES OFF SANS ENGINE COVER



AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 9: An Alliance Air flight from Mumbai to Bhuj, carrying 70 passengers, flew without engine cover that was later retrieved from the runway at the city airport Wednesday, prompting aviation regulator DGCA to start a probe into the incident, according to an official.

The ATR aircraft landed safely at Bhuj in Gujarat. Alliance Air said that it has initiated a probe into the incident.

The incident happened Wednesday morning and was brought to the notice of airport authorities by a Mumbai Air Traffic Controller (ATC). Subsequently, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) started an investigation into the incident. "Mumbai ATC informed the airport that Alliance Air ATR aircraft, operating flight 91-625 (Mumbai-Bhuj) took off without the left engine cowling (cover)," the official said. Later, the airline's engineering team reached the site and retrieved the engine cover from the runway.

During the operation of Alliance Air flight 91-625 from Mumbai to Bhuj February 9, the panel of the engine cowl was found on the runway post take off, Alliance Air said in a statement.

"We have taken strict note of the incident and a thorough investigation has been initiated. The findings of the same shall be shared with the regulatory authorities and we shall ensure that all required corrective actions are put in place," the government-owned airline said. It also said that "we are grateful that all passengers and crew on-

### PILOTS WEREN'T AWARE: OFFICIAL

BHUJ, GUJARAT: The Mumbai Air Traffic Control (ATC) had contacted the pilots of the Alliance Air flight, which flew from Mumbai to Bhuj without its engine cover, whether any object had fallen off the aircraft after its take-off from the airport in Maharashtra capital, an official in Bhuj said. As per the preliminary reports, the pilots did not realise that the cowl (cover) of one of the engines had fallen on the runway in Mumbai as they told the ATC that everything was fine, the official said.

board the flight safely landed and there was no damage to the aircraft due to this unfortunate incident."

Expressing "regret" at the "unfortunate" incident, Alliance Air said, it follows laid down policies/procedures as per the regulatory authorities.

The airline has strict checks in place - both pre and post flight operations in order to ensure complete safety of its passengers and crew, Alliance Air said in the statement. Flying without engine cowling may have an aerodynamic effect leading to marginal deterioration in the aircraft's performance, the official said.

Besides, it could have an impact on engine components as well because of the exposure to the airflow, the official said, adding that, however, in this case, the aircraft landed safely at the destination.

According to the official, no one has been grounded so far but appropriate action will be taken after DGCA receives the preliminary report, the official added.

## Govt bans import of drones; provides certain exceptions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: The government Wednesday banned import of foreign drones with certain exceptions as part of efforts to promote domestic manufacturing of drones in the country.

Import of drones for R&D, defence and security purposes have been exempted from the ban but such imports will require due clearances. "Import of drone components, however, shall not require any approvals," the civil aviation ministry said in a release on Wednesday.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) under the commerce and industry ministry has issued a notification banning the import of foreign drones.

"Import policy for drones in CBU (Completely Built Up)/CKD (Completely Knocked Down)/SKD (Semi Knocked Down) form... Is prohibited with exceptions provided for R and D, defence and security



purposes," DGFT said. Import of drones by government entities, educational institutions recognised by central or state government, government recognised R&D entities and drone manufacturers for R&D purpose will be allowed in CBU, SKD or CKD form.

This will be subject to import authorisation issued by DGFT in consultation with concerned line ministries. Import of drones for defence and security purposes will be allowed in CBU, SKD or CKD form subject to import authorisation issued by DGFT in consulta-

tion with concerned line ministries. The civil aviation ministry said that in order to promote Made in India drones, import of foreign drones has been prohibited with effect from February 9, 2022.

The ministry came out with liberalised drone rules in August 2021. After the rules, the ministry issued the drone airspace map and PLI scheme in September 2021, UTM policy framework in October 2021. Besides, drone certification scheme and single window DigitalSky Platform were put in place last month.

### BUNDLES OF HOPE



Farmers plant paddy saplings in a field, in Balurghat, West Bengal

pti photo

## Air quality not impacted by industrial emission alone: Study

Half of India's SO2 emissions arise from thermal power plants and industrial activities add another third. Even agricultural activities produce two key pollutants namely ammonia (NH3) and nitrous oxide (N2O) emissions

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 9: A recent study by three scientists on the adverse impact on air quality because of industrial emissions, has cleared many long-standing misgivings. And, that includes the fact that in-

dustries are the biggest polluter of the environment.

The report literally cleared the air after the authors R.L. Verma of the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand, J.S. Kamyotra, freelance consultant, New Delhi, and Balram Ambade, National Institute of Technology, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, did a detailed study on the air quality of Thoothukudi (former Tuticorin).

The authors compared the air quality and air quality index (AQI) of Thoothukudi with those of other industrial clusters of Tamil Nadu, and with the four major metros on various parameters. The ambient air quality of Thoothukudi was compared on concentration levels of key air pollutants - particulate matters (PM10, and PM2.5), sulphur dioxide (SO2), nitrogen oxide (NO2), and the Air Quality Index (AQI) from January 2015 to December 2020 with those of Delhi,



Representational image

Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai. Comparison was also made with those of Manali, Cuddalore, and Coimbatore, major industrial clusters of Tamil Nadu.

The study revealed that the concentration levels of PM10, PM2.5, and NO2 in Thoothukudi were not only comparable with those ob-

served in Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai, which too are coastal cities, but also those with the industrial clusters between 2015 and 2020.

Only Delhi proved to be an outlier with double the concentration level of pollutants. For the authors it proved that local meteorology

plays an important role in the ambient concentration levels of air pollutants. Even the AQI of Thoothukudi like other metros (except Delhi) and industrial hubs, reported less than 100, which signifies good quality air.

Similarly, the concentration level of air pollutants during the operation of Sterlite Copper during 2017 and 2018, and after its closure in 2018 and 2019 showed no significant change in the concentration levels of SO2 at Thoothukudi. Even during its operation, the SO2 levels were in the range of 13-15 ug/m3, well below the 24-hour ambient air quality standard of 80 ug/m3 and was comparable to other industrial clusters.

The authors discovered that other sources of air pollution like vehicle exhausts from burning of diesel, petrol and compressed natural gas, gases from thermal power plants, small scale industries in-

cluding brick kilns, resuspended dust on the roads due to vehicle forest fires etc have been glossed over or not given their due importance.

For instance, the past two decades have seen a seven-fold increase in the number of passenger cars on India's roads leading to significant increases in urban air pollution levels and associated health problems.

The strong economic growth witnessed between 2010 and 2019 too had a role in the worsening air quality because the country's total energy consumption increased by one-third in that period.

The heavy reliance on traditional biomass for cooking and heating in many of the poorer households in India, which have little to no access to clean cooking, results in high levels of harmful PM2.5 pollution and also contributes to a much lesser degree to NOX and SO2 emissions.



# international



We have a good relationship with the US and also an iron-brother relationship with China. We want to play a role of the 1970s, when Pakistan was instrumental in getting the United States and China together

IMRAN KHAN | PM, PAKISTAN

## DENMARK'S QUEEN TESTS POSITIVE

Denmark's Queen Margrethe has tested positive for coronavirus but is only showing mild symptoms, the royal court said in a statement Wednesday. The 81-year-old Queen, who has sat on the throne for half a century was isolating in a wing of the Amalienborg Palace in the heart of Copenhagen



## of the day quote

Let us continue to beg the God of peace so that the tensions and threats of war can be overcome through a serious dialogue and that the Normandy Format talks can contribute to this aim. And let's not forget. War is madness

POPE FRANCIS | HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

We have reached a point where the cost and relevance of the testing is no longer justifiable. If we were to have extensive testing adapted to everyone who has COVID-19, that would mean half a billion kronor a week and 2 billion a month

KARIN TEGMARK WISELL | CHIEF, SWEDISH PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY

We must fix it (the problems with the so-called Northern Ireland protocol) and with goodwill and common sense I believe we can fix it. But if our friends don't show the requisite common sense then of course we will trigger Article 16

BORIS JOHNSON | PM, BRITAIN

## NZ Catholic Church abuse

# BOY 'SHOWN CORPSE' TO KEEP MOUTH SHUT

An interim report on the inquiry released in Dec 2020 revealed that up to a quarter of a million children and young and vulnerable adults were physically and sexually abused in New Zealand's faith-based and state care institutions from the 1960s to the early 2000s

REUTERS

Wellington, Feb 9: A New Zealand inquiry Wednesday heard harrowing accounts from people who were abused as children while they were under the care of the Catholic Church, one of whom said he was shown a corpse in a hospital morgue by a priest to keep him quiet. The livestreamed hearings are

part of a wider Royal Commission of Inquiry that is looking into abuse in state care and faith-based institutions that is under way in the Pacific island nation.

Wednesday marked the first of a seven-day hearing into abuse in the care of the Catholic Church, which has been rocked by decades of sex abuse scandals across the world.



The hearing focused on abuse by priests of the St John of God at three Catholic institutions in the South Island city of Christchurch - the Marylands School, the neigh-

bouring St Joseph's orphanage and the Hebron Trust. One survivor from Marylands School talked about how he en-

ured abuse by child sex offender Brother Bernard McGrath for four years.

"After a while, I started to just adapt to the sexual things that happened at Marylands," Donald Ku said in his testimony.

"I was also threatened by Brother McGrath to keep quiet about what was going on. Once he took me to the hospital morgue and showed me a corpse as a way of silencing me," he said.

The Catholic Church acknowledged in its statement that

McGrath is one of Australasia's worst sexual offenders against children. He is currently serving a sentence of 33 years in prison in Australia after being convicted of 64 offences against 12 boys there.

Of the 42 priests at Marylands, 21 had abuse complaints against them, higher than the abuse claims made against St John of God priests in Australia.

A total of 537 boys, many with disabilities, attended Marylands and 144 reported abuse, although this was the "tip of the iceberg", the commission was told at the hearings. The commission has so far heard about 1,686 experiences of abuse in 87 days of public hearing.

The Church carries deep shame for this dark chapter of their history

LAWYER SALLY MCKECHNIE | REPRESENTING THE BISHOPS AND CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS OF THE CHURCH

## STANDOFF WITH WEST

# Vast drills show Russia's grip on Belarus

REUTERS

Moscow, Feb 9: Russia launches the active phase of vast military exercises in Belarus Thursday, a display of strength that shows how Moscow's tightening grip on Minsk has given it enhanced capabilities in its standoff with the West over Ukraine.

The joint Allied Resolve drills that NATO has described as Russia's biggest deployment to ex-Soviet Belarus since the Cold War run until Feb 20 and are part of a Russian troop buildup near Ukraine that has stirred fears of a looming invasion.

Russia, which denies any invasion plans, has not disclosed how many troops will be involved. Many of the troops have been deployed from thousands of miles away in Russia's Eastern Military District in the far east.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said last week that Russia was expected to have 30,000 troops as well as Spetsnaz special operations forces, SU-35 fighter jets, S-400 air defence systems and nuclear-capable Iskander missiles.

In military terms, the deployments create a new front for Ukraine to worry about and stretch Kyiv's forces thinner around its long defensive perimeter, said Neil Melvin, director of International Security Studies at the RUSI think-tank in London.

The deployments to the north of Ukraine put Russian troops much closer to Ukraine's capital Kyiv, which lies just over 90 km (56 miles) from the border at its closest point.



- NATO says 30,000 Russian troops expected to be involved
- Exercises to north will stretch Ukraine's forces thinner
- Belarus opposition fears troops will never leave

Lukashenko has opened Pandora's Box. He thinks he's still in control, but we're not sure. Is he able to make sure these troops are going home, or not?"

FRANAK VIACORKA | ADVISER TO BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION LEADER SVIATLANA TSIKHANOUSKAYA

With the deployment of fighters and air defence systems, Russia has much more effective defensive cover for its Kaliningrad exclave in Europe, and electronic jamming systems in Belarus make Western intelligence gathering harder, said Melvin.

"(This) puts forces in play on NATO's eastern flank that will discourage or prevent NATO having any kind of role," he said.

---NO MORE AMBIGUITY

For years, Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko, a wily political operator in power since 1994,

played off East against West for political gain and resisted the idea of hosting a permanent Russian military base.

But since Russian President Vladimir Putin shored him up with political and economic support to help him weather huge opposition protests in 2020 he has shed much of that veneer of autonomy, analysts said.

"I think he finally decided that in order to stay in power he should

rely on his strategic alliance with Moscow and of course these joint military exercises are yet another kind of manifestation of this new closeness," said Andrey Kortumov, head of the Russian International Affairs Council which is close to the Foreign Ministry in Moscow.

"Now he has full backing from Putin in exchange for his loyalty. Apparently both sides are happy with this deal, at least for the time being," he said.

In recent months, Lukashenko has publicly offered to host Russian nuclear missiles in Belarus. Moscow and Minsk have agreed a joint military doctrine for their "union state" integration project. Russian warplanes now regularly patrol the Belarusian border.

## Ukraine sees room for diplomacy

KYIV: Ukraine believes there is still a chance of resolving the West's standoff with Russia through diplomacy but that there are already grounds to impose sanctions on Moscow, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Wednesday. The United States and the European Union have threatened Russia with new sanctions if it attacks Ukraine after massing troops near its borders. Moscow denies planning an attack. "These sanctions are designed in a way that they will be imposed in the event of a further - or a new wave of - armed escalation, Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine," Kuleba said beside visiting Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said Kyiv needs action to be taken against Russia before any attack. "Some sanctions could have been imposed earlier as well as right now in order to demonstrate the seriousness of intentions and readiness for decisive action," Kuleba said.

# Blinken in Oz for Indo-Pacific talks



ASSOCIATED PRESS

## China opposes

Beijing: Ahead of Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting Friday, China said Wednesday that it was opposed to exclusive blocs to create bloc confrontation and the four-nation alliance should stop driving wedges between regional countries. We oppose exclusive blocs to create bloc confrontation," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here while answering a question on the Foreign Ministers' meeting of the Quad. "We hope that the US and relevant countries can get a clear picture of the situation, feel relaxed, abandon the Cold War mentality, stop driving wedges between regional countries and contribute to regional peace, stability and prosperity," he said.

Melbourne, Feb 9: Secretary of State Antony Blinken and key allies are "voting with their feet" by flying to Australia to focus on challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, Australia's foreign minister said Wednesday, as fears rise of a Russian invasion of Ukraine on the other side of the globe.

Blinken landed in the Australian city of Melbourne Wednesday ahead of a meeting with Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne as well as their Indian and Japanese counterparts who form the so-called "Quad."

Payne said the gathering sends a message to Beijing that security in the Indo-Pacific remains an important challenge to Washington.

The Quad ministers were "voting with their feet in terms of the priority that they accord to issues" important to the Indo-Pacific, said Payne, who will host the meeting Friday.

With the Quad, Blinken is expected to highlight the benefits of

Indo-Pacific nations aligning themselves with democracies and democratic values, officials said.

It will be the fourth such ministerial-level meeting of the bloc of Indo-Pacific democracies that was created to counter China.

However, particularly after the recent meeting in Beijing between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping at the opening of the Winter Olympics, Blinken is also expected to address threats posed by a growing partnership between the two authoritarian nations.

# 'Ghettoisation': Pak min on hijab uproar

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 9: Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi Wednesday waded into another controversy, by commenting on the hijab row in India's Karnataka state.

He claimed that India is depriving Indian Muslim girls from getting education just because they

want to attend their classes wearing their religious headgear.

"Depriving Muslim girls of an education is a grave violation of fundamental human rights. To deny anyone this fundamental right and terrorise them for wearing a hijab is absolutely oppressive. World must realise this is part of the Indian state plan of ghettoisation of Muslims", he said in a tweet.

It is not the first time that Pakistan has sought to express its opinion on India's internal affairs. Indeed Qureshi himself has been known for freely making comments on India's internal matters, especially on Kashmir, at various international forums.



# Covid cases surpass 400mn as Omicron grips world

It took over a month for Covid cases to reach 400 million from 300 million, compared to five months for the cases to reach 300 million from 200 million. The pandemic has killed over 6 million people worldwide

REUTERS

Washington, Feb 9: Global Covid-19 cases surpassed 400 million Wednesday, according to a



Reuters tally, as the highly contagious Omicron variant dominates the outbreak, pushing health systems in several coun-

tries to the brink of capacity.

The Omicron variant, which is dominating the surge around the world, accounts for almost all

new cases reported daily. While cases have begun to level off in many countries, more than 2 million cases are still being reported on average each day, according to a Reuters analysis. Deaths, which tend to lag cases, have increased by 70% in the last five weeks based on the seven-day average.

While preliminary evidence from several countries have shown that Omicron is milder than previous variants, a larger volume of cases can potentially overwhelm healthcare systems globally.

The top five countries reporting the most cases on a seven-day average - United States, France, Germany, Russia, and Brazil - ac-

count for roughly 37% of all new cases reported worldwide, according to Reuters analysis.

The most common form of the Omicron variant, BA.1, accounted for 98.8% of sequenced cases submitted to the public virus tracking database GISAID as of January 25. But several countries are reporting recent increases in the sub-variant known as BA.2, according to the World Health Organization.

Roughly 62% of the world population has received at least one dose of a Covid vaccine, while only 11% of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose, according to figures from Our World in Data.

# Iran unveils new long-range missile

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tehran, Feb 9: Iran unveiled a new missile Wednesday with a reported range that would allow it to reach both US bases in the region as well as targets inside its archfoe Israel.

State TV reported that the missile has solid fuel and a range of 1,450 kilometers, or 900 miles. It is called the Khaibar-buster, a reference to a Jewish castle overrun by Muslim warriors in the early days of Islam.

It said the missile has high accuracy, is manufactured completely domestically, and can defeat missile shield systems. The information has not been independently verified.

Israel's closest point to Iran is some 1,000 kilometers, or 620 miles, away. The report comes as negotiations continue in Vienna to revive Tehran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers. Iran, which has long said it does not seek nuclear weapons, insists its missile program is only a deterrent.

Iran has missiles that can travel up to 2,000 kilometers, 1250 miles. Earlier in January Iran tested an engine for a solid-fuel rocket designed to launch satellites.

Tehran regards its missile programme as an important deterrent against the United States, Israel and other adversaries. It has rejected Western demands to halt its ballistic missile work.

"Iran will continue advancing its ballistic missile programme," Iran's armed forces chief of staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri told a ceremony at an IRGC base where the new missile was displayed, Iranian media reported.



## of the day quote

Almost all the social media companies have set up an institutional structure and are publishing monthly compliance reports as required under the statute

The Government of India is in discussion with ASEAN countries for initiating the review of ASEAN-India trade in goods agreement to seek more market access for Indian products

A taxpayer would be permitted to file only one updated return for an assessment year.

## SHORT TAKES

**Jan's equity MFs' inflows at ₹14K cr**

**Mumbai:** Equity-linked mutual fund schemes saw a net inflows of over ₹14,887.77 crore in January, as per the data furnished by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) Wednesday. In December 2021, the net inflows had stood over ₹25,000 crore. Besides, in November 2021, it had stood over ₹11,614 crore, while in October, the inflows had stood over ₹5,214 crore. Furthermore, the data showed that contributions through systematic investment rose to ₹11,516.62 crore, the highest monthly SIP contribution.

**Airtel plans to raise \$1 billion**

**Bangalore:** Indian telecom operator Bharti Airtel Ltd said Tuesday it will raise \$1 billion in debt, after it reported better-than-expected quarterly revenue on higher tariff rates. Airtel said it would raise the amount, ₹75 billion, by issuing non-convertible debt securities, including debentures and bonds, but did not reveal how it would use the money. Engaged in a fierce price war that started since the entry of billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio into the Indian telecom sector in 2016, Airtel has been raising capital for development of its products and services to lure more customers.

**PGCIL net dips 2.2% in Dec qtr**

**New Delhi:** State-run Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd's consolidated net profit declined by 2.2 per cent to ₹3,292.97 crore in the October-December quarter compared to the year-ago period. The company had reported a consolidated net profit of ₹3,367.71 crore in the quarter ended December 31, 2020, a BSE filing said. Total income of the company rose to ₹10,723.61 crore in the quarter from ₹10,359.48 crore in the same period a year ago. PGCIL said that its board in a meeting held on Wednesday has declared an interim dividend of ₹5.50 per share for 2021-22.

**Nykaa loses sheen**

**Bangalore:** Indian cosmetics-to-fashion retailer Nykaa Wednesday reported a 59.5% slump in quarterly net profit on a steep increase in expenses, overshadowing a rise in revenue and gross merchandise value. Total costs surged 46.8% year-on-year to ₹10.67 billion (\$142.68 million) in the third quarter, including a big jump in employee benefit expenses, Nykaa's parent company FSN E-Commerce Ventures Ltd said in a regulatory filing.

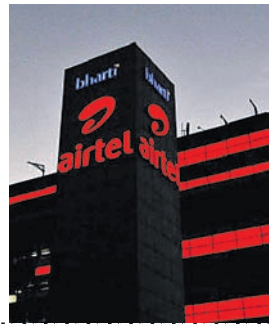


There was 2G exploitation because of which BSNL lost out... you (Congress) allowed all kinds of corruption in 2G. BSNL is a part of our strategic asset... we are giving (the company) money to buy 4G spectrum and become competitive

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

## TARIFF MAY RISE AGAIN: AIRTEL MD

Bharti Airtel may take lead in hiking mobile call and services rates this year as it looks to increase average revenue per user to ₹200, a company official said. Airtel was the first telecom player to raise mobile services rates in the range of 18-25 per cent in Nov 2021. The ARPU, an indicator of a telco's profitability, of Airtel was at ₹163 in Oct-Dec 2021, down 2.2 per cent YoY



## INDONESIA RESTRICTS EXPORTS

# Struggles on to contain vegoil prices

As India imports two-thirds of its edible oils, the benefits of the duty cut and other measures have been virtually erased by the surge in global prices after Indonesia ordered producers to sell 20% of their sales to the domestic market to cool local cooking oil prices

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Feb 9:** India's attempts to lower edible oil prices ahead of important state elections have been ruined by a spike in global palm oil prices to record highs after Indonesia, the world's biggest supplier, moved restrict exports.

Mindful of an electorate that is highly sensitive to food price inflation, India's government tried to rein in domestic prices by reducing import taxes, imposing stockpile limits and suspending futures trading in edible oils and oilseeds.

Nearly half of the exports from the world's biggest palm oil exporter Indonesia land in only four Asian countries - India, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

"Indonesia's move has complicated India's efforts to bring down prices," said BV Mehta, executive director of Mumbai-based Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA).

The price of rival oils such as soyil and sunflower oil jumped as buyers scrambled to replace lost palm oil volumes, increasing import



bills for the world's biggest edible oil importer and making it difficult for New Delhi to rein in costs for consumers.

Previously palm oil was by far the most imported oil in India, but "at the current price level there is no advantage to buy palm oil," an Indian refiner, who declined to be named, said.

India's retail food price inflation rose to 4.05% in December, and analysts expect it to stay on an upward

trend in coming months. Indonesia is the biggest exporter of crude and refined palm oil, accounting for more than 55% of the exports, followed by Malaysia that accounts for about 30%.

"It can't reduce import taxes further. The only option the government has is to subsidise edible oils," said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm.

"It can sell edible oils at lower prices to poor people via the pub-

Spot prices of palm oil, the most consumed edible oil in the country, have risen more than 12% so far in 2022 to ₹1,228 per 10 kg after hitting a record high of ₹1,280.75 in May 2021

Crude palm oil (CPO) is being offered at around \$1,450 a tonne, including cost, insurance and freight (CIF), in India for March shipments, compared with \$1,490 for crude soybean oil and \$1,455 for crude sunflower oil

A year ago, palm oil was trading at a discount of around \$100 and \$250 per tonne to soyil and sunflower oil respectively, both regarded as better quality than palm oil

lic distribution system. But this requires lots of funds and government has already been struggling to contain its fiscal deficit."

Officials had even lobbied the members of edible oil trade bodies to keep a lid on prices, but were met with the harsh market realities.

"We cannot sell imported oil at a lower price than our purchase price," said a Mumbai-based edible oil refiner.

# Daikin launches new range of split room ACs



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 9:** Daikin Air-conditioning India Pvt Ltd, a 100 per cent subsidiary of Japan based Daikin Industries Ltd, has recently launched a new range of split room ACs indigenously conceptualised and manufactured for the discerning Indian consumers. This new U Series range boasts of future ready technologies that empower costumers to manage the quality of air conditioning across their premises.

Daikin, keeping in mind heavy customer emphasis on air quality and health, has extended its patented streamer discharge technology to 4 star segments in addition to offering an upgrade to products with WiFi. The company's commitment to deliver goodness in air via product innovations continues with its Dew clean technology that enables indoor units (IDU) to self clean themselves with atmospheric water, ensuring hygienic and efficient

operations. Considering a 150 square feet space is very common area across houses and offices, this newly launched range of Daikin ACs offers itself to the compact cooling and air quality needs for every common man. With widespread electrification of India over the last few years, Daikin ACs presents an ideal choice for consumers to avail eco-friendly air-conditioning solutions.

Director and Senior Vice President of Daikin India Kuldeepak Virmani said, "At Daikin, we have a vision for 'Make in India' products that are designed to serve the needs of every Indian. With ACs fast becoming a necessity, there was a need for radical change in product innovation and standards, in order to serve the emerging consumer aspirations. The new range of Daikin ACs will empower the growing Indian population to upgrade from outdated and older technologies without any impact of high energy consumption charges."

# Fracas over Kashmir post highlights risks for global companies

Firms caught in the furore include Japan's Toyota Motor, the world's biggest automaker, Suzuki Motor, majority owner of India's top carmaker Maruti Suzuki, Honda Motor, Isuzu Motor, South Korea's Kia Motors, Domino's and Yum! Brands' KFC



urged boycotts of their products. The affray highlights the risks global companies face while navigating sensitivities amid rising nationalism in South Asia, and spurred some of them to tighten their social media policies.

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Feb 9:** Hyundai Motor, Domino's and other companies have found themselves in a diplomatic fracas after their Pakistani partners tweeted support for disputed Kashmir, irking Indians and highlighting the risks of operating in the region.

Kashmir has long been a flashpoint between India and arch rival Pakistan, each of which controls only parts of the Himalayan territory but makes claims to it in full.

The row erupted after several companies posted messages on social media to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day, commemorated annually by Pakistan Feb 5 to honour the sacrifices of Kashmiris struggling for self-determination.

The posts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram outraged Indian social media users, who demanded apologies from the companies and

While issuing an apology, Toyota, Hyundai and Kia said the posts by their Pakistani partners were unauthorised and misused their brands. The carmakers also put measures in place to prevent a recurrence of such incidents.

Suzuki said it would advise business associates to comply strictly with its communication policy, which avoids any alignment with political or religious groups.

"In a flat world where social messages travel across borders, companies have to build in clauses and guardrails on what partners can speak about," said Amit Narayan, head of India and South Asia at risk adviser Control Risks.

India, compared with Pakistan, is a bigger market for companies and one where losing business can be painful.

# Gross FDI inflows at \$54.1bn

TOTAL FDI COMPRISES EQUITY INFLOWS, REINVESTED EARNINGS AND OTHER CAPITAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 9:** India has received total foreign direct investment (FDI) of \$54.1 billion during April-November 2021-22, as against \$81.97 billion in 2020-21, Parliament was informed Wednesday.

Total FDI comprises equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital.

FDI inflows serve an important role in augmenting domestic capital and help to promote industrial development and employment generation across various



sectors and industries, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

In a separate reply, the minister said as January 31, 16,737 startups have been recognised by the ministry.

In another reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Som Parkash said to provide seed funding to startups through approved incubators across all sectors and

areas, the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme was launched by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) April 16, 2021.

A grant of ₹945 crore has been approved for a period of 4 years starting from 2021-22 under the scheme, he said.

As December 31, 2021, ₹232.75 crore has been approved as grant to 58 incubators, and 146 startups have been funded by such approved incubators, he added.

## BIZ BUZZ

### Pfizer's vax sales to cross \$50bn : UK's 1st refinery-based H2 furnace by Essar

**New York:** Pfizer forecast more than \$50 billion in 2022 sales for its Covid-19 vaccine and therapeutic on Tuesday as the pharmaceutical giant reported a more than doubling of annual profits on strong sales of its inoculation. Pfizer, whose vaccinee developed with German company BioNTech was the first approved to counter the deadly virus, sees slightly lower 2022 revenues for the vaccine compared with the just-finished year, but a big infusion of revenues from Paxlovid, the company's pill for Covid-19. Chief Executive Albert Bourla described 2021 as a "watershed year" for Pfizer, adding that the company's efforts in the pandemic "have fundamentally changed our company forever."



**New Delhi:** Leading UK-focused downstream energy company Essar Oil UK plans to install a new 45 million pound refinery-based hydrogen furnace. The furnace will have an improved energy efficiency of four per cent compared to existing furnaces, which will save 16,600 tonne of carbon dioxide per annum, as well as reducing ongoing maintenance costs. The furnace is set to be installed in 2022 and will become fully operational by next year. From 2026 onwards, it will be fuelled by hydrogen produced at Stanlow as part of the 'HyNet North West' decarbonisation cluster.



# GAIL eyes new deals to meet country's energy demand

INDIA'S NO 1 GAS TRANSPORTING AND MARKETING FIRM HAS LONG-TERM LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS (LNG) SUPPLY CONTRACTS FROM THE US TO AUSTRALIA AND WITH RUSSIA, SUPPLEMENTING DOMESTIC GAS SUPPLIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 9:** GAIL (India) Ltd has pre-poned the supply of gas from the US and is looking to contract more LNG next year as it

doubles down efforts to secure affordable energy supplies to meet the needs of Asia's third-largest economy, chairman Manoj Jain said.

"In 3Q (October-December 2021) we preponed a couple of cargoes (LNG shiploads) from supplies that we were to receive next year and we did it again in the current quarter," Jain told PTI.

This because US LNG costs one-third of the price of gas available in the spot or current market.

GAIL has a 5.8 million tonne per annum LNG contract with US suppliers. These are all linked to the US gas market, Henry Hub where the current rate is \$5.45 per million British thermal unit. In comparison, the spot price of LNG in Asia is \$15.5 per million British thermal unit.

"We have been conscious in tying up gas supplies and our basket is pretty diversified, balancing risks," he said. To make up for the next



year's volumes already taken and to meet rising demand, GAIL will soon float a short to medium-term tender to source LNG.

"We may look at the supply of one or even more cargo every month beginning early next year for a 3 to 5-year term," he said. "We are in the

process of estimating the demand and will finalise the size and other details in some time."

GAIL is also doing destination swaps to cut shipping costs of US LNG. Under this, it would sell the US LNG to a buyer say in Europe and get an equivalent volume

The government has set a target raising the share of natural gas in the primary energy basket of the country to 15 per cent by 2030 from current 6.3 per cent and we are working towards achieving that

MANOJ JAIN | CHAIRMAN, GAIL

from a supplier nearby like in the Middle East.

Gas demand, he said, is already above pre-Covid levels and it will continue to rise further with the expansion of the city distribution network for CNG and piped cooking gas in more areas as well as the start of fertilizer plants.

GAIL reported its higher quarterly net profit in three months to December 2021 as margins improved. "Gas transmission volumes

increased 3.6 per cent year on year to 114.3 million standard cubic meters per day in 3Q and we expect volumes to rise 5-6 per cent every year for the next couple of years due to increase in supplies to city gas and fertilizer plants," he said.

The firm traded (or sold) 96.6 mmscmd of gas in 3Q and the same is likely to rise by up to 6 mmscmd in coming months as supplies to new fertilizer plants in the east starts, he said.

While gas transmission volumes are projected to rise to 131 mmscmd by FY24, trading volumes may surge to 104.5 mmscmd by March 2024.

Besides the US, GAIL gets 2.5 million tonne per annum of LNG from the Gazprom of Russia. Through Petronet LNG Ltd, it gets 4.8 million tonne of LNG on a long-term contract from Qatar and another 0.4 million tonne from the Gorgon project in Australia.



# Prasidh, Surya seal series

# India eves suffer loss in one-off T20I vs NZ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, Feb 9:** Suryakumar Yadav conjured up a responsible 64-run (83b, 5x4) knock before Prasidh Krishna (4/12 in 9 overs) returned an impressive four-wicket haul as India thrashed the West Indies by 44 runs in the second ODI to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series, here Wednesday.

Surya hit a dogged half century to help India post a decent score of 237/9 after being invited to bat. The Indian bowlers, led by Prasidh, then bundled out the opposition for 193 on a 'Motera' track, where batting wasn't easy. For the visitors, Shamarh Brooks was the top scorer with 44 (64b, 2x4, 2x6).

It is the 11th time in the last 17 games that West Indies have failed to bat their quota of 50 overs despite the presence of senior players. India had won the first ODI by six wickets and now the third game will be played February 11.

Chasing a modest 238, West Indies lost opener Brandon King (18) and Darren Bravo (1) early with India pacer Prasidh accounting for both batsmen.

Opener Shai Hope (27) and Brooks tried to rally the innings but were able to add only 14 runs as Hope holed out to Suryakumar at long-on off Yuzvendra Chahal (1/45).

The visitors were reeling at 52/3. Prasidh was on a rampage as rival skipper Nicholas Pooran (9) became his third victim. West Indies lost half its side for 76.

From here on, it was just a matter of time. However, Brooks and Akeal Hosein (34) delayed the inevitable. Odean Smith (24) raised the Windies hope but eventually he too fell. Prasidh fittingly ended the game by dismissing Kemar Roach.

Pacer Mohammed Siraj (1/38), Shardul Thakur (2/41), Chahal, Washington Sundar (1/28) and Deepak Hooda (1/24) perfectly aided Prasidh.

Earlier, the hosts were reeling at 43/3 after a top-order collapse but then Suryakumar forged a crucial



MEMORABLE SPELL: Prasidh Krishna reacts after dismissing Nicolas Pooran during the second ODI, Wednesday

91-run stand with vice-captain KL Rahul (49, 48b, 4x4, 2x6) to bring the team back on track.

India lost skipper Rohit Sharma (5) cheaply when tried to chase a wishful delivery off pacer Kemar Roach (1/42) and edged to Hope after West Indies opted

to field. Virat Kohli (18), who is playing his 100th ODI in India, then joined Rishabh Pant (18), who opened for first-time in the 50-over format.

Surya was initially the aggressive one but Rahul then freed his arms, starting with a towering

maximum, a pull shot, off left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein (1/39). The two kept ticking the scoreboard, as India were poised at 91/3 after 25 overs. But just when it looked that they would score big, Rahul was run out in the 30th over.

Surya then found an able ally

in Washington Sundar (24), as the duo added 43 runs for the fifth wicket. However, Surya perished in the 39th over, giving an easy catch to Joseph, as Fabian Allen (1/50) got his only wicket.

Sundar too was unable to convert his start. Then Deepak Hooda's 29 off 25 deliveries helped India go past the 225-run mark. The hosts could add only 54 runs in the last 10 overs.

## BRIEF SCORES

### India 237/9

(Suryakumar Yadav 64, KL Rahul 49; Odean Smith 2/29, Alzarri Joseph 2/36) **beat West Indies 193** (Shamarh Brooks 44, Akeal Hosein 34; Prasidh Krishna 4/12, Shardul Thakur 2/41) **by 44 runs.**

## INDIA COLTS FETED

**AHMEDABAD:** India's U-19 World Cup winning squad was Wednesday felicitated by the BCCI on the sidelines of the second ODI here Wednesday. The U-19 heroes, wearing blazers, first watched the second ODI at the Narendra Modi stadium from the stands, as they had a joyous time seeing their stars in presence of head coach Hrishikesh Kanitkar and other members of the support staff. The victorious squad members could not get to meet the senior India cricketers as they were part of the bio-bubble created for the three match series. Former India batter and National Cricket Academy head VVS Laxman, who was with the team in the Caribbean, was also present on occasion. And so was BCCI secretary Jay Shah, treasurer Arun Dhumal and few other senior officials of the state cricket bodies. The Board has already announced cash reward of Rs 40 lakh for the players and Rs 25 lakh each for the support staff. More functions await the boys when they reach their respective hometowns by Thursday.



New Zealand's top scorer Suzie Bates bats during her innings against India Women, Wednesday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Queenstown, Feb 9:** Batting let India down as they suffered an 18-run defeat to hosts New Zealand in the one-off women's T20I here Wednesday.

Senior opener and vice-captain Smriti Mandhana did not play and her absence was felt badly as India fell short by 18 runs while chasing 156 for a win.

Rookie Yastika Bhatia, who opened in place of Mandhana along with young Shafali Verma, did reasonably well with a run-a-ball 26 (2x4, 1x6) but India never looked like they could chase down the target against an impressive New Zealand bowling attack.

The opening stand was worth 41 runs in 6.3 overs and that was the highest partnership for India. Shafali was not at her best as she contributed just 13 runs from 14 balls with the help of two boundaries. Captain Harmanpreet Kaur, who made 12 from 13 balls, also looked off colour.

The onus was then on the lower order to give a push for the target. Inexperienced Sabhinini Meghana, who top-scored for India, did well with a 30-ball 37, which had six fours in it, stitching 34 runs with Richa Gosh (12) for the fourth wicket.

That stand was the last flicker of hope for India and once Meghana was out, there was a batting collapse

and the visiting side could only reach 137/8 in their allotted 20 overs. When Meghana was out, India needed 55 runs from 5.1 overs which proved a tough ask for the lower order.

Jess Kerr, Amelia Kerr and Hayley Jensen took two wickets apiece for New Zealand, while Lea Tahuu and Sophie Devine got one each.

Earlier, experienced all-rounder Deepti Sharma (2/26) and Pooja Vastrakar (2/16) scalped two wickets apiece to help India restrict New Zealand to 155/5 after Harmanpreet opted to field after winning the toss.

For New Zealand, captain Sophie Devine (31 off 23 balls) and her opening partner Suzie Bates (36 off 34) scored the bulk of the runs. The duo gave the home side a flying start, stitching 60 runs for the opening wicket.

The Indian bowlers took wickets at the regular intervals but failed to stop the hosts from crossing the 150-run mark. The two sides will begin their five-match ODI contest here Saturday.

**Brief scores:** New Zealand Women 155/5 (Suzie Bates 36, Sophie Devine 31; Pooja Vastrakar 2/16, Deepti Sharma 2/26) beat India Women 137/8 (Sabhinini Meghana 37, Yastika Bhatia 26; Jess Kerr 2/20, Amelia Kerr 2/25; Hayley Jensen 2/25) by 18 runs.

## Ahmedabad IPL team to be called 'Gujarat Titans'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 9:** The Ahmedabad team of the Indian Premier League (IPL) will be called the 'Gujarat Titans', the franchise announced Wednesday.

The franchise, owned by private equity firm CVC Capital and to be led by India all-rounder Hardik Pandya, said the name was chosen to pay tribute to the state's rich cricketing legacy.

"Debating in the 15th season of the IPL, the Gujarat Titans will pay tribute to the state's rich cricketing legacy, which has seen it produce countless Indian international cricket legends over the years," the franchise said in statement Wednesday.

"The franchise is inspired by the opportunity to represent and build on this deep cricketing heritage, as well as build on its future success on the pitch."

Siddharth Patel, a representative of the franchise, said, "We want this group to achieve great things for Gujarat and its many passionate fans, which is why we have chosen the name 'Titans'."

Apart from Pandya, the franchise has also signed Afghanistan

## Manchester United out of EPL top four



TWO SIDES OF EMOTION: A Burnley player reacts after their equaliser, while Manchester United players look dejected

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Manchester, Feb 9:** Manchester United is going through a rough spell under Ralf Rangnick — and Cristiano Ronaldo currently isn't in good enough scoring form to get the team out of it.

Ronaldo didn't even start the 1-1 draw at last-place Burnley on Tuesday, only appearing as a

second-half substitute and failing to score for a fifth straight game. That's his worst run without a goal at club level since 2010.

The problems run deeper than the scoring slump of one of the world's great strikers, though. The way United dropped off in the second half was alarming, just like the team did in the second half of its FA Cup game at home to second-tier

Middlesbrough Friday. United lost a penalty shootout on that occasion.

Also alarming was the defending by England center back Harry Maguire that allowed lanky striker Wout Weghorst, Burnley's new signing, to turn him in the middle of the field and play in Jay Rodriguez for the equalizer in the 47th minute.

That cancelled out the 18th-minute opener by Paul Pogba, starting for the second game after a long injury layoff and probably United's best player in the first half.

United actually scored three times before halftime but two were ruled out, first for an offside against Maguire — before he blocked off Rodriguez prior to Raphael Varane heading home — and then for an innocuous-looking foul by Pogba.

United fell to fifth place, a point behind West Ham, who were 1-0 winner over Watford Tuesday.

**NEWCASTLE ON RISE**  
Newcastle beat Everton 3-1 in the other game to climb out of the relegation zone and move four points ahead of Burnley. It was Newcastle's third win of the season.

Everton, meanwhile, is sinking closer to the bottom three, with only three points separating the team with third-to-last Norwich.

Frank Lampard's first game in charge of Everton was a 4-1 win over Brentford in the FA Cup on Saturday but he was given a reality check, despite his team going ahead through Jamaal Lascelles' own-goal.

Mason Holgate also scored an own-goal a minute later for Newcastle's equalizer, before second-half goals by Ryan Fraser and Kieran Trippier, one of the Saudi-owned club's five signings in January.

## Inter beat Roma 2-0 in Cup, spoil Mourinho return

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Milan, Feb 9:** A pair of brilliant goals from Edin Dzeko and Alexis Sanchez ruined Jose Mourinho's return to his former club as Inter Milan beat Roma 2-0 to reach the Italian Cup semifinals.

The match marked the first time Mourinho faced Inter at San Siro since he left after leading the club to the Serie A-Italian Cup- Champions League treble in 2010.

Mourinho received a warm welcome from the fans, who deployed a banner that read: "Welcome back home, Jose." Roma players did not receive the same friendly treatment. Inter got off a perfect start to open the scoring on its first move.



Edin Dzeko and Alexis Sanchez celebrate a goal against Roma

Facing his former team, Dzeko connected with a cross from the edge of the box from Ivan Perisic and beat Roma goalkeeper Rui Patricio with a right-footed volley after only two minutes.

Roma's sluggish defense looked more solid as the game progressed, but Mourinho's team was too clumsy up front and failed to convert its rare occasions against the Serie A leader.

Sanchez doubled Inter's lead in the 68th minute with a superb long-range strike into the top left corner that Patricio could not touch and left Mourinho ruminating.

Under Mourinho, Roma is having an inconsistent season. The team dropped to seventh in the Serie A standings over the weekend after a 0-0 draw at home to struggling Genoa and its hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions League are looking slim.

Inter's celebrations were dampened by defender Alessandro Bastoni's ankle injury.

## Dhuper, Abhishek rescue Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Feb 9:** Rajesh Dhuper (65, 105b) and Abhishek Raut (63, 100b) scored fighting half centuries Wednesday to help Odisha secure a crucial 135-run first innings lead on the second day of their multi-day warm-up match against Baroda

at the Barabati Stadium here.

In response to Baroda's 100 in the first innings, Odisha were reeling at 65/6 at stumps on day one. However, Dhuper and Abhishek's heroics as well as a crucial 43-ball 30-run knock by Sujit Lenka allowed the hosts to post 235 in their first essay. Atit Sheth (4/47) was

the pick of the Baroda bowlers.

After conceding 135-run lead, Baroda responded in style reaching 131/1 at stumps on day two. After losing their first wicket early off Ashish Rai (1/8), Shivalik Sharma (76 batting, 109b) and Pratyush Kumar (53 batting, 112b) negated the Odisha bowling scoring half centuries. They are still four runs behind Odisha's first innings lead.

**RANJI GAMES IN ODISHA**

Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) will host six Elite Group B matches starting February 17, the board has announced through a release Wednesday. Barabati Stadium, Cuttack and Bikash Cricket Ground in Bhubaneswar will be the venues.

The round one will see the face offs between Bengal and Baroda, and, Hyderabad and Chandigarh. In round 2 (Feb 24-27), Bengal will meet Hyderabad, while Baroda face Chandigarh. In the third round (March 3-6), Bengal will take on Chandigarh, while Baroda face Hyderabad.



## Odisha win

Odisha men's team registered their third consecutive victory in the Senior National Volleyball (men & women) Championship at the Biju Patnaik Indoor Stadium, Campus 13, KIIT Deemed to be University. They came from a set down to beat Madhya Pradesh 3-1 (23-25, 25-23, 25-21, 25-16).

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Jugraj hat-trick helps India trounce SA

**POTCHEFSTROOM (South Africa):** Young drag-flicker Jugraj Singh, playing his second international match, slammed a hat-trick as Olympic bronze medalist India hammered hosts South Africa 10-2 in the FIH Pro Hockey Pro League, here Wednesday. Jugraj converted three penalty corners in the fourth, sixth and 23rd minutes, while Gursahibjit Singh (24th, 36th) and Dilpreet Singh (25th, 58th) scored a brace each in the opening match of the two-leg tie. The other goal getters were Harmanpreet Singh (second), Abhishek (12th) and Mandeep Singh (27th). South Africa's goals were scored by Daniel Bell (44th) and Richard Pautz (45th).

### Tearful Del Potro nears retirement

**BUENOS AIRES:** 2009 US Open champion Juan Martin del Potro lost in what appeared to be a farewell match in front of his home fans at the Argentina Open tournament. The 33-year-old, who had not played since 2019 due to injuries, was eliminated by compatriot and friend Federico Delbonis 6-1, 6-3 in an emotional match in Buenos Aires Tuesday. Del Potro was already in tears as the final game unravelled. The Argentinian said in a press conference he will decide Wednesday whether he will play at the Rio Open tournament in Brazil next week. "I will speak to doctors again. I have to take care of my knee and then we will see," said Del Potro, who did not rule out a full return to the circuit. "I will always leave the window open," he said. "(But) if today was the last time I will leave happy," the Argentinian said. "This is the moment I hoped would never come," he said. "I don't have the strength to go ahead. I gave it all." Minutes later, Del Potro placed his headband on the net as emotional fans chanted.

### Legal issue delays medal ceremony

**BEIJING:** An ongoing legal issue that could affect the medalists in the team figure skating competition at the Beijing Olympics has caused the award ceremony to be delayed, the IOC said Wednesday. The ceremony to award the Russian team the gold medals, the United States silver and Japan bronze was pulled from its scheduled slot late Tuesday. International Olympic Committee spokesman Mark Adams said the reason was a "legal consultation" required with the governing body of skating. Details of the case were not specified. "We have athletes that have won medals involved," Adams said at the daily news briefing. In a one-line statement, the International Skating Union also cited ongoing legal talks. If any athlete and team were disqualified, an appeal would likely follow to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Canada placed fourth and would be in line to be upgraded.