



## STARTING AFRESH

Actor Rhea Chakraborty, who was accused of abetting Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide, returns to work after 2 years

LEISURE P2



## FLIGHTS CANCELLED

Some airlines have cancelled or diverted flights to Ukraine amid heightened fears of Russian invasion

INTERNATIONAL P10



## CSK PICK SUBHRANSHU

Odia cricketer Subhanshu Senapati becomes 3rd player from state to get selected by an IPL side

SPORTS P12



## 4 KILLED AS CAR RAMS INTO TRUCK

**PHULBANI:** Four people were killed and as many injured when their car rammed into a truck amid dense fog in Kandhamal district in the early hours of Sunday, officials said. The accident happened around 3am on Berhampur-Phulbani Highway near Lahabadi village when they were returning home to Badisuga after attending a birthday party in Talipada. Four people, including the driver, died at the spot, while the injured were admitted to a hospital. Their conditions were stated to be stable, officials said. The bodies were sent for post-mortem, Regional Transport Officer Gati Krushna Samantroy said.



## MAN LYNCHED IN PAK OVER BLASPHEMY

**ISLAMABAD/LAHORE:** A middle-aged man was stoned to death and his body was hung from a tree by a mob for allegedly desecrating a religious book in a remote village in Pakistan's Punjab province, police said Sunday. The incident took place in Jungle Derawala village, in Khanewal district, situated 275-km from Lahore Saturday evening, where locals had gathered after their Maghrib (evening) prayers, following announcements that a man had torn pages of the Holy Quran and had set them on fire. The police had arrived in the village before the incident, but the mob had outnumbered them. They seized the victim from the SHO's custody and tied him to a tree, after which he was lynched to death, eyewitnesses said. **More P10**

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## LOVE IS IN THE AIR

Women buy gifts at a shop on the eve of Valentine's Day in Kolkata, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

## GOVT TO SELL 5% IN LIC VIA IPO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 13:** The government Sunday filed draft papers with capital market regulator Sebi for selling 5 per cent stake in insurance behemoth LIC through an initial public offering which is likely to hit D-street in March. "The DRHP of LIC IPO has been filed today with the SEBI. For filing valuation about 31.6 crore shares are on offer representing 5 per cent equity," Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted. As per the draft red herring prospectus, LIC's embedded value has been pegged at about ₹5.4 lakh crore as of September 30, 2021, by international actuarial firm Milliman Advisors. Under the em-

bedded value method, insurance companies' present value of future profit is also included in its present net asset value (NAV). The IPO is 100 per cent offer for sale (OFS) by the Government of India and no fresh issue of shares by LIC. "LIC has 66 per cent market share in new business premiums with 283 million policies and 1.35 million agents as of March 31, 2021," Pandey added. The government, however, did not disclose in the DRHP the market valuation of LIC or the discount which will be given to policyholders or LIC employees in the public offering. The government is also mulling allowing foreign investors to pick up stake in LIC. As per Sebi rules, foreign portfolio investors are permitted to buy shares in a public offer.

## HIJAB ROW

### K'taka schools to reopen today

AGENCIES

**Hubballi (Karnataka), Feb 13:** Amid hijab row, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai Sunday warned trouble makers of legal action as schools up to Class X are reopening Monday. Bommai was speaking to reporters in Hubballi. "Our officers are observing messages that are put out on social media. They are also collecting information on their own. My first duty now is to see that schools and colleges are opened as early as possible and to create a cordial atmosphere for peaceful learning. The students must focus on examinations scheduled in March. Other things would be taken care of by investigative agencies," he said. Bommai said, high schools are reopening from tomorrow (Monday) in the state. District Commissioners and school managements have been told to conduct peace meetings and classes will be held peacefully, he said. A decision will be taken on reopening of colleges soon after ensuring all preparations are being made. "Colleges will function like before in a cordial atmosphere. Reopening schools and colleges is our first priority. I have sought a report from the Education Minister. Based on that, a decision would be taken," he stated. Bommai explained the state's economy has suffered badly in the two years due to Covid and through the Budget an attempt would be made to boost the economy. "Economic progress, welfare of people and financial discipline will be kept in mind while presenting the budget," he said, adding, "Our revenue collections are improving, priority will be given to the lowest and poorest person," he said.

## SEC warns fake voters ahead of rural polls

■ A polling agent can challenge the voting right of a person in case he/she finds the concerned person's identity suspicious

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 13:** The State Election Commission (SEC) Sunday warned fake voters of stringent action if found attempting to vote by impersonation during the three-tier panchayat elections in the state scheduled to start February 16. Secretary to the SEC, Rabindra Nath Sahu stated that a person can cast vote during the panchayat elections only when the concerned person's name is mentioned in the voters' list. However, a polling agent can challenge the voting right of a voter in case he/she finds the concerned person's identity suspicious. "By depositing a fee of ₹2 before a presiding officer, the polling agent can request the official for an inquiry. The presiding officer will conduct an on-spot inspection to ascertain the veracity of the allegation. If the voter in question is found out to be a genuine one, the fee amount will be forfeited and he/she will be allowed to cast vote," Sahu said. However, regarding the action to be taken against fake voters, Sahu said that, "If the allegation is proved to be a genuine one, the fee amount will be returned to the agent and the fake voter will be handed over to the police. In case the fake voter

## Pramila faces campaign ban

**BHUBANESWAR:** The SEC Sunday debarred BJD MLA Pramila Mallik from campaigning for the party candidates during the three-tier panchayat elections, 2022 for violating Model Code of Conduct (MCC). The Binjharpur (Jajpur) MLA was debarred from campaigning after a show-cause notice was issued to her on allegations of threatening voters. Now, she cannot campaign for the party anywhere in Odisha for 48 hours starting from 10am of February 14. It can be mentioned here that Mallik was earlier issued the notice after she was found to have threatened voters of stopping their benefits under various schemes, if they don't vote for her party during the panchayat elections. "I did not violate the Model Code of Conduct by seeking votes for my party," Mallik had responded.



has already cast his vote before being identified, his/her vote won't be counted."

It can be mentioned that elections to the three-tier Panchayati Raj bodies in Odisha will be held on every alternate day in five phases, starting February 16 and ending February 24. The polling will commence at 7am and continue till 1pm on the mentioned days. The counting will start February 26.

## Infant, 21 others succumb to Cov

■ Daily positivity rate, which stands at 1.82%, falls below the threshold of 2% for the first time since January 5

PNN/AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 13:** Twenty-two more coronavirus patients, including an infant, have died in Odisha and 1,148 people tested positive for the pathogen, the Health department said Sunday. The daily positivity rate was 1.82 per cent, the first time it fell below the threshold of 2 per cent since January 5. The infections are the lowest since 680 cases January 4. The state had logged 1,539 Covid-19 cases and 24 deaths Friday. A four-month-old girl in Ganjam district and eight patients in Balasore were among the new fatalities. The toll mounted to 8,884 and these are confirmed as Covid deaths after an audit. Fifty-three other Covid patients have died due to comorbidities so far, according to data. Khurda district, where Bhubaneswar is located, reported the highest number of cases with 153 infections, while 244 children were among those newly infected in the state.



## Biological E seeks EUA for Corbevax

**NEW DELHI:** Biological E has sought emergency use authorisation from India's drug regulator for its Covid-19 vaccine Corbevax for the 12 to 18 years age group, official sources said Sunday. The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has already approved Corbevax, which is India's first indigenously developed RBD protein sub-unit vaccine against Covid-19, for restricted use in emergency situation among adults December 28.

There are 12,330 active Covid-19 cases, including 2,355 in Khurda, which is in the yellow zone. As many as 63,037 samples were tested in the past 24 hours, a bulletin stated. Covid-19 tally rose to 12, 77,262, including 12, 55,995 recoveries as 2,081 patients recuperated from the disease in the last 24 hours, it added.

## Sundargarh ADM jailed for graft

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 13:** The Additional District Magistrate (ADM) of Sundargarh, Biswajit Mohapatra, was Sunday arrested and sent to jail on charges of corruption. The Odisha Vigilance arrested Mohapatra after detection of assets worth over ₹10 crore which are allegedly disproportionate to his known sources of income, the Vigilance officials said. Properties of Mohapatra were raided at seven places in Khurda, Sundargarh and Jagatsinghpur districts for two days - Friday and Saturday. During the raids, the anti-corruption wing unearthed one double-storey building worth about ₹89 lakh and a flat in Bhubaneswar, and 10 plots in Bhubaneswar and Jagatsinghpur. Cash over ₹3.32 lakh, along with bank deposits, mutual fund and insurance deposits of over ₹2.40 crore and 470 gm gold have been recovered, the officials said. "Technical Wing will carry out detailed measurement and assessment, based on which the value is likely to increase further," claimed Vigilance sources. The Vigilance has registered a case under Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 as amended by PC (Amendment) Act, 2018 against Mohapatra and his spouse. Mohapatra was produced before the Special Judge Court here that sent him to judicial custody. Recently, the Vigilance had arrested Rourkela Assistant Collector Manoranjan Nayak in a DA case.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



This is not our culture, dear. Why don't you try your hand at spreading hate instead?

## 13-yr-old girl's anti-bullying app gets ₹50L funding offer

■ Two of the judges of reality show 'Shark Tank India' have come forward to invest ₹50 lakh in the app developed by Class VIII student Anoushka Jolly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gurugram, Feb 13:** The sight of a fellow student being mocked during a school function five years ago is etched deep in Anoushka Jolly's memories. But for this 13-year-old, that incident became the

push to start a social initiative to stop bullying and provide a platform for students as well as parents to report anonymously. The Anti Bullying Squad (ABS), with help from educational institutions, social organisations and experts, has positively impacted over 2,000 students from over 100 schools and universities, said Jolly as she spoke about the digital platform, she formed three years ago. The Class VIII student has also come up with a mobile application called 'Kavach' and it allows students and parents to report incidents of bullying anonymously, giving opportunity to schools and counsellors to tactfully intervene and take action.



The incident of the girl being bullied "got registered in my memory and I still cannot forget her face," she was terrified and felt helpless, said Jolly, who was nine years old then.

"I was attending the school annual day when my friends decided to bully the six-year-old girl who they found annoying. They walked up to her and started calling her names

and laughed at her," she said. "Soon, I realised how common the problem is and saw many other children of my age being victims of bullying and losing confidence," said Jolly whose social initiative not only made her the youngest contestant to pitch her entrepreneurial idea on TV reality show 'Shark Tank India' but also landed her a funding offer of ₹50 lakh. The Pathways School, Gurugram, student wants to build a strong network of anti-bullying ambassadors, who will track the progress of those impacted directly or indirectly through the platform and application. "I have been running the ABS digital platform for over three years

with an aim of spreading awareness about bullying which leaves many scared and desolated. The platform acts as a community where specialists come together to organise one-on-one sessions in schools against bullying," Jolly told PTI. The platform also allows people to better understand bullying and its consequences, along with taking a pledge to prevent the menace, she said, adding that it also sells anti-bullying merchandise. "However, during the process, I realised that most of these incidents do not get reported and hence, do not get resolved. So, I came up with an idea of creating a bullying reporting mobile app 'Kavach' to anonymously report incidents," Jolly said.

**WEATHER**

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	28.2°C	28.5°C
TEMP MIN	13.4°C	13.6°C
Humidity	46%	54%
Rainfall	NIL	NIL
Forecast	Clear sky mainly	



# leisure



## EMMA THOMPSON REVEALS HOW A ROLE HELPED HER ACCEPT HER BODY

British actress Emma Thompson, who plays a widow in the much appreciated film *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande*, which was recently screened at Berlinale, revealed that her part in the film pushed her to new avenues as an actor where she learnt to accept her body on screen.

## BARDEM'S *THE GOOD BOSS* WINS BIG AT SPAIN'S TOP FILM AWARDS

Javier Bardem-starrer *The Good Boss* written and directed by Fernando Leon de Aranoa has emerged as the biggest winner at The Goyas - Spain's top film awards. The film collected six awards, reports *Deadline*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today you will have to give in to your spouse's demands for improving the environment at home. In your own interest it will be advisable, says Ganesh, to hasten the measures needed to be taken and stay focussed on them as you are the one who is guilty of neglect.

**TAURUS**  
You will be fondly thinking about your close friends, particularly about the ones of the opposite sex. It may suddenly dawn upon you that you are in love, says Ganesh. If per chance, there is a romantic encounter, go ahead and dive fearlessly in the pool of love. It is near certain that the wedding bells will be ringing for you sooner than you think.

**GEMINI**  
Your family members and your friends will have much higher expectations from you today, and trying to fulfill the same will make you irritable. However, you will figure out creative ways to juggle the many demands made upon you and come out on top at the end of it all, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You will tackle with ease, even the most confounding challenges today. You may be the scapegoat, though, fears Ganesh. Beware, or this may shake you and lower your self-confidence. Try to shake off your weaknesses, and you should see yourself obtaining energy and positivity.

**LEO**  
People involved in Sales and Marketing related jobs will attend productive meetings and will make effective presentations. However, delays in journeying are a possibility. It is a good time to recognise your inherent capabilities. You will be able to prove your worth in the next 2-3 days, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
In all likelihood you will indulge in some writing or artistic work, which will bring about wonderful results. As you are passionate about these things, you may convert them into your hobbies, if you are not involved in them as a professional. Ganesh gives you the green signal to enjoy the clout that you wield over others with your sweet words.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says you will spend time with your family members by putting them above other commitments. There may be plans made to go out for dinner or for a short excursion with them. Ganesh says that the health of a close relative may be a cause of concern for you today.

**SCORPIO**  
The one thing that we neglect the most about ourselves is health. But today you are unable to do that. Your health needs to be paid enough attention as you may be suffering from ailments. Try to regularise your routine along with healthy food and regular exercise, advises Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You are all set to groom your skills as a professional. Talking about work, determination and dedication are likely to rule you today. Putting your heart and soul, your work speaks volumes about your efforts. Appreciation, though slow in pace, is on its way to encourage you.

**CAPRICORN**  
You will have heard of many emotional fools who let sentiments rule their lives. Try not to be one of them, and if it's too difficult a task, at least pretend not to be one of them, for Ganesh says going by your feelings can leave you at a low ebb. In other words, your feelings can come in the way of your success. A solution to this problem is to remain dispassionate and let the opportunist think you are a hard nut to crack.

**AQUARIUS**  
You will go through some heavy mood swings today. And the people who know you well will get shocked and find it difficult to deal with you. Keep your guards on, and don't take uncalculated decisions, advises Ganesh, rather get your current assignments cross the finishing line.

**PISCES**  
Today will be a hectic day for you. Most of your time will be spent in making your relationships on the business as well as the personal front more meaningful. You will likely find yourself attending social events. There is also the possibility that you will attend some religious ritual today.

## Valentine's Day ideas for long distance relationships

Virtual dates assist lovers by improving bonding and communication that extends beyond physical proximity

The goal of long-distance virtual dating is not frivolous or pointless. Virtual dates assist long-distance lovers by improving bonding and communication that extends beyond physical proximity.

Here are a few virtual date ideas that you can use to ensure that your entire set-up is balanced.

### Virtual candlelight dinner

Create an intriguing virtual candlelight dinner because it is the most romantic and amorous date one can have with their partner. Create an atmosphere filled with candlelight to assist you in casting meaningful intentions towards your partner. It will set a romantic tone with its gentle lighting. Cook some drool-worthy virtuals, make a cheese platter, and pour yourself some wine that will potentially go along with your candlelight date, and devour it with your beau or belle in the quaint solitude of your home.

### Psychic reading

It's time to have some fun by exploring and connecting with your partner's hidden intuition about the relationship via a virtual tarot reading. Take these read-

ings lightly, but a quick fortune reading will make you both visionary and futuristic, and can lead you both into a dynamic conversation about your life purpose, hopes, and dreams.

### Unwind with Artsy

This is more than just emotions and basic video chats. Going all creative with your partners is a life elixir that increases levels of intimacy. So gather your painting brush, easel, and paints and prepare for an artistic moment. You don't have to be a good artist; the goal is to celebrate both your own and your partner's self-expression.

### Grab a sunrise coffee

The combination of an aphrodisiac, delicious coffee and a sunrise is pure bliss. Coffee is a powerful temptress that can elevate your mood and arouse your sensual desires. This is for couples looking for an affective twirl from their partners first thing in the morning. If you want to embrace your valentine with devotion the next day in the morning after a perfect date night, you can virtually chat with your partner while brewing a plentiful cup of coffee to sip.



## Creating a new person is a new high: Sanjana

**Mumbai:** After *Dil Bechara*, Sanjana Sanghi is ready to tell another story about young love. Where her debut film showed the power of young love in the face of death, her latest offering *Uljhe Hue* chronicles the modern dating scene.

Admitting that she didn't fully identify with her character who hopes to find love on a dating app, Sanghi says, "My character wasn't entirely relatable to me. I am a bit old-school. I need to know someone organically and spend a lot of time with him to know that I want to be with them. But I have seen a lot of my friends who have got married or engaged after meet-

ing on dating apps."

The Amazon Prime mini-series revolves around Sanghi's Rasika, an introverted visual artist who bumps into Varun, essayed by Abhay Verma, after being stood up on a date. How was it to dive into a feel-good love story after the intense portrayal in *Dil Bechara*? "The world of *Dil Bechara* was so complex. As a character, I submitted to Kizie for two years of my life. Here, to create a new person and jump into her world is a new high. It gives you the faith that if you push yourself, you can get into the skin of a character," she says.

## 'Adaptation isn't a 'copy-paste' job'



**Mumbai:** As the show *Mithya* is releasing, which is an Indian adaptation of the British show *Cheat*, director Rohan Sippy says the most tricky part of any work of adaptation is to bring about a sense of originality without tampering with the very essence of the story and not make it look like a 'copy-paste' job.

Rohan said: "When it comes to *Mithya* we have to understand that it is a British show and we are making an Indian version of the core story. So, there will be some similarities of the main narrative but at the same time, it is an Indianised version. So, where we are setting the story, our society, our mindset every-

thing has to be included in the story to make it relatable."

While re-writing the story to put it in the Indian context was a creative challenge that he and his team enjoyed, shared Sippy.

*Mithya*, which features Huma Qureshi, Avantika Dassani, Parambrata Chattopadhyay, Rajit Kapur among others - releases on ZEE5 February 18.

## RHEA returns to work after two years

**Mumbai:** Rhea Chakraborty, who was last seen in the film *Chehre*, is rejoicing going back to work after two years.

Taking to her Instagram handle, the actor posted a video in which she can be seen at a radio station's studio, dressed in a black-on-black attire with a script in her hand.

In the caption, she wrote, "Yesterday, I went to work after 2 years. A big thank you to all the people who stood by me through my toughest times. No matter what, the sun always shines. NEVER GIVE UP!"

Fans and fellow members of the film industry extended support in the comments section. "yaasss girl get it," Shibani Dandekar wrote. Patralekhaa dropped a string of heart emoticons.

For the unversed, Rhea had an unpleasant 2020 and 2021 as

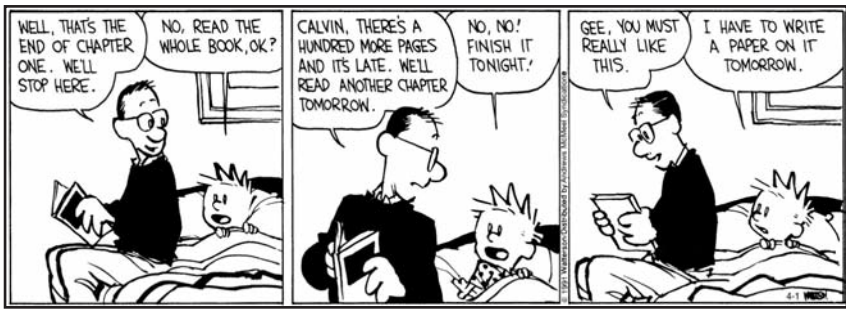
she was accused by her late boyfriend Sushant Singh Rajput's father of abetting the actor's suicide and misappropriating his funds. AGENCIES



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

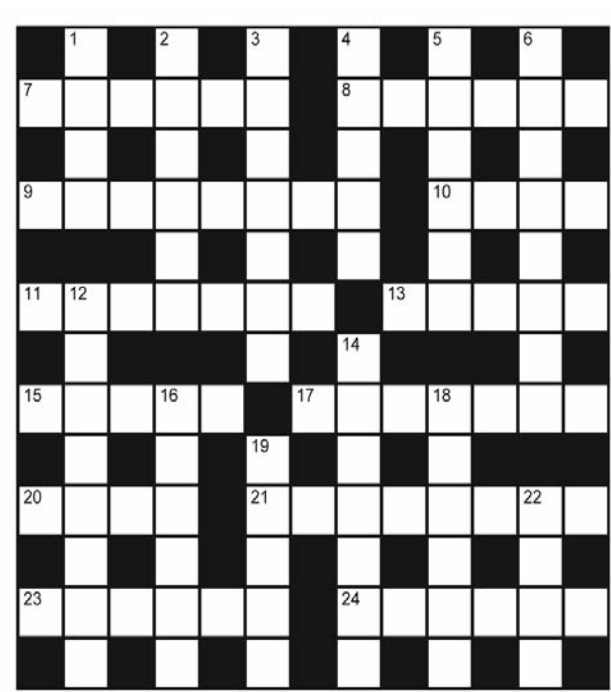


### BREVITY



### FUN post

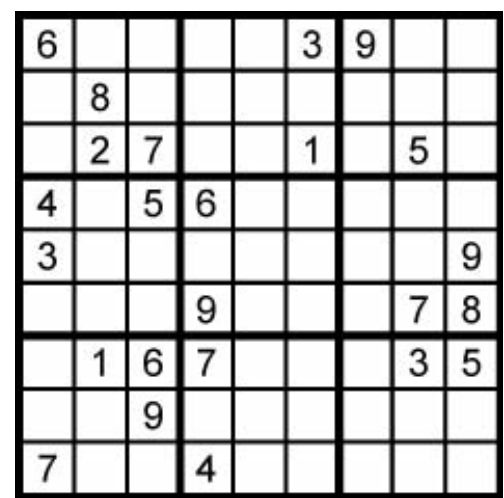
### CROSSWORD



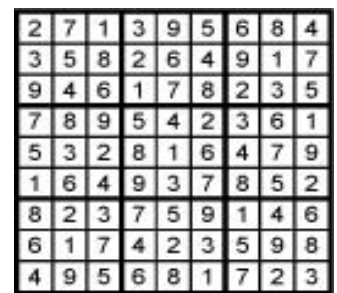
- Across**
- 7 Model's venue
  - 8 Trick-taking card game
  - 9 Vacated the premises (5,3)
  - 10 Wine choice
  - 11 Knackwurst
  - 13 Where to find a bishop
  - 15 Poncho
  - 17 Wedding party member (4,3)
  - 20 Still sleeping
  - 21 Torpor
  - 23 Hush-hush
  - 24 Sonora snooze
  - Down**
  - 1 Camera setting
  - 2 Title holders
  - 3 Sci-fi characters
  - 4 Brief brawl (3-2)
  - 5 Char
  - 6 It's between Great Britain and Ireland (5,3)
  - 12 Winged it (2-6)
  - 14 Bridge expert
  - 16 Common vipers
  - 18 London's waterway
  - 19 Champagne holder
  - 22 Fence part

### 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



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

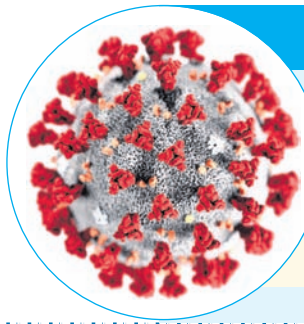


# downtown



## IN MEMORIAM

A musical event by Cinecritics Association and Culture department in progress at Rabintra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Sunday, to pay homage to singer Lata Mangeshkar



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	41,13,20,294	33,14,89,416	58,31,008
India	4,26,31,421	4,15,85,711	5,08,665
Odisha	12,77,262	12,57,840	8,884

# BJD criticises Centre but prefers not to name BJP

KULDEEP SINGH, OP

New Delhi, Feb 13: Biju Janata Dal (BJD), the ruling party in Odisha, took an aggressive stand against the Centre during the first phase of the Budget Session by criticising the latter's policies. However, the BJD MPs did not mention Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) while criticising the Centre.

During the first phase of the Budget Session that commenced January 31 and ended February 11, the BJD MPs attacked the Centre for not opening the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) portal for people of Odisha despite repeated requests in this regard from the state government. They alleged that the Centre was not treating all states equally by citing the case of Karnataka, for which the PMAY-G portal was opened by the Centre.

However, the BJD MPs didn't mention BJP even once while citing the case of Karnataka. While raising the issue in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, none of the BJD MPs criticised the BJP, which is the ruling party in Karnataka. Several regional parties often criticise the Centre for favouring the BJP-ruled states. The Shiv Sena in Maharashtra had criticised the Centre for favouring BJP-ruled states in the management of Covid-19 pandemic. BJD MPs Sasmit Patra, Amar Patnaik, Sujeet Kumar and Bhartruhari Mahtab made reference to Karnataka while raising the issue in Parliament but skipped attacking BJP in their speeches.

## Budget Session Phase-I

Although the BJD MPs attacked the Centre for not opening the PMAY-G portal for people of Odisha despite repeated requests in this regard from the state govt, they didn't mention BJP even once while citing the case of Karnataka, for which the portal was opened by the Centre

While raising the issue in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, none of the BJD MPs criticised the BJP, which is the ruling party in Karnataka

Several regional parties often criticise the Centre for favouring the BJP-ruled states. The Shiv Sena in Maharashtra had criticised the Centre for favouring BJP-ruled states in the management of Covid-19 pandemic



The BJD government in Odisha received a lot of appreciation from PM Narendra Modi during the first phase of the Budget Session. While giving the example of cooperative federalism, the PM praised the Odisha government for proper implementation of the central schemes

The PM also appreciated BJD MP Prasanna Acharya for lauding the Centre for Veer Baal Diwas initiative and commemorating Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

Speaking on the Motion of Thanks to President's address in the Rajya Sabha, Patra said the Chief Minister of Odisha had written thrice to the Centre requesting it to open the PMAY-G portal so that over six lakh families from the coastal state can be included under the housing scheme.

"This window PMAY-G portal was opened for Karnataka and around 25 lakh families of the southern state were included under the housing scheme. We appreciate that. But, what is the mistake of Odisha people that the Centre did not open

the portal for them," Patra said.

Interestingly, the BJD government in Odisha received a lot of appreciation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the first phase of the Budget Session. While giving the example of cooperative federalism, the Prime Minister praised the Odisha government for proper implementation of the central schemes.

The PM also appreciated BJD MP Prasanna Acharya for lauding the Centre for Veer Baal Diwas initiative and commemorating Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

# State to see rainfall, rise in temperature

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: The India Meteorological Department's (IMD) regional centre here stated Sunday that several parts of Odisha are likely to witness rainfall activities under the influence of a fresh Western disturbance starting February 16.

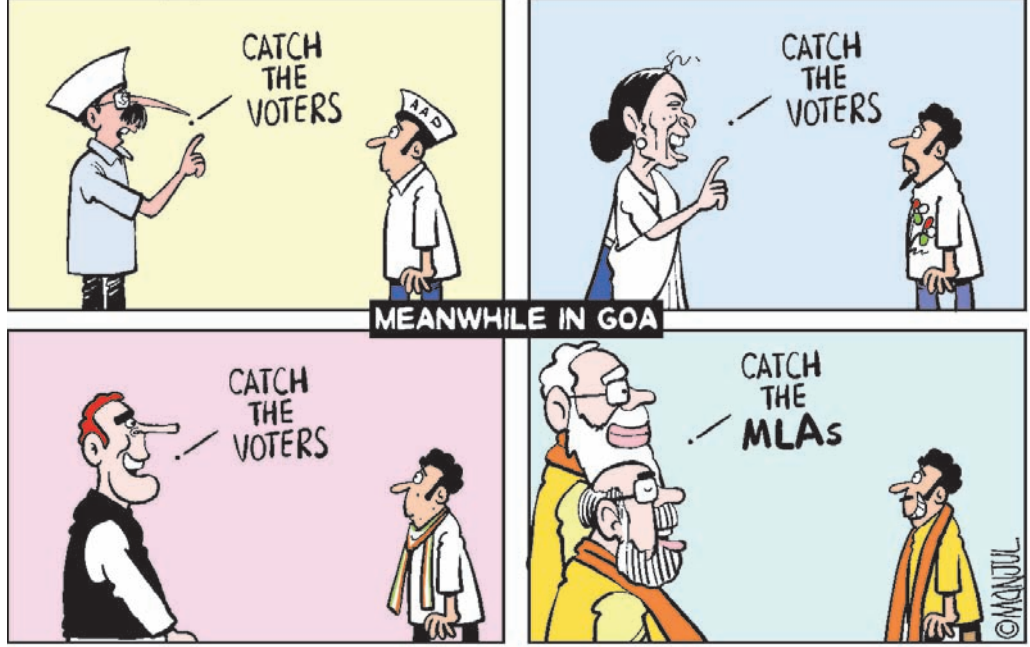


There will be a gradual rise in the normal minimum temperature by 3 to 5 degree Celsius post February 15

As per the met body, several parts of north interior Odisha will experience rain and thunderstorm activities. Rain forecast has been issued for Balasore, Bhadrak, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh and Jharsuguda districts. Some parts of the state are also likely to witness hailstorm during this period.

However, the overall weather will mostly remain dry in Odisha till February 15. The weatherman further informed that there will be no change in the minimum (night) temperature for the next two days. However, there will be a gradual rise in the normal minimum (night) temperature by 3 to 5 degree Celsius subsequently.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



# BMC team to sensitise event organisers on food waste

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 13: As the Capital city witnesses a large number of functions during wedding season, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to deploy a dedicated team that would sensitise event organisers on food wastage and avoidance of single-use plastic during events.

Sources at the BMC said that the civic body will introduce 'zero waste' concept to stop usage of plastics and wastage of food and promote waste segregation at source. It has been observed that single-use plastic items like disposable glasses, cups and spoons get piled up post events. Such materials need to be prohibited as per the Waste Management Rule 2016.

"The City authority is conducting 'Citizen Connect Programme' under the Swachh Survekshan 2022. As an important component of the programme, the dedicated team of BMC has targeted a few event venues where the team members will directly visit and orient the organisers on the objective of the 'Zero Waste Programme'," a BMC official said.

The BMC's plan to demonstrate such practices at religious insti-



Eight such programmes have been conducted in three zones of the Capital city so far

Moreover, the BMC is planning to propagate the idea through permission orders and money receipts

tutions and social functions - marriage, thread ceremonies and funeral feasts - includes members from its communication and sanitation wings. The team would visit different event points and sensitise the organisers beforehand. During the event, sanitation workers would go to the venue and orient them on segregation of waste at source. On spot zero waste demonstration would be conducted and venue owners, too, would be oriented on the spot.

"Few event venues and permission documents are selected for orientation sites. One day before the

# Valentine's Day: Lovebirds throng Puri

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Feb 13: Hundreds of couples, both married and unmarried, have thronged the coastal city of Puri for celebration of Valentine's Day, Monday.

The sandy beach of the city, the Sun Temple at Konark and the Chilika lake have attracted the couples to Puri for the special occasion. Most of the rooms in hotels, lodgings and holiday homes of the city have already been booked by

these lovebirds, sources said.

"All the 95 rooms in our hotel have been booked by the young couples. Some have already checked in while others are supposed to arrive by Monday morning," said Sudhanshu Sahu, the manager of a hotel near the beach.

The couples have a preference for hotels located close to the beach. The rooms of all sea-facing hotels have been booked by the couples, Sahu claimed.

The fire brigade department,

meanwhile, has made an elaborate arrangement to ensure safety for sea bathers. "The youngsters may go for a bath in the sea. We have deployed adequate number of life-guards to prevent any untoward incident," said fire brigade official Dhananjaya Mallick.

Many couples are also likely to visit Srimandir and pay obeisance to Lord Jagannath on the occasion. "We have come to Puri to visit Srimandir on Valentine's Day," said Saroj Baral, a visitor.

Many college students have also planned to celebrate the occasion. "Valentine's Day is a very special day for us. We are eagerly waiting to celebrate it," said Aishwarjya Patnaik, a student.

The police have stepped up security at the beach and other places as some outfits are likely to oppose Valentine's Day celebration in Puri.

"An adult person can spend time with another adult person. There is nothing wrong in it," said city DSP Janardhan Padhi.

# New office-bearers of Cuttack Pvt Bus Owners' Association

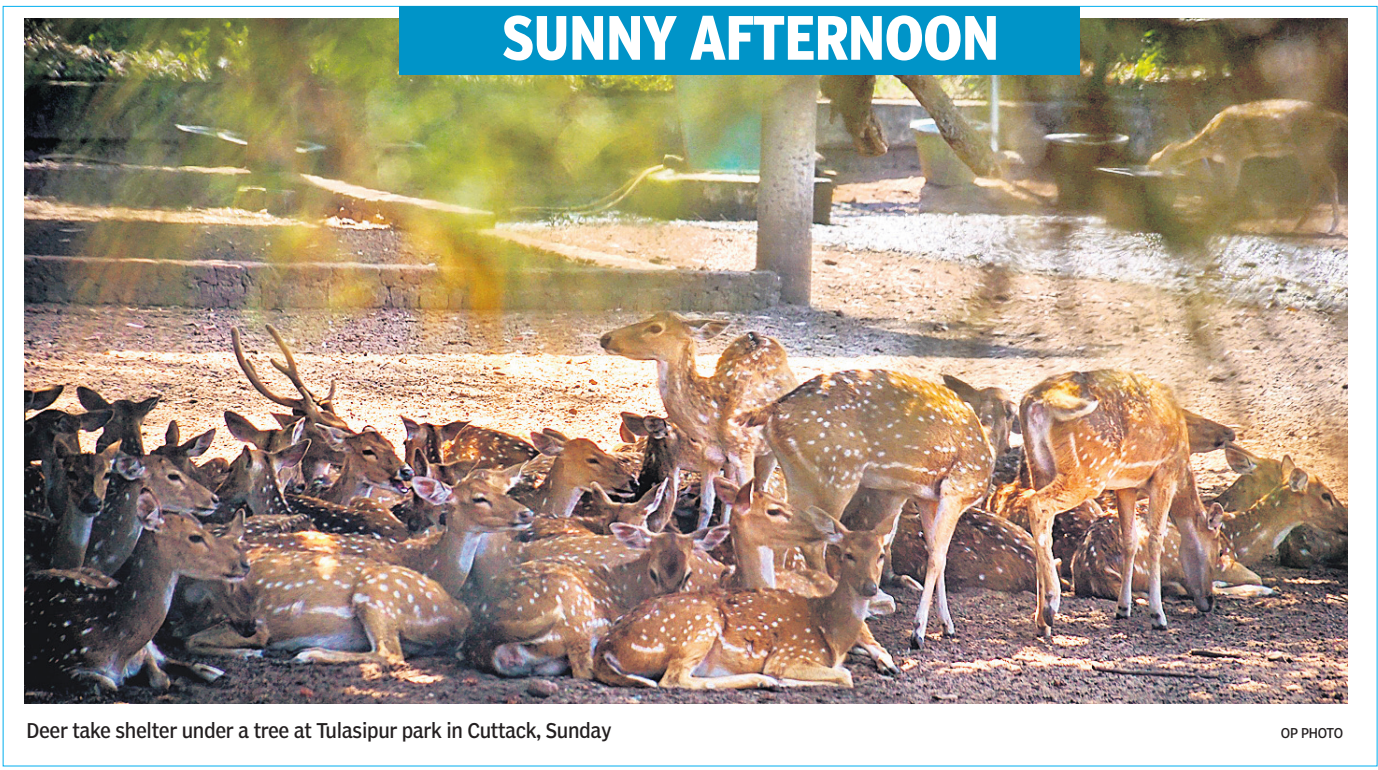
POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 13: The election for the office-bearers of Cuttack Private Bus Owners' Association was conducted here Sunday.

Priyabrata Tripathy has been elected as the president of the association while Ajay Kumar Barik has been declared as the general secretary. Rabintra Kumar Singh has been chosen as the treasurer, said returning officer Rabi Mallick.

PRIYABRATA TRIPATHY HAS BEEN ELECTED AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION WHILE AJAY KUMAR BARIK HAS BEEN DECLARED AS THE GENERAL SECRETARY. RABINDRA KUMAR SINGH HAS BEEN CHOSEN AS THE TREASURER, SAID RETURNING OFFICER RABI MALLICK

ALTOGETHER 26 PERSONS HAVE BEEN ELECTED TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE ASSOCIATION. THE OFFICE-BEARERS HAVE BEEN ELECTED FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS



Deer take shelter under a tree at Tulasipur park in Cuttack, Sunday

# India logs 44,877 fresh Cov cases, 684 deaths

## SUNNY AFTERNOON

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 13: In a marginal decline, India registered 44,877 new Covid-19 cases and 684 deaths in the last 24 hours, the Union Health Ministry said Sunday.

The new fatalities increased the overall death toll to 5,08,665.

Meanwhile, the active covid caseload has reduced to 5,37,045, which constitute 1.26 per cent of the country's total positive cases.

The recovery of 1,17,591 patients in the last 24 hours has increased the cumulative tally to 4,15,85,711. Consequently, India's recovery rate stands at 97.55 per cent.

Also in the same period, a total of 14,15,279 tests were conducted across the country, which increased the total to 75.07 crore.

While the weekly positivity rate

WHILE THE WEEKLY POSITIVITY RATE STOOD AT 4.46 PER CENT, THE DAILY POSITIVITY RATE FELL TO 3.17 PER CENT

WITH THE ADMINISTRATION OF OVER 49 LAKH VACCINE DOSES IN THE LAST 24 HOURS, INDIA'S COVID INOCULATION COVERAGE REACHED 172.81 CRORE AS OF SUNDAY MORNING

THE NEW FATALITIES INCREASED THE OVERALL DEATH TOLL TO 5,08,665

stood at 4.46 per cent, the daily positivity rate fell to 3.17 per cent.

With the administration of over 49 lakh vaccine doses in the last 24 hours, India's Covid inoculation coverage reached 172.81 crore as of Sunday morning.

# Omicron may cause brain complications, inflammations: Expert

## COVID BLUES

Founder and chief executive of DNKOM research centre Andrey Isaev said although Omicron has been touted as causing mild infections, it can lead to long Covid in adults and systemic inflammations among children

Yet, several studies have shown that the Omicron variant is less able to infect the lungs and, as a result, is leading to less patients being admitted with pneumonia who require oxygen and ventilators.

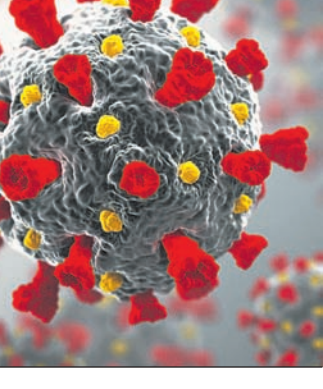
However, in many countries, particularly in the US and Israel,

The Omicron variant carries a large number of mutations and is also known to evade vaccine-induced immunity

However, in many countries, particularly in the US and Israel, it spiked hospitalisations.

Isaev stated that since Omicron is a variant of the SARS-CoV-2 -- which had been known to affect

the brain as well as cause inflammation -- it may have some of the other post infection effects, the report said.



"Despite the lighter course of the Omicron, it is necessary to understand: if the coronavirus does not lead to pneumonia and artificial lung ventilation, it may have other consequences," he was quoted as saying.

"Covid-19 in the past may lead to severe nervous system disturbances - neuro Covid and long Covid-19 may occur when infected with the Omicron as well," Isaev added.

The variant also significantly affected children. Many children across US were hospitalised.

Isaev noted that "systemic inflammations may evolve with children" due to Omicron.

The predominant symptoms of Omicron include headache, lethargy, throat pain, dry cough, fever, and

loss of appetite. So far, studies have shown it to be largely affecting the upper respiratory system and is not known to affect lungs much.

But in January, Israel reported a case of a person with Omicron being treated for myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle.)

Studies have shown that even mild cases of Covid-19 can trigger persistent symptoms.

Long Covid is a possibility regardless of the variant, top US infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci was quoted as saying in a recent interview.

"Long Covid can happen no matter what virus variant occurs. There's no evidence that there's any difference between Delta or Beta or now Omicron," he had said.



## WORLD RADIO DAY



People visiting an exhibition at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar on the occasion of World Radio Day, Sunday

# Nod for WW-II airstrip facelift soon: Tudu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 13:** Union Minister Bishweswar Tudu Sunday said he is hopeful that the Centre will give its nod for turning the now-defunct Amarda Road Airstrip in Mayurbhanj district, which was operational during World War-II, into a modern airport.

Making an aggressive pitch for its revival, Tudu said the airstrip is located 225km from state Capital Bhubaneswar and only 90km from the Kalaikunda Air Force Station, and can be used for commercial and defence purposes.

"I have taken up the matter with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia. Both of them have found the place suitable for a modern airport as it is strategically located," Tudu told PTI. A team of experts from the Airports Authority of India has already visited the site, and "We are hopeful that the authorities will soon accord a no-objection certificate," said the Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs and Jal Shakti.

The 1,000-acre piece of land in Rasgovindpur block falls under the purview of the Defence Ministry and it needs to be handed

### Huge potential

The airstrip is located 225km from Bhubaneswar and only 90km from the Kalaikunda Air Force Station, and can be used for commercial and defence purposes, like in Pune and Guwahati

The Amarda Road Airstrip will cater to an estimated 82 lakh people, mostly in north Odisha, south Bengal and east Jharkhand

The proposed airport will address the requirements of institutions like the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur in Balasore and IIT-Kharagpur in West Bengal



### Illustrious history

The station came into existence during the war as a forward airfield against the Japanese conquest of Burma

The large airstrip served its purpose well as a landing ground and also as a training space for special bombing missions

Built in the 1940s at a cost of ₹3 crore, it was eventually abandoned after the war

over to the Civil Aviation Ministry, Tudu said.

The Rasgovindpur Airstrip (as it is known today) has a short but "secret illustrious history", which has never been made public, said war historian Anil Dhir, adding it had the "longest runway in Asia, over 3.5km long".

"Today, if you look at the silent runway lying mostly vacant apart from a few odd cows grazing, it would be difficult to associate the airport with activities of any kind. But, this airstrip played a very important role in Indian defence dur-

ing World War-II," Dhir said.

He said no details of the events that took place here between 1943 and 1945 exist, not even in government and military records. "The station came into existence during the war as a forward airfield against the Japanese conquest of Burma. The large airstrip served its purpose well as a landing ground for planes and also as a training space for special bombing missions," the historian said.

Built in the 1940s at a cost of Rs 3 crore, it was eventually abandoned after the war.

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Built in the 1940s at a cost of Rs 3 crore, it was eventually abandoned after the war.

# Halted Ganjam Hockey turf work awaits Home dept nod



PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

Kulange has again written a letter to Ashok Kumar Mishra, IDCO's divisional head in Berhampur. In the later, the Collector has asked Mishra to obtain permission from the Home department to dismantle the old building. The Ganjam Collector also stated that after dismantling the building, the hockey turf work will start and then only the deadline set by the Sports Secretary can be met.

Kulange had written to the Additional Secretary of the Home department March 6 last year to transfer the ownership of the land from the Home department to State Youth Services and Sports department.

IDCO Berhampur divisional head Ashok has written to the Ganjam ADM to direct the home department officials to demolish the building. Mishra has also written to the Ganjam SP to take expedite steps.

However, permission from the Home department has not been obtained yet. The IDCO has been tasked to execute its work. Meanwhile, the IDCO has chosen a contractor by floating a tender.

There are also some trees on the land. Therefore, the permission of the Divisional Forest Officer too needs to be obtained for cutting those trees, in order to further the Hockey turf work.

The IDCO has been tasked to execute its work for which it has chosen a contractor by floating a tender, while permission from the DFO too is required to fell some trees standing on the proposed Hockey turf

A patch of 3.1 acre has been identified in Sitarampur mouza under Chhatrapur tehsil. Ganjam district Collector Vijay Amruta

**Bhubaneswar / Chhatrapur, Feb 13:** The inordinate delay in the construction of a proposed hockey centre with synthetic turf in Ganjam district has been attributed to the delay in permission of the Home department to dismantle an old building on the earmarked land, report said.

The old building belongs to the Home department and it has become a hurdle for carrying out the construction of the Hockey turf. There is a dire need for removal of the building to find the way forward for the construction work.

# 62-year-old man nabbed for snatching bag at rly station

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 13:** Government Railway Police (GRP) officials here Sunday claimed to have arrested a 62-year-old man on charges of snatching a bag with valuables worth ₹1.80 lakh from a couple at the railway station here. The accused was identified as Nagu Das, a resident of Penthakata in Puri district.

According to GRP sources, the incident took place in the after-



noon when the couple from Angul was waiting to board the Rourkela Intercity Express. Das was loi-

tered in the platform when he found the couple distracted and taking advantage of the situation decamped with their bag. The bag contained valuables, including jewellery and ₹8,000 in cash, worth ₹1.80 lakh.

A fellow passenger nearby alerted the couple about the theft. Later, the victims approached the GRP officials who examined the CCTV footage and managed to nab Das as he was trying to escape through the station's main entrance.

"A case (379/22) has been registered in this connection. We've handed over the bag to its owner. Das, a rickshaw puller, had been arrested by Puri police in several cases of theft," said an official.

## POLLS AHEAD



BJP workers take out a campaign at Sishupalgarh in Bhubaneswar, Sunday, ahead of the elections

OP PHOTO

# Cuttack boy praised by PM, Vice President

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Feb 13:** Sambhab Mishra, a student of Class X in Lajpat Rai DAV Public School here, earned appreciations of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu for "Vijayee Bhaba Bharat", a compilation on various welfare schemes of the Centre.

"Dear Sambhab Mishra! Thank you for sharing a copy of 'Vijayee Bhaba Bharat', a book describing the Government of India's schemes in an innovative way. My best wishes for your future endeavours," wrote Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu in his appreciation letter. Sambhab said he developed interest for writing while studying in Class IX.

"When I was in Class IX, I learnt about various schemes of the government through political science books. I grew curious to get further insight into the schemes and sought help of my parents and teachers. In this way, I got inspiration and wrote the book," said an elated Sambhab.

# Autism still underdiagnosed in girls and women

Being autistic, but not diagnosed, can lead to a lifetime of struggles and being misunderstood for women.

This issue has been highlighted in the last few years by celebrity women including Hannah Gadsby, Daryl Hannah, British reality star Christine McGuinness and former Australian of the year Grace Tame. By talking about their adult autism diagnosis, they are helping debunk the myth that autism is for boys and men.

Autism affects thoughts, feelings, interactions and experiences in an estimated one in 70 people. In childhood, autism is now diagnosed in three boys for every one girl, a ratio that has greatly reduced over time. Girls are often diagnosed later than boys, missing out on opportunities for early support.

Girls, who have autism but are not diagnosed, grow up not understanding why they are sometimes confused in social situations. They might not be able to make friends as easily as others and can sometimes be targets for bullies. This

can lead to lifelong feelings of failure and thinking they have character defects—or being told they do. These experiences growing up can lead to or interact with post-traumatic stress symptoms in adulthood.

Girls get diagnosed and misdiagnosed with other things. Girls who don't get diagnosed tend not to have readily observable co-occurring difficulties, such as hyperactivity. But many girls and women receive other, sometimes incorrect, diagnoses instead of, or before, an autism diagnosis.

There is a long-standing bias in the world of mental health to view some symptoms as the domain of males, such as aggressive and externalising symptoms, while internalising symptoms like anxiety are seen as the domain of females.

Clinical observations reveal many women who receive their autism diagnosis in adulthood have had various other diagnoses including anxiety disorders, depression and mood disorders, borderline personality

### 4 changes needed in tests

- They should consider autistic strengths and not focus solely on deficits and impairments, as sometimes autism isn't considered because of the presence of strengths
- They should incorporate the common lived experiences of autistic women. These have now been well-documented by autistic women, many with successful careers and yet areas of difficulty
- The differences between the presentation of autism in females and males should be reflected in the diagnostic criteria

ALSO, AUTISTIC PEOPLE SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE DESIGN AND CONTENT OF DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder and eating disorders. Treatments and support need to be tailored to be effective, where the underlying cause is likely autism.

Research suggests girls quickly

learn to copy others, which has the effect of "masking" or "camouflaging" their difficulties. They might practise making facial expressions in the mirror so they can be ready to make their expressions match upcom-

ing social situations; they may copy other girls to learn how to position their bodies. They might have an array of scripts to say in different situations, especially when there is a risk of having to engage in "small talk". They use rule-based approaches rather than intuitive response. Their special interests might be more "acceptable" than those of autistic boys. Think animals, music, books, or just learning and researching, compared to videogames or trains.

Trying to be perfect, or achieve in other areas, can be another response to one's social difficulties. These strategies can result in autism not even being considered by parents, teachers and clinicians. Compared to boys, girls are observed to have less repetitive behaviour such as movements, narrow interests, or ritualised behaviour.

Not picking up on social situations quickly enough can put women and girls at greater risk of traumatic experiences. Parents and teachers need better support

to identify and understand autism in girls. They may spot girls not picking up social cues or appearing a little behind their peers in some areas. These can be carefully explored. A conversation with a young person about how they navigate social situations can be revealing. Confusion or a rule-based approach may be quickly apparent.

Autistic girls grow into women who may have a very direct style of communication and not pick up on the subtleties of office politics. This can result in them receiving negative professional feedback and reinforce self doubts.

Clinicians too need to be better at understanding how girls and women with autism might get missed. Thinking beyond binary notions of gender is also important—there is more gender diversity in autistic people. Exploring the presentation of non-binary and gender fluid people with autism is an emerging field that could shed further light on autistic presentations. PTI

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SHORT TAKES

**Murder convict lifer dies in hosp**

**Phulbani:** An inmate of District Jail here serving life term for murder died while undergoing treatment at the district headquarters hospital, Sunday. The deceased was identified as Kanhu Charan Pradhan (61) of Karmaha village under Daringbadi police limits. According to the jail superintendent Sarmistha Prusty, Kanhu was convicted in a murder case in 2016 and had been serving as a lifer. In 2018, Kanhu had also killed another jail inmate. He fell sick Friday and was admitted to the district headquarters hospital at 9 pm. There he succumbed, she added. The body has been handed over to his family after post mortem.

**Locals, admin hold talks over JSW project**



**Kujang:** A discussion was held Sunday between the villagers and the district administration vis-a-vis the JSW ISP project at the Dhinkia Panchayat office. JSW has been able to win the trust of people in Dhinkia Panchayat, epicenter of the earlier protests for POSCO project, within a very short span, said a company spokesperson. The attractive R&R package and planned employment drive prior to setting up of the plant have been instrumental in winning the trust of people, it was learnt. A group of villagers under the leadership of Nirbhay Samantray met the district administration Saturday to discuss expectations of people from the project.

**Similipal: Nine families shifted out of core area**



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Udala, Feb 13:** The forest department and the authorities of the Similipal Tiger Reserve have started relocating people from the core area of Similipal sanctuary. This step is aimed at ensuring undisturbed wild atmosphere for the wildlife so that more parts of the sanctuary will be granted national park status by the Centre.

As many as nine families have been shifted from the core area Friday. Two families have been rehabilitated at Ambadiha and seven other families at Nabara under

Udala block. The officials concerned said that the displaced families will be provided with all possible facilities by the state government at the new locations. Deputy Director of the Similipal Tiger Reserve Samrat Gouda and Baripada divisional forest officer Santosh Joshi had talked to the families about their rehabilitation and facilities when they were dislocated from their age-old dwelling places in the core area.

The entire area of Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR), fourth largest tiger habitat in the country, has not been accorded national park status as it is yet to be freed from human settlements.

Notably, 35 families living in Jamunagad area, the core area of the sanctuary had been rehabilitated at Nabara, September 15, 2015.

**FLAG MARCH**



Police officials participating in a flag march ahead of the first phase of elections for the panchayat polls at MV-79 village in Malkangiri district

OP PHOTO

**Funding delay freezes MGNREGS pay**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhanjanagar, Feb 13:** The Centre-sponsored Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has become a principal scheme for employment and helped in reducing rural unemployment in the country.

However, the scheme has failed to achieve desired success owing to various reasons at different points of time. Moreover, preferential treatment in payment of wages, allegedly on caste basis, has also hit the success of the scheme. The wages are paid on the basis of whims of officials as per their preference for caste.

It has been alleged that now the Centre is not releasing funds in time for which it has become difficult to pay the job card holders in due time. The rule mandates that the job card holders have to be paid in every 15 days. Any violation invites action against the concerned employees.

The Centre, by not releasing the funds to the bank accounts of the job card holders in due time, is violating the rule which it has framed.



FILE PHOTO

**AT CENTRE'S WHIMS**

Rule mandates that the job card holders are to be paid in every 15 days. But the government is violating the rule which it has framed. Such violation of rules is being witnessed for the last few years

The Centre is yet to release the funds towards wages from the last week of December till now. The labourers were last paid December 27

Wages amounting to over ₹1 crore are yet to be paid to the job card holders alone under Bhanjanagar block

The implementation of the scheme is also moving at a snail's pace under the forest department, thereby making the workers demotivated to work

Such violation of rules is being witnessed for the last few years.

As a result, resentment is brewing among the people and particularly the job card holders in Ganjam district.

Reports said that the Centre is yet to release the funds towards wages from the last week of December till now. The labourers were last paid December 27.

As a result, wages amounting

to over ₹1 crore are yet to be paid to the job card holders alone under Bhanjanagar block. The job card holders who have worked for the forest department have also not been paid their wages. Consequently, they are also losing interest in their work due to non-payment of dues in time.

Moreover, the implementation of the scheme is also moving at a snail's pace under the forest department. Workers are demotivated to work under the scheme in forest department. The senior officials of the department have also expressed their displeasure on the slow implementation of the scheme.

Recently, a meeting was held in the local nursery where the senior officials stressed on preparing plan to create more and more man days. Presiding over the meeting, DFO Abhaya Kanta Dalai stressed on proper and successful implementation of the scheme and providing works to more and more people.

When contacted, BDO Anil Kumar Sethi said the wages of the labourers are released into their bank accounts as soon as the fund is available for disbursement.

**Poll boycott threat works well for Rayagada village**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rayagada, Feb 13:** In an interesting turn of event, the threat of boycotting the upcoming panchayat elections by people of Katanganda village in Guma panchayat of Rayagada district has forced the administration to start development works for the village. The villagers are upbeat about a change in their village, a report said.

This village in Guma panchayat is just 15 km from the district headquarters. The people have long been suffering due to lack of road connectivity, electricity, drinking water and other basic amenities. There are 18 families living in the village. Villagers said they have to trek about 25 km through hilly terrains to avail PDS items and pension from the panchayat office. It was too difficult for people to negotiate through the harsh landscape.

In case of medical emergency, am-

The administration has started laying a road cutting through the hills to the village after the villagers warned of shunning the elections

balance fails to reach the village.

Though they had been repeatedly drawing attention of the administration towards the need of development, a precious little was done. The villagers were angry and had resolved to boycott the panchayat elections.

Meanwhile, the administration has started laying a road cutting through the hills. The work is being executed under MGNREGS.

As for the issue, BDO Laxminarayan Sabat said that after construction of the road, all government facilities will be made available to the villagers.

**Cong accuses MLA of poll code violation**

**SAREES, TOWELS SEIZED FROM MLA'S CAR**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nabarangpur/Papadahandi, Feb 13:** Dabugaon MLA Manohar Randhari is caught in soup on charge of allegedly carrying sarees and towels Saturday evening in his car for distribution among voters at Randagada under Kantamal panchayat to woo them ahead of the upcoming three-tier rural polls.

The matter came to the fore after former local Congress MLA Bhujabal Majhi and his daughter Lipika Majhi lodged a complaint with the tehsil and Papadahandi police station, Saturday.

Police and tehsil official seized Randhari's car and brought it to Papadahandi police station later at night. Notably, Lipika, the daughter of the former MLA, is contesting for the zilla parishad zone-2 from Congress party.

Meanwhile, Muna Tripathy, district Congress president al-

leged that the ruling BJD is violating the model code of conduct for elections. Tripathy said this while speaking at a press meet held here, Sunday. He said the party members have stopped BJD during distribution of saree, towel at Randagada village, six hundred packets of rice at Baghasiuni village and tables and chairs at Umerkote and lodged complaints with the electoral officer.

He said that the ruling party has been facing stiff opposition during campaigning due to disappointment among people. At some places eggs have been pelted at BJD leaders while people have turned away their campaign vehicles in other places.

Reacting to the allegation, Randhari said, "I was carrying the sarees and lungis for a post-death ritual in Bhamini village and not for distribution among voters as the case is made out to be."

**Cong ZP candidate joins BJD citing no funds for campaign**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, Feb 13:** The Congress party in Sambalpur district received a jolt after the party's zilla parishad candidate for zone no-2 under Maneswar block Sujata Badi resigned from the party and joined the ruling BJD citing lack of funds for campaigning, Sunday.

The move came as a shock for the party leaders with only five days left for the panchayat elections. Sujata claimed she failed to get the funds required to campaign for the election and was left with no other choice.

Accompanied by her husband Srikanta Badi, Sujata joined the ruling party at the residence of Rohit Pujari, MLA and party's deputy chief whip. Siddharth Das, BJD district president and Gopiranjana Behera, party president of Maneswar block were present during her joining.

She said that she joined BJD after being inspired by the ideals of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and the efficiency of MLA Rohit Pujari.

**NORM VIOLATION**



A zilla parishad candidate along with supporters and local MLA hitting the campaign trail in Ganjam block with scant regard to the Covid guidelines

OP PHOTO

**Startup mooted for marketing of edible wild roots**

Dr Debabrata Panda did his research on wild yam species used by the tribes of Koraput. The nutritional traits and health benefits were studied at the laboratory of the Central University of Odisha



**It is high time that we took necessary steps to conserve these valuable resources in their natural habitat and to validate them scientifically. A strategy to promote commercial production of these wild plants is required to boost the local economy by initiating processing, value addition and creating market so as to reach more consumers**

**DEBABRATA PANDA** | ASST PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF BIO-DIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES, CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF ODISHA

ality, many of these tubers are edible and have been actually sustaining the tribals with food and nutrition since ages.

These tubers also help in boosting immunity as all of them are not toxic and life threatening for humans. This was stated here by

Debabrata Panda, an assistant professor at School of Bio-Diversity and Conservation of Natural Resources, Central University of Odisha in Koraput. Panda has been carrying out extensive research for the last 10 years on various types of wild fruits, flowers and wild roots

consumed by the tribals.

Panda said that the tribals in Koraput mainly consume eight types of wild roots as food as well as medicine. During food shortage, they mainly use wild roots such as Fitkala, Taragai Kanda, Kasha Kanda, Kulia Kanda, Soranda Kanda

and Cherbhaga Kanda as food. They collect wild roots from jungle and use those in preparation of their traditional food.

These wild roots are rich in protein, minerals and essential nutrients. Moreover, these are also good sources of vitamin-C, vitamin-E, sodium, potassium, calcium and zinc. These wild roots are also rich in anti-oxidants that help in boosting their immunity against deadly diseases.

This apart, these wild roots prevent hunger and malnutrition during climate change induced droughts. Panda pleaded for more publicity of these edible wild roots which will help in facilitating the lives and livelihoods of the tribals. He has stressed on commercialisation of these wild roots like coffee and Kala Jeera rice of Koraput through a startup. He said that the tribals should be encouraged to take up commercial production of wild roots and their conservation.

**Binapani Sangeet Parishad**  
Baradeswar, Bonth, Bhadrak, Odisha  
padmalochandutta@gmail.com, 9337072560

**TENDER NOTICE**  
Date: 11.02.2022  
Tender Doc. No.: COHANDS/NA/Applique and Allied Cluster/IA/DPR/2019-20/002

**Supply of Machinery and Equipment for CFC At Baradeswar, PO: Bonth, Bhadrak, Odisha under SFURTI Scheme, MSME, GOI**

Sealed tenders are invited from manufacturer/supplier/traders (having minimum three years experience in supply or manufacturing of machineries) for Supply of Machinery and Equipment for CFC at Village Baradeswar, Bonth, Bhadrak, Odisha, being facilitated by Binapani Sangeet Parishad, Baradeswar, Bonth, Bhadrak, Odisha. Tender should be submitted in separate envelopes for Technical Bid and Financial Bid alongwith earnest money of Rs.2,20,000/- (Rupees Two Lakh Twenty Thousand only) and can be deposited at the below mentioned address upto 05.00 P.M. of 25.02.2022. The Demand Draft of earnest money should be in the name of Binapani Sangeet Parishad, payable at Bhadrak, Odisha. Tenders received will be opened before the Procurement Committee of the proposed Common Facility Centre on 25.02.2022 at 3.00 P.M. in Office.

Tender form can be obtained from Binapani Sangeet Parishad, Baradeswar, Bonth, Bhadrak, Odisha any working day between 11.02.2022 to 25.02.2022 from 10.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. and on 26.02.2022 from 10.00 A.M. to 2.00 P.M. by payment of Rs.500/- (Rupees Five Hundred only)

The details of work's alongwith Terms and Conditions are available in the Tender Form Binapani Sangeet Parishad, Baradeswar, Bonth, Bhadrak, Odisha & our website: www.binapanisangeetparishad.com reserves the right to cancel any or all the tenders without assigning any reason.

**Sd./- Chief Coordinator**  
**Binapani Sangeet Parishad, Baradeswar, Bonth, Bhadrak, 756112, Odisha**





All thoughts, desires, conventions, attachments which come from outside must be ruthlessly pushed away.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Northern Voters

The battle of ballots for the most crucial state in Indian politics – Uttar Pradesh – has begun just as four other states, Punjab, Goa, Manipur and Uttarakhand, are getting ready for polls in the next few days. That the outcome in UP will have a decisive effect on the fate of the Narendra Modi government at the Centre in the next Lok Sabha election due in 2024 is clear from the desperation of the BJP to retain the state for which it has degraded the electoral discourse to an all-time low. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has taken the lead in communalizing the narrative. Significantly, the Election Commission is watching the shameful spectacle helplessly as if it is not an autonomous Constitutional body, but a government department. By contrast, the BJP's arch rival and chief of the Samajwadi Party Akhilesh Yadav and the national president of Rashtriya Lok Dal Jayant Chaudhary are showing remarkable restraint in their responses to the provocative remarks of Adityanath. The worst of the string of communal rhetoric the UP CM uttered was his attempt to infuse fear into the electorate by warning that if the BJP is not returned to power, UP will turn into Bengal, Kerala and Kashmir, the implication being that the three states appease the minority population for capturing power. Such overt attempt to communalise the electoral process goes against the election model code of conduct but no action seems possible by the EC.

The recent 'hijab' issue of Karnataka has also assisted the BJP in changing the narrative from serious issues of economic failures, unemployment, all round price rise and poor governance. From the college students who started all the confusion to national and international media and the Courts, talk is only of superficial religious clothing. The Moslem intelligentsia too has been contributing to the growth of the BJP by its eerie silence, especially during election time.

The Election Commissioners, all bureaucrats, also seem to be too petrified before the might of the BJP ruling at the Centre and the state of UP to take any action against the flagrant breach of electoral norms.

Yogi Adityanath's rhetoric on Kerala, Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir could have been construed as acceptable electoral brownie points had the objective been to suggest that UP had much to lose in socio-economic terms if it were to go the way of the three states he mentioned. But, that was not the reason since Kerala ranks among the best in conforming to socio-economic indicators, J&K is above average while West Bengal is ahead of UP on most counts. The intent was, without doubt, to raise the communal bogey. Again, Kerala and J&K (the Kashmir Valley specifically) have a higher proportion of Moslems than the rest of the country while West Bengal also has an above average composition of Moslems (nearly 26 per cent). What Adityanath was driving at was that the three states/UT have a significant minority representation. This is unlike UP, where despite minorities being close to 20 per cent of the population, their corresponding proportion in the outgoing Assembly was much lower at 5.9 per cent. Moslem legislators are absent in the ruling BJP, though the party won more than three fourths of the seats in 2017. In such a scenario, as Adityanath hinted, an electoral defeat for the BJP would mean higher minority representation. His warning is against such a prospect. However, it also should be noted that the 20 per cent Moslems in UP may not necessarily be voting for candidates of only their religion. Possibly their votes had been divided in past.

To be fair with the Yogi Adityanath government it did try to address the livelihood issues through welfare delivery such as direct benefit transfers and Centrally-sponsored schemes. But people of the state were given a raw deal during the COVID-19 pandemic with inadequate primary health infrastructure. The way unidentified bodies, victims of the virus, were dumped into the river Ganga shocked the conscience of the nation and it should be a major poll issue. Adding to the woes of the BJP government, the farmers' movement against the three farm laws in western UP could influence the electoral outcome just as the discontent among the OBC groupings in the state which feel deserted by the party in power. Considering these factors, the BJP probably fears that not only it may fail to repeat the success of 2017, but may even lose the state. The efforts at whipping up communal passion and the showering of sops at the eleventh hour may betray that fear of the BJP in UP.

Interestingly, Akhilesh Yadav, when asked about Adityanath's 'tamachawadi (pistol-loving)' remark, only smiled and said, "He (Adityanath) is the first chief minister in India's history who got criminal cases withdrawn against him. The cases are testimony to his integrity in public life." Similarly, Jayant Chaudhary has maintained decorum in public. Reacting to the "garmi nikaal denge" (will let out the hot air) barb of Adityanath at an election rally, Chaudhary said, "People should vote to remove the charbi (flab) of the BJP leaders."

In a way what is being witnessed in UP is but a continuation of what the BJP did only a few months back in Bengal. Many believe the PM's lamprooming of TMC chief Mamata Banerjee at election rallies with his "Dido-Dido" banter alone cost the BJP dearly in Bengal where the party was moving well in its aim of dislodging the TMC from power for many of its omissions and commissions.

Stoking communal passion may help a party reap electoral dividends for some time, but what it will yield this time through has to be observed carefully as an indication of how the average voter of north India sees the country shaping up in the future.

### WISDOM CORNER

Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future and renders the present inaccessible. MAYA ANGELOU

Imperfection is beauty, madness is genius and it's better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring. MARILYN MONROE

Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough. OPRAH WINFREY

### WORDSWORTH

#### Salmagundi

Though this is now used mainly in a figurative sense of a mixture or miscellany, it was first attached in English to a dish of chopped meat, anchovies and eggs, garnished with onions, lemon juice, oil and other condiments. A gastronomic dog's breakfast, you may think. We know that the word came to us in the seventeenth century from the French salmagondis, of which older spellings in that language were salmiguondin and salmingondin. Here the trail of linguistic footprints ceases, and we must cast about to pick up the route again. One theory is that it was a dish first prepared for the French king Henri IV (or Henri VI in another version) by a nobleman's wife, after whom it was named. Another, more prosaic but more plausible, is that it derives from the Italian phrase salame conditi, "pickled meat". Yet another says it comes from the French salemine, "salted food" and condit, "to season". In English the name was corrupted to Solomon-gundy in the eighteenth century, and it's probable that it's related to the name in the children's rhyme: "Solomon Grundy, born on a Monday, christened on Tuesday, married on Wednesday, took ill on Thursday, worse on Friday, died on Saturday, buried on Sunday, that is the end of Solomon Grundy", which was first set down by James Orchard Halliwell in 1842.

### FOCUS AFGHANISTAN

# HUMANITARIAN IMPERATIVE

The United States may have lost the war in Afghanistan, but it can still salvage the peace. To prevent Afghanistan from becoming a failed state, the US must end its economic isolation of the country and, instead, jumpstart international efforts to resuscitate its collapsing economy. The US also needs to develop a road map that could open the door to recognising and working with the Taliban-led government, which, like it or not, is set to remain in control of Afghanistan in the foreseeable future.

The chaos produced by the US-led military withdrawal from Afghanistan last summer made daily headlines. Yet global attention has faded, even though the suffering that accompanied the fall of Kabul pales in comparison to the effects of cutting off external economic support after the Taliban takeover. Under Afghanistan's previous Western-backed regime, international development aid financed 75 per cent of the government's budget, and foreign assistance accounted for over 40 per cent of GDP. Withdrawing this support has triggered a dire humanitarian crisis, with disease spreading and half of the country's population of roughly 40 million facing life-threatening food shortages. The United Nations estimates that 97 per cent of Afghans will soon be living below the international poverty line (\$1.90 a day).

The international community is well aware of Afghanistan's plight, and is seeking to increase funding for the many organisations delivering humanitarian assistance on the ground. The UN aims to raise \$4.5 billion in humanitarian aid, the largest single-country package in its history. But even this sum will fall well short of what is needed to rescue Afghanistan. The unraveling of the country's economy and state institutions means that humanitarian assistance is a bandage, not a remedy.

While the US and its international partners are right (for now) to sanction the Taliban and deny them recognition and funding, they can and should work around



The international community must confront the harsh reality that Afghanistan is descending toward catastrophic human suffering and state failure

Afghanistan's nominal leaders to revive the economy. The only solution on the scale needed is to free up the country's roughly \$10 billion in frozen reserves and task the UN with establishing a supervisory council in Kabul to disburse these funds to restore liquidity, keep ministries functioning, and pay public-sector salaries.

The unfrozen funds would go to technocrats in the central bank, other non-political civil servants, and the doctors, teachers, and other essential workers needed to keep Afghanistan afloat. The UN body would allocate funding in accountable segments to ensure that the money does not fall into the hands of the Taliban leadership.

Such arrangements are a tall order, but they have worked elsewhere. In parts of Yemen controlled by the Iran-backed Houthis, the international community has successfully routed funds to the public sector, circumventing the rebels who ostensibly control the ministries. In the Gaza Strip, which is controlled by Hamas, an Islamist group designated by the US and the European Union as a terrorist organisation, the UN has worked around the Hamas leadership to provide Gazans with

direct food support, invest in schools and medical facilities, and help improve infrastructure.

Funding and cooperating with Afghan technocrats and other non-political workers represents the international community's only viable option for staving off state collapse while keeping the Taliban at arm's length. And although the Taliban may bristle at this foreign intrusion, they would likely prefer it to the failure of the country they seek to govern.

The prospect of international recognition would further encourage Taliban acquiescence to this plan. Establishing a UN body to disburse the currently frozen funds is only a stopgap measure to keep Afghanistan on its feet. Over the longer term, the US and its partners also need to set clear criteria that the Taliban must meet in order gain international recognition and sanctions relief.

To move from international isolation to diplomatic normalisation, the Taliban must meet three benchmarks. First, they must deny safe haven to transnational terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Although the Taliban are taking on the Islamic State, they maintain

deep ties to al-Qaeda. They must break these links and demonstrate a willingness to share with international authorities information on terrorist networks operating in Afghanistan. Taliban leaders currently sanctioned as terrorists also need to step down.

Second, the Taliban must adhere to basic international norms regarding human rights. This requirement includes permitting the departure of Afghans who wish to emigrate, reopening schools for girls, and ending the abuse of Afghans associated with the former regime, the media, and civil-society organisations.

Third, the Taliban must build a government that reflects Afghanistan's diversity, in which women and ethnic and religious minorities all become stakeholders. Afghanistan has changed over the past two decades, and the Taliban must adapt to new social realities to succeed politically. Only inclusive governance can bring sustained stability to a country that has been at war for more than 40 years.

The Taliban may of course prove unwilling or unable to meet these standards for recognition. That possibility only reinforces the need to establish a UN body tasked with disbursing the funds required to keep the country's economy functioning and its people alive.

The international community must confront the harsh reality that Afghanistan is descending toward catastrophic human suffering and state failure. For both geopolitical and moral reasons, the US must lead the effort to move quickly beyond the provision of humanitarian assistance. That means getting essential funding into Afghanistan's economic bloodstream while laying out clear standards for normalising its relations with the international community.

Charles A. Kupchan is Professor of International Affairs at Georgetown University. Douglas Lute, a retired US Army lieutenant general, was US Ambassador to NATO from 2013 to 2017.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

### SPECTRUM BANKING

## Ready for bold moves

The global banking sector remained resilient and robust during the once-in-a-lifetime pandemic period of two years. High capital buffers and lower leverage enabled the global banks to carry out normal banking operations. The asset quality, however, has suffered marginally in some parts of the globe. The resurgence of the pandemic in the form of Omicron has again engaged the entire global community in saving lives and businesses on a war footing. It's against this backdrop that one needs to introspect on the Indian banking Sector from a global perspective.

Out of the 12 PSBs (public sector banks) and 21 PVBs (private banks) nine PSBs and three PVBs have branches abroad. Among the PSBs it is the State Bank of India followed by Bank of Baroda and Bank of India that have maximum presence abroad. Amongst the PVBs, ICICI Bank has maximum presence followed by Axis Bank and HDFC Bank. The total number of all kinds of offices of Indian banks abroad stands at 229 (126 branches) out of which 189 (82.5%) are that of PSBs. Forty-five foreign banks are operating in India

with their 263 branches.

India has 29 banks in the list of the top 1000 banks compiles by 'The Bankers'. Out of this, six are foreign-owned subsidiaries. So literally, only 23 Indian banks figure in the top 1000 banks – nine PSBs and 14 PVBs. There are three Indian banks in the top 100 global banks – SBI (56th), HDFC Bank (68th) and ICICI Bank (96th).

Indian banks domestically have done reasonably well during 2020-21 and also in the first half of 2021-22, notwithstanding the pandemic woes. Gross NPAs of SCBs has come down to 6.9 per cent, the lowest in six years, as of September 2021 from an all time high of 11.5 per cent in March 2018. PSBs have earned profit in 2021 for the first time in five years.

The last five years saw some bold policy initiatives on the part of the government: i) The recovery laws – the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and setting up of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) in 2016; ii) Bank amalgamation in 2017, 2019 and in 2020. This has resulted in reducing the number of PSBs from 27 five years

back to 12 now; iii) Policy relating to setting up of National Assets Reconstruction Co Limited (NARCL), India Debt Resolution Company Limited (IDRCL) and National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID).

These are undoubtedly bold policy initiatives. The experience with IBC and NCLT have been quite rewarding initially. Hopefully the amendments from time to time will bring about further improvement in the recovery area which is very crucial for continuity and sustainability. However, amalgamation is no panacea for weak banks. One or more weak banks' merger with a strong bank will also make the strong bank weaker because of the legacy issues of the merged banks.

In the private sector banking space, we come across serious governance issues, some of them at regular intervals. So, it cannot be construed that private banks are better always. In a mixed and transitional economy such as ours we need strong PSBs and strong PVBs for better delivery and progress of the nation. Once the forbearances end, post pandemic, the asset quality

issues may again crop up.

So again, it comes down to basics. Capital, recovery, risk (perception measure and mitigation), digital disruption and corporate governance are the foremost prerequisites for the transformation. To develop a robust and prudent system a strong leadership and an accountable management are needed.

We are great nation with a 250-year history of banking. Banking is changing all over the world with traditional banking giving way to modern, digital and disruptive banking. Other players are making serious attempts to enter into the banking space; they have succeeded in the payments space. But they cannot replace banks; at the most there will be a collaborative approach. Indian banking has never been smooth and it will continue to be turbulent but there is every chance we can transform ourselves domestically and globally with the right approach at the right time and meet the challenges.

The writer is senior advisor, Indian Banks' Association. Views are personal.



Bikash Narayan Mishra

IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR BANKING SPACE, WE COME ACROSS SERIOUS GOVERNANCE ISSUES, SOME OF THEM AT REGULAR INTERVALS

## 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

Orissa POST  
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### Education & religion

Sir, In the backdrop of the 'hijab' issue, the countrymen should take invaluable lessons from our freedom fighters. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh and others wanted religion to be kept out of education and wanted it to be an individual's personal choice. Swami Vivekananda had also said religion has no role in ensuring social justice. But instead of keeping religion out of education, successive governments have mixed religion with it more often. Bose had said that in the fight against religious fanaticism, secular education is the solution. The governments mixed religion with education in post-independent era. This is in fact not the question of 'hijab or saffron shawl'. Religious practices have no place in schools and colleges. A scientific and secular education is the need of the hour. Students should know who would be benefitted who would be at loss if communities get divided.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

### A great icon

Sir, In business icon Rahul Bajaj's demise the nation has lost one of its greatest industrialists, visionary and philanthropist. A colossus in the Indian industrial world he made Bajaj a household name and the words 'Humara Bajaj' truly mean how much we Indians are bonded to this man and his company. At a time when Indians could only aspire and dream of having a two-wheeler, Rahul Bajaj made the dream come true through his famous Bajaj Chetak scooter that became a must in almost all Indian homes during the eighties. Bajaj products are still a part of Indian life. The name 'Chetak' was derived from Rajput warrior Maharana Pratap's valiant and faithful horse and standing testimony to the name, Chetak scooters were so powerful and strong that riders believed that these travelling machines would never let down the riders in their journey. Rahul headed the Bajaj group of companies which has now diversified into various sectors – automobiles, general and life insurance, investment and consumer finance, home appliances, electric lamps, wind energy, special alloy and stainless steel, material handling equipment and travel. This only goes to show Rahul Bajaj's excellent entrepreneurial skills. This further shows that if one has farsightedness and the grit to venture into business endeavours with a clean and clear vision success comes automatically. Rahul Bajaj was an icon in the business world and his great life is an inspiration for all of us.

M Pradyu, KANNUR



# national



**Suicides rose due to unemployment. And what led to the rise in unemployment? The Central government is responsible for this unemployment emergency**  
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

## KERALA SCHOOLS TO REOPEN

Kerala School education minister, V. Sivankutty said that the schools in the state will reopen Monday (February 14). Classes for students up to ninth standard will be, however, held only till noon



## of the day quote

While explaining democracy, it is said -- a government of the people, by the people, for the people. But, these extreme dynasts ('ghor parivarwadis') have changed this. These people say - government of the family, by the family, for the family

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

A commission will be formed to look into the demands of the employees of the education and other departments, who have staged demonstrations, and their genuine demands will be accepted

MAYAWATI | BSP SUPREMO

Their hands were soaked with blood, they put humanity to shame. The Congress created such situation in Independent India where a brother stood against brother

J P NADDA | BJP PRESIDENT

# ABG Shipyard bank fraud: Cong, BJP trade charges

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Feb 13:** The Congress Sunday targeted the Modi government over the Rs 22,842-crore bank loan fraud case of Gujarat-based ABG Shipyard, alleging complicity of those sitting in the highest echelons of power, but the BJP hit back saying the loans were given to the accused company during the UPA rule.

On February 7, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) booked ABG Shipyard Limited, its former chairman and managing director Rishi Kamlesh Agarwal and others for allegedly cheating a consortium of lenders led by the ICICI Bank in the biggest such bank fraud. The opposition party questioned why the government "took five years" after the liquidation proceedings of ABG Shipyard to lodge an FIR in connection with the alleged duping of 28 banks. The state-run State Bank of India, which is the complainant and one of the affected banks, however, issued a statement denying any delay, saying it has been diligently following the case with the CBI after the forensic audit report.



**Why did it take five years after the liquidation proceedings of ABG Shipyard to lodge even an FIR for duping 28 banks of ₹22,842 crore?**  
RANDEEP SURJEWALA | CONGRESS LEADER

forensic audit report. Congress general secretary and chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged that the Modi government is running a "loot-and-escape" scheme for bank fraudsters and cited Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi, Lalit Modi, Vijay Mallya, Jatin Mehta, Chetan and Nitin Sandesara, and several others who fled the country after duping Indian banks. He said Agarwal and others are the "new gems" in the list. "Complicity, collusion and connivance of those sitting in the highest echelons of power in the Modi government is writ large in India's biggest bank fraud in-

Congress general secretary and chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged that the Modi government is running a "loot-and-escape" scheme for bank fraudsters. He said the latest entrants to the list are Agarwal and others, whom he described as the new gems

Countering the allegations, BJP spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Syed Zafar Islam said that for the Congress to attack the government over the case is like a thief blaming the police for the crime. He said all these loans were given before 2014 and had turned non-performing assets (NPA) under the Congress-led UPA dispensation whose functionaries, the BJP leader alleged, were "hand in glove" with the promoters of the company.

Due process was followed all these years and the BJP government has identified the fraud, he said. "That is why we have taken this action," he said, referring to the CBI case in the matter.

# Shah lauds Amarinder



Union Home Minister Amit Shah along with BJP MP Dushyant Gautam, former Punjab Chief Minister and Punjab Lok Congress president Captain Amarinder Singh and others, waves towards supporters during a public meeting ahead of the Punjab Assembly elections, in Patiala

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Patiala, Feb 13:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah Sunday saluted the valour of Punjabis, the Sikhs in particular, saying the nation feels safe and secure as they keep a guard.

Addressing a public rally here Sunday, Shah said Punjab was a border state and peace and security here was very much important for the security of the country.

He said only an NDA government, which will work closely with the central government can ensure peace, harmony and security here.

In this context, the Union Home Minister had a special praise for former Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, who was also sitting on the dais, that he always rose above partisan considerations when it came to the issues concerning national security.

He said when he became the Home Minister in 2019, he felt quite concerned about the security along the Punjab border. "But once I spoke to Capt Amarinder, I felt relaxed," he recalled.

In a special message to people of Patiala, the Home Minister said the way the Congress party had treated a senior leader like Capt Amarinder, it (the Congress) must not get a single seat from Patiala. Shah referred to the problem of drugs prevailing in Punjab.

He said give Narendra Modi a chance and drugs will be completely wiped out of Punjab. He took a dig at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, saying he had the audacity to claim to finish

*In a special message to people of Patiala, the Home Minister said the way the Congress party had treated a senior leader like Capt Amarinder, it (the Congress) must not get a single seat from Patiala*

drugs from Punjab when he had drowned Delhi in liquor by opening liquor shops everywhere. He also questioned Kejriwal's intentions towards Punjab and towards Sikhs.

He said Kejriwal was coming to Punjab seeking votes of Punjabis and Sikhs. But, he said, Kejriwal has been in government in Delhi for about eight years now and he has not appointed a single Sikh as a minister in his government.

He said the contribution of the Sikhs towards Delhi's history and development is immense and Kejriwal never acknowledged that.

The Home Minister said the NDA government has a clear roadmap for rejuvenation of industry and agriculture in the state. Punjab had occupied top most place among the states till 70s as it did exceptionally well in agriculture and industry. Punjab needs to get back that place of pride and the NDA government here will ensure it in coordination with the central government.

## 7 LABOURERS RESCUED IN MP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Katni, Feb 13:** Seven labourers were rescued while two others were still trapped after an under-construction tunnel caved in at Sleemanabad in Madhya Pradesh's Katni district, officials said Sunday.

Six of the rescued labourers were rushed to the Katni district hospital, located about 30 km from the spot, via a 'green corridor', they said. The 'green corridor' is a special cleared out route for fast transportation in case of an emergency.

Nine labourers got trapped after the tunnel of the Bargi canal project caved in late Saturday night in Sleemanabad, located about 450 km from the state capital Bhopal. Seven of them were so far pulled out from the debris, Madhya Pradesh Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Rajesh Rajora said.

The State Disaster Emergency Response Force team and other personnel were making all efforts to rescue the other two trapped workers, said Rajora, who was monitoring the rescue operation from Bhopal.

The trapped labourers were responding to calls from rescue personnel, Sleemanabad Sub-Divisional Magistrate Sangh Mitra Gautam said.

Out of the seven labourers rescued so far since the night, six were admitted to the district hospital, Additional Superintendent of Police Manoj Kedia, who was at the spot, said.

They were shifted to the hospital in 25 minutes through the 'green corridor', he said. Another rescued labourer was in a state of trauma. He was being comforted and given first aid near the tunnel, the police official said.

After being pulled out from the debris, the rescued labourers were given an initial treatment at the spot for about 30 minutes in a special ambulance equipped with modern facilities, he said.

## REACHING OUT



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Punjab AAP president and CM candidate Bhagwant Mann, during a roadshow ahead of the Punjab Assembly elections, in Amritsar

## SECOND PHASE OF UP POLLS

# It'll be down to the wire for BJP, SP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 13:** Uttar Pradesh will be voting for 55 assembly seats in the second phase of elections Monday. A total of 586 candidates are in the fray, but the main contest is between the BJP and the Samajwadi Party. However, the BSP is in a position to make the contest triangular at some seats.

In the last assembly elections in 2017, out of the 55 seats going to polls on Monday, 38 went to the BJP, 15 to Samajwadi Party (SP) and two seats to the Congress as there was an alliance between SP and the Congress. Muslim candidates won 10 of the 15 seats they contested which all went to the SP.

History shows alliance politics benefited both the SP-Congress alliance in 2017 and BSP-RLD al-



Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav during an election campaign rally for UP polls in Hathras

liance in 2019, but this time with no alliance among the major political parties, political analysts claim that there will be a split of votes which can benefit the BJP.

In the last Assembly elections, when SP and Congress won a total of 17 seats, in the Lok Sabha elections of 2019, seven of the 11 seats in this region went to the BSP-SP

Mahan Dal which are believed to have considerable influence over Jat, Shakya, Saini, Kushwaha, Maurya, and Koiri voters.

A total of 2,01,42,441 voters will exercise their franchise in 55 assembly seats of which 1,07,61,476 are male voters, while 93,79,704 are female voters and 1,261 voters are the third gender.

In 2017, the highest number of 77.53 per cent votes were cast in Nakud Vidhan Sabha seat. In the 2012 assembly elections too, the same seat had recorded 77.18 per cent voting. The Election Commission has marked Deoband of Saharanpur; Manihar of Rampur; Sambhal and Asmoli seats of Sambhal, Nagina, Dhampur and Bijnor seats of Bijnor as sensitive. Additional companies of Central Armed Police force will be deployed in these areas.

## NEW ROUTE

# 'Tiger widows' of Sundarbans spin khadi to eke out living

CHRISTENED THE 'TIGER VICTIM KHADI KATAI KENDRA', IT IS NOW EQUIPPED WITH 125 NEW MODEL CHARKHAS, 15 MODERN LOOMS AND PROVIDES EMPLOYMENT TO 150 WOMEN ARTISANS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Feb 13:** More than 100 'tiger widows' of Bali Island in Sundarbans of West Bengal, who were facing an acute financial crisis after the death of their husbands in tiger attacks, are spinning khadi to eke out a living.

The initiative of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) since 2018 has borne fruit as the remote island, which was totally disconnected from the mainstream of development since Independence, now bustles with activity with the sound of spinning of power loom and charkha breaking silence in the area. The women have now picked



up the skill to independently eke out a living with marketing support from the commission, its release said.

KVIC, which had set up a temporary structure three years ago, now replaced it with a permanent 3,000 sq ft work shed and 500 sq ft

common facility for the artisans in Bali Island. These were recently inaugurated by the commission's chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena.

Christened the 'Tiger Victim Khadi Katai Kendra', it is now equipped with 125 new model charkhas, 15 modern looms and provides employment to 150 women artisans on the island, it said.

KVIC has also provided these artisans with machines for yarn dyeing and manufacturing ready-made garments. The centre has been modernised at a cost of ₹95 lakh, funded by KVIC under its Khadi Reforms and Development Programme (KRDP) and Workshed Scheme for Khadi Artisans, it said. The centre is being locally man-

aged by a khadi institution from the state. "While the self-employment activities will help rehabilitate these hapless women artisans, it will also encourage other families to take up spinning and weaving activities to earn a livelihood.

"By taking up khadi activities, these artisans will be able to earn up to ₹200 per day. The idea is also to desist these families from venturing into deep water or thick mangroves for fishing and thus mitigate the threat of tiger attacks," Saxena said. KVIC had initially provided 75 charkhas to the women artisans in 2018. It had also provided 500 bee boxes with bee colonies to the economically backward people of the island.

**Kolkata, Feb 13:** Three BJP leaders, who had withdrawn their nominations for polls to the Garulia Municipality in West Bengal, Sunday made their way back to the Trinamool Congress, voicing grievance over the saffron party's style of functioning.

Polis to 108 municipalities, including Garulia, are scheduled to be held on February 27. The three leaders - former MLA Sunil Singh, his son Aditya and Garulia Municipality's ex-chairperson Saurabh Singh - had withdrawn their nominations on Saturday.

The trio, relatives of BJP's Barrackpore MP Arjun Singh, re-joined the TMC at the Titagarh party office in the presence of West Bengal minister Jyotipriyo Mallick and Naihati MLA Partha Bhowmik.

They were fielded by the saffron party from ward numbers 12, 17 and 18 of Garulia Municipality. "We are unhappy with the way the North 24 Parganas unit of BJP is functioning. While the organisational base of the party is shrinking fast in the district, the number of self-styled leaders has increased. We don't want to be associated with such a party," Saurabh Singh said.

"It was a mistake on our part to have left the TMC to join the BJP," added Sunil Singh. BJP's Arjun Singh, who had quit the ruling party in 2019, however, deplored their move, calling them "traitors".

"They betrayed our party, having got tempting offers from the TMC. All of them had literally begged for municipal poll tickets from the BJP... and now backstabbed the party. "I have failed as a brother and uncle... They are no more my family. Those in the BJP are my family members," the parliamentarian said. Meanwhile, 200 BJP youth wing members joined the TMC in Kharagpur area of Paschim Medinipur district earlier in the day, claiming that they were not getting due recognition despite toiling hard in support of saffron party candidates in recent elections.



# Chettinad mansions, a mute testament to lost riches

TIME HAS NOT BEEN KIND TO THE NEARLY 11,000 PALATIAL HOMES BUILT ACROSS THE REGION AND MANY NOW APPEAR DILAPIDATED AND OVERGROWN WITH VEGETATION, THEIR CURRENT OWNERS EITHER UNABLE TO PAY FOR UPKEEP OR MIRED IN PROPERTY DISPUTES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Chennai, Feb 13: Thousands of mansions in a remote corner of India once housed some of the nation's wealthiest bankers and traders - but a century later most of them lie abandoned, their desolate remains a mute testament to lost riches.

The tycoons of Chettinad, near the country's southern tip, made their fortunes trading precious gems and spices across sprawling business empires that stretched as far as Malaysia and Singapore during the era of British colonial rule.

Much of their wealth was channelled into the construction of resplendent homes, embellished with stucco figurines, colourful glass windows and cornices.

Historians say they sourced chandeliers from Venice, giant mahogany-framed mirrors from Belgium and glazed ceramic tiles with intricate patterns from Birmingham.

"At that time there was a competition between the Chettiars themselves to create the most beautiful building - more beautiful than the brother, the cousin, whatever," Bernard Dragon, a French architect working in the region, told AFP.



With the nearest airport more than two hours away and the mansions - some with up to 100 rooms - needing staggering sums for upkeep, there is little appetite for local real estate.

But time has not been kind to the nearly 11,000 palatial homes built across the region and many now appear dilapidated and overgrown with vegetation, their current owners either unable to pay for upkeep or mired in property disputes. "We worry about the state

of conservation," said Dragon, who has worked to restore one property in the area to its former glory for service as a boutique hotel. "In some villages, the owners are more present and more committed. [But] in some of the villages, you enter... and you realise

nobody is taking care of the properties."

Chettinad's residents belonged to a caste of Tamil merchants, and the location was an ideal staging post for a maritime merchant empire. Its residents were able to leverage their networks into sprawl-

ing banking operations and landholdings, in a commercial partnership with British traders seeking markets and financing for trade in tea, coffee and rubber.

But after World War II their holdings were thrown into disarray, as independence movements gained ground regionally and socialist-inspired economic policies at home clamped down on money-lending and foreign trade.

Many families, forced to tighten their belts or seek other opportunities, moved to the nearby city of Chennai, leaving their homes in the custody of caretakers or simply abandoning them.

Today the dozens of villages that make up the Chettinad region are far from the beating heart of commercial life in southern India, while Chennai has become an important hub for finance and the automotive industry.

With the nearest airport more than two hours away and the mansions - some with up to 100 rooms - needing staggering sums for upkeep, there is little appetite for local real estate.

But emotional attachments from the descendants of earlier inhabitants and passionate architects extolling the supreme craftsmanship of the homes have helped fuel

some efforts to preserve these marvels.

"The new generation is earning a lot of money and they are interested in these properties," said A. Chandramouli, the elderly proprietor of the Chettinadu Mansion.

"I expect a revival shortly," he added, sitting on an antique chair in a tiled courtyard awash with afternoon sunlight. "They want to preserve this unique heritage for future generations."

The Chettinadu Mansion, spread over 40,000 square feet (3,700 square metres), has been renovated into a heritage resort and has been featured as a backdrop for Bollywood movies.

Other properties have largely retained their gleaming marble floors, crystal chandeliers and carved mirrors while adding modern amenities catering for wealthy sightseers attracted to the area's faded grandeur.

"These homes need to be restored for our future generations to see how people used to live here," tourist Malini Bharathy told AFP, in between snapping selfies from one of the sun-drenched balconies of Chandramouli's property.

"I want my son (and) my son's son to come here and enjoy this, and relish this."

## Lack of info on local elections: TN youth hesitant to vote

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 13: With the urban local body (ULB) polls in Tamil Nadu scheduled to be held February 19, several youngsters in the state are unaware of the polls and those who are aware do not have information about their wards, candidates, and polling booths.

Several youths in the age group of 18 to 21, who are mostly in colleges or other professional institutions, lack information about the local polls.

Sujaya Kumar, 21, a student of an arts and science college in Chennai told IANS: "I am not aware of the ULB polls as I have just voted in the 2021 Assembly elections. Now, I will have to check about my polling booth and the ward. There is no high pitch campaigning this time which I witnessed during the Assembly elections."



Another major factor plaguing the voters is the lack of information on the wards where they live and the number assigned to the ward. Even the house tax receipts, according to several residents, are different from the actual ward they live in.

R. Rajesh of Ashok Nagar in Chennai told IANS: "I tried several helpline numbers but did not get a proper answer. I am being directed to contact the tehsildars and most of the numbers which they provide are not working. Information on wards is lacking and this prevents us from casting our vote. I am trying to educate my son studying in the tenth standard on the importance of elections and voting so that by the time he reaches the legal age of voting, he would have made all the preparations. I will somehow vote in the election and am trying hard to get the details of the booth and other details."

Experts, however, point out that the lack of information on elections and the hesitancy to vote are linked to youths who don't have any political affiliations and those who vote only under compulsion.

Dr R. Padmanabhan, Director, Socio-Economic Development Foundation, a think-tank based out of Madurai while speaking to IANS, said: "In a democracy, people should be aware of their rights and voting is a major right. These youngsters must be abreast of what is going around them."

## Initiate bilateral talks with Sri Lanka, Stalin tells Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 13: Flagging the arrest of 12 fishermen by Sri Lanka in the early hours of Sunday, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to convene bilateral talks with the neighbouring country to find a solution to the vexatious issue and get a total of 41 fishermen and their boats released.

In yet another incident, 12 fishermen have been apprehended by Sri Lanka, Stalin said. "Such incidents are happening with alarming regularity, causing deep distress to the people of Tamil Nadu," the CM said in a letter to the Prime Minister. The fishermen had ventured out for fishing from Rameswaram base in two mechanised fishing boats. They were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy in the early hours of February 13 and taken to Thalai Mannar. This is the third such incident in two weeks and 41 fishermen and six fishing boats are in the custody of the Sri Lankan Navy, he noted. Such arrests and harassment have caused a sense of insecurity in the fishermen community of Tamil Nadu, particularly in the Palk Bay area and have adversely affected their livelihoods.

It is extremely vital to find a lasting solution to this vexatious and long-pending issue through the collaborative efforts of the union



and state governments, Stalin said. As a preliminary step, consultations may be initiated to convene bilateral talks, he urged. "As the Covid situation has eased, I request you to press for the resumption of deliberations through the Joint Working Group Meeting (JWG) immediately." "Further, talks between the fishermen of the two countries may also be facilitated to ease the tension in the area. I also urge you to take immediate steps to expedite the release of 41 fishermen from Tamil Nadu."

## Security cover of 4 ex-CMs scaled down further

THE MOVE COMES AT A TIME WHEN SRINAGAR CITY HAS BEEN WITNESSING TERRORIST-RELATED VIOLENCE SINCE LAST YEAR

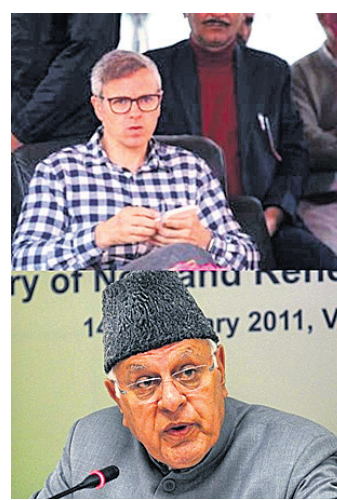
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar/New Delhi, Feb 13: The security cover of four former Jammu and Kashmir chief ministers has been scaled down further with the Union Territory administration's decision to stop deployment of jammers and ambulances during their movement within Srinagar district, according to officials.

Saturday, veteran politician and Lok Sabha member Farooq Abdullah, was seen offering prayers at the famous Hazratbal shrine and Dasgeer Saab in downtown Srinagar but there was neither an ambulance nor were there jammers, which, among other things, also blocks signals in cases where terrorists have planted an improvised explosive device that can be triggered by remote control. The ambulance is provided to attend to medical emergencies during travel.

However, the officials, said during inter-district movement of former chief ministers Farooq Abdullah, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti jammers and ambulances will continue to be deployed.

This comes in the wake of the recent decision to downsize the Special Security Group (SSG), which had been created under a law enacted by the assembly of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir for protection of chief ministers and for-



mer chief ministers. Subsequently, the SSG cover for the four former chief ministers was withdrawn and their protection entrusted to the security wing of the Jammu and Kashmir Police, which will be backed by central armed paramilitary forces.

Queries to the Jammu and Kashmir Police on the subject elicited no formal response. The move comes at a time when Srinagar city has been witnessing terrorist-related violence since last year.

Many encounters between security forces and militants have taken place within the city's limits besides some targeted killings of civilians being carried out by the Resistance Front, a shadow group



of the banned terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba. The Jammu and Kashmir administration had withdrawn SSG protection after it was decided to downsize the elite unit established in 2000. This move came over 19 months after the Centre issued a gazette notification Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Adaptation of State Laws) Order, 2020, on March 31, 2020, under which it amended the Special Security Group Act of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir government by omitting a clause that provided former chief ministers and their families with SSG cover.

The officials said the SSG was in the process of being 'right-sized' by

reducing number of personnel in the elite force to 'bare minimum' and that it will be headed by an officer below the rank of superintendent of police as against a director, who is in the rank of an inspector general of police or above.

The SSG has now been entrusted with the security of serving chief ministers and their immediate family members. The decision entailed withdrawal of security cover of National Conference leaders Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah, PDP chief Mehbooba and Congress leader Azad at a time when a number of terror incidents have taken place in Srinagar where all of them except Azad reside.

Farooq Abdullah and Azad, however, will continue to be provided National Security Guard cover, whose personnel are known as Black Cat commandos, as both have been categorised as Z-plus protectees. Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba also continue to have Z-plus security cover while in Jammu and Kashmir but are likely to have a reduced security outside the Union Territory.

The security to the leaders would be provided by the district police as well as the security wing based on threat assessment, the officials said. Some of the SSG personnel would be posted with the security wing of the Jammu and Kashmir Police for a 'close protection team.'

## After 70 yrs, J&K products get global recognition

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi/Srinagar, Feb 12: The carpet industry in Jammu and Kashmir has got a shot in the arm with the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. The Indian Institute of Carpet Technology (IICT) has introduced QR Code mechanism for the purpose of testing and certification of hand-knotted carpets manufactured in Kashmir under Geographical Indication of Goods Act 1999.

The GI tag is affixed with certain products that correspond to a specific geographical location or origin. Generally, the location or the place is historically reputed for an outstanding quality product. The tag denotes geographical genuineness and ensures native sourcing of the product.

Hand-knotted Kashmiri carpets famous for their intricate and colourful floral patterns are all set to invade the markets across the globe with GI tag being the proof of their authenticity.

Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) welcomed the step of the UT government, under Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, for introducing GI tags to famed hand-knotted Kashmiri carpets. It stated that the QR code based mechanism, first of its kind in the country, for certification and labeling can help in checking the



cheating that has badly dented the carpet industry in Kashmir.

After J&K's transition into a Union Territory nine products - Kani Shawl, Kashmir Pashmina, Kashmir Sozini Craft, Kashmir Papier-Mache, Kashmir Walnut Wood Carving, Khatamband, Kashmiri Hand Knotted Carpets and Kashmir Saffron and Basmati - have been issued GI tag to fight counter branding.

The GI powered saffron and bas-

mati rice have got world wide acceptance and have helped in preserving its quality as well. Other products that are in the list of GI tagging include Kashmir's indigenous rice types, Honey, and few spices. The GI tagging is vital to get legal protection to the product.

The concept of GI-tagging was introduced soon after August 5, 2019-when the Centre announced its decision to abrogate J&K's special status. The idea was to take the

Hand-knotted Kashmiri carpets famous for their intricate and colourful floral patterns are all set to invade global markets with GI tag being proof of their authenticity

products manufactured in the Union Territory to the world.

The GI tags checked the duplicity of the products and also helped in reviving the crafts that are witnessing downfall for the past many years now. The GI tagging of J&K products has saved an individual from getting cheated and has ensured that authentic products only are sold in the market.

Besides issuing GI tags the government reduced procedural formalities for export transactions by way of fast processing of export-related documents, like issuance of licenses and import, export codes. Steps were taken to integrate the Single Window Interface for Trade system with a Single Desk Portal.

During the past two years Jammu & Kashmir Trade and Export Policy has been restructured in line with the suggestions given by the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

## Records on human rights violations in J&K locked up in room: RTI reply

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 13: Records related to alleged human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir, which were being handled by the erstwhile State Human Rights Commission, are locked up in a room since the panel was wound up after the state was downgraded into a Union Territory in August 2019, according to an RTI reply.

An application under the Right to Information (RTI) Act was filed by activist Venkatesh Nayak, who had sought to know the number of complaints pending before the commission as on October 31, 2019, when The Jammu and Kashmir Re-organisation Act, 2019 came into force.

The reorganisation bifurcated the erstwhile state into Union territories, which resulted in the winding up of autonomous bodies such as the State Human Rights Commission and the State Information Commission as central laws took over.

Responding to Nayak's application, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has said it has no information related to the records of the erstwhile panel.

In response to his first appeal, the Jammu and Kashmir administra-



tion said after the reorganisation of the erstwhile state into two Union territories, the Jammu and Kashmir Protection of Human Rights Act, 1997 (the State Act) was repealed.

With the repeal of the Act, the General Administration Department wound up the Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission, it said. "All the records of the commission were locked in a designated room at the office premises of the erstwhile Human Rights Commission, Old Assembly Complex, Srinagar. The employees of the erstwhile commission were deputed and adjusted in dif-

ferent other departments."

"The records of the commission were not formally handed over to the Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs and as such are not accessible to the department," the response said.

"As the records of the erstwhile State Human Rights Commission are not accessible or available to the public authority of the department nor are under the control of such authority and the information sought by the appellant is connected to such records, suffice it to say that the required information to this extent is not held by the public authority," it added.





The central government will roll out COVID-19 vaccination for children in the age group of 5 to 15 years as soon as it receives recommendation from a group of experts  
MANSUKH MANDAVIYA  
UNION HEALTH MINISTER

## PM GREET'S LISTENERS ON WORLD RADIO DAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday greeted all radio listeners and those who enrich this outstanding medium with their talent as well as creativity, on the occasion of 'World Radio Day'



### of the day quote

UP will be extremely lucky if it becomes a Kashmir, Kerala or Bengal as these states are far ahead insofar as social and economic indicators are concerned  
YASHWANT SINHA | FORMER UNION FINANCE MINISTER

Uttarakhand is a tourist spot for the Congress but for the BJP, it is the soul of India's culture  
AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

In J&K, there is no place for opposition against India or the national flag now. Anyone who tries to raise an objection will be dealt with strictly as per the Constitution  
MANOJ SINHA | LT GOVERNOR OF J&K

## Amarinder govt was run by BJP from Centre: Priyanka



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kotkapura (Punjab), Feb 13:** Senior Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Sunday said the former chief minister Amarinder Singh-led Punjab government had to be replaced as it was being run by the BJP from Delhi.

She also attacked the Aam Aadmi Party, accusing it of doing nothing in Delhi and said its government has been a "failure".

Priyanka was addressing a "Navi Soch, Nava Punjab" public meeting ahead of the upcoming Punjab Assembly polls. Referring to Singh's tenure as chief minister, Priyanka, without naming him, said, "It is true that for five years we had a government here, it is also true that there were some deficiencies in that government. It got lost somewhere on the way." "That government stopped running from Punjab. That government started being run from Delhi and that too not by the Congress but by the BJP and the BJP-led government," she said.

Priyanka was addressing a "Navi Soch, Nava Punjab" public meeting ahead of the upcoming Punjab Assembly polls

Hitting out at the AAP over its Delhi model, Priyanka cautioned voters against falling for the party's claims

"That hidden nexus has come out in the open today. That is why we had to change that government," the Congress general secretary added. Singh resigned as chief minister in September last year following a bitter power tussle with state Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu.

Singh later quit the Congress and launched his own party Punjab Lok Congress (PLC). The PLC is contesting the state assembly polls in alliance with the BJP and the Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa-led Shiromani Akali Dal (Sanyukt).

Hitting out at the AAP over its Delhi model, Priyanka cautioned voters against falling for the party's claims. "There is another political party which has come from Delhi. You are being shown a Delhi model through advertisements and people come to you and propagate the Delhi model and the (work done by) the government in Delhi," she said.

Priyanka told the people at the gathering that they should not forget that the BJP came to power at the Centre in 2014 on the basis of the Gujarat model. "There were big advertisements (claiming) so much development took place in Gujarat, everybody is getting rich, and everything is prosperous. But what happened? That model was only in advertisements," she said.

The AAP government has been a "failure" in Delhi, she said. Punjab goes to the polls February 20. The counting of votes will be taken up March 10.

## Hijab controversy now erupts in MP

As per official information, the fresh controversy over wearing hijab-burqa erupted at an Autonomous PG College in Madhya Pradesh's Satna district Saturday after an M.Com student Rukshana Khan arrived at the college wearing hijab to appear in the exam

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhopal, Feb 13:** The hijab controversy that erupted in a pre-university college in Karnataka has now hit a college in Madhya Pradesh.

As per official information, the fresh controversy over wearing hijab-burqa erupted at an Autonomous PG College in Madhya Pradesh's Satna district Saturday after an M.Com student Rukshana Khan arrived at the college wearing hijab to appear in the exam. In the mean time, students from other groups, including some associated with Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), students' wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), opposed the woman wearing hijab-burqa during the examination.

Sensing that the matter could snowball into a major controversy, the college's principal-in-charge, Shivesh Pratap Singh swung into

action. He not only advised Rukshana Khan not to wear hijab again in the college, but also took a written undertaking from her that she will wear only college uniform like other students in future.

"All the students are strictly told that they will be allowed only in proper uniform and face masks in the college examination. But she (Rukshana Khan) arrived wearing hijab-burqa. She has given a written undertaking that she will come in the college only in uniform," Shivesh Pratap Singh said.

The political controversy over hijab in Madhya Pradesh had erupted after School Education Minister Inder Singh Paramar supported banning of hijab in schools and also announced that new dress code will be strictly enforced from the next academic year.

Some Congress leaders who belonged to Muslim community opposed the minister's remarks and said that they would oppose MP government's proposal to ban hijab-burqa.

On Friday, Bhopal Qazi Syed Mushtaq Ali Nadvi before namaz (prayer) made an appeal to Muslim women to wear hijab-burqa. Qazi said that he is making this appeal because women have stopped wearing hijab-burqa and asked other clerics to make a similar appeal from the mosques.

However, later Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra said that the state government has no proposal to ban hijab-burqa in educational institutions in the state.

## 2 workers freed after 12 days in Arunachal

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Itanagar, Feb 13:** Two construction workers, residents of Assam and Bihar, were released by the Myanmar based militant outfit NSCN (K-YA), 12 days after they were kidnapped from Longding district of Arunachal Pradesh, police said Sunday.

Police said that the outlawed outfit of the Yung Aung faction of NSCN-K released the two captives -- Hiren Konch from Assam and Ramashis Mahato from Bihar -- on the India-Myanmar border on Saturday night. Longding district Superintendent of Police Vikram Harimohan Meena said the duo was rescued by the police after "making tremendous efforts".

He said that both the workers are visibly in good health but their medical checkups are being done.

Police officials said that Banphua Wangpan, Hiren Konch and Ramashis Mahato were engaged in the construction of the Pumaol-Langkhow road in Longding district and were staying at a camp near the construction site from where the militants kidnapped them on January 31.

Police said that one of the three captives -- Banphua Wangpan was released the next day and two others were in the hideout of NSCN (K-YA).

The police had suspected that the intention behind the kidnapping was ransom. The militants had reportedly demanded ₹4 crore as ransom.

### SHORT TAKES

#### Body retrieved

**Gurugram:** Following a 54 hour-long operation, a body was retrieved from the debris of the collapsed Chintels Paradiso condominium in Gurugram's Sector 109, officials said Sunday. A team of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and authorities retrieved the body of Sunita Shrivastava late Saturday night from the first floor of the building, which collapsed on the evening of February 10 and had claimed two lives. "We have managed to retrieve the body of the woman after a very difficult rescue operation. The debris from the upper floors has fallen on the first floor. We are taking several precautionary measures to remove debris carefully," said a senior NDRF official.

#### FIR against BJP MLA

**Patna:** Patna police have registered an FIR against BJP MLA Vinay Bihari in connection with alleged kidnapping of a 25-year-old girl, an official said. The victim went to college of commerce for examination on February 9. Since then, she has not returned home. The victim's mother alleged that when her phone was switched on, Vinay Bihari received the call. The FIR has been registered under IPC sections of 366 and 120B at Agam Kuan police station. The SHO has confirmed filing of the FIR. He said that an investigation is underway.

#### Two held in UP

**Etah (Uttar Pradesh):** The Etah police have arrested two men for kidnapping, rape and murder of the six-year-old daughter of a garment businessman. The two were arrested on Saturday. The girl was raped allegedly by one of the accused. Her body was found in a vacant plot behind a private hospital in the Awagarh area on February 4. It took six police teams and local intelligence unit to zero in on the accused, identified as Prince Ojha, 19, and Rohit Nayak, 22. They had planned to kidnap a child, preferably a boy, for ransom.

#### Two shops gutted

**New Delhi:** Two sweet shops in the national capital were gutted as a fire broke out on Sunday morning, an official said here. Three people who were stuck inside the building for a while were rescued by firemen. Delhi Fire Service chief Atul Garg said that they received a call about the fire incident around 10.45 a.m. in the sweets shops-cum-restaurant at S-12, Gandhi Chowk, Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar after which as many as five fire tenders were immediately pressed into the service. Fire Department officer said that so far there have been no casualties or injuries in the incident, however, certainly there was a massive loss of property.

## Over 70% eligible teens get first dose

Over 70 per cent of the adolescents between the 15 to 18 age bracket have received their first dose of Covid vaccine. As per the government's CoWIN portal, a total of 6,69,85,609 youngsters of this age group have been administered Covid vaccines so far

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 13:** Over 70 per cent of the adolescents between the 15 to 18 age bracket have received their first dose of Covid vaccine. As per the government's CoWIN portal, a total of 6,69,85,609 youngsters of this age group have been administered Covid vaccines so far.

As per the ministry report on Sunday morning, a total of 5,20,32,858 first vaccine doses and 1,47,92,245 second doses have been administered so far among the adolescents of 15 to 18 age bracket.

Union Health Ministry Mansukh Mandaviya has appealed to the eligible youngsters to get vaccinated at the earliest. "Young India further strengthening the world's largest vaccination drive. Over 70% of our youngsters between 15-18 age group have received their 1st dose of COVID19 vaccine. I appeal to all eligible young friends to get vaccinated at the earliest", Mandaviya

said in a tweet on Sunday. With the administration of more than 49.16 lakh vaccine doses in the last 24 hours, India's Covid-19 vaccination coverage has exceeded 172.81 crore as per the health ministry report on Sunday morning. This has been achieved through 1,93,53,556 sessions. A total of 1,72,30,955 precaution doses have been administered so far among the eligible beneficiaries which includes 38,78,308 healthcare workers, 53,58,037 frontline workers and 79,94,610 doses for over 60 plus population.

The nationwide drive to vaccinate teenagers in this age group of 15-18 years was rolled out on January 3. As of now only Bharat Biotech's indigenously-made Covaxin is being administered to this age bracket. Meanwhile, India has started showing declining Covid trends over the past few weeks. On Sunday, the nation reported below 50,000 Covid cases after 40 days.



## DEMOCRATIC EXERCISE



Polling officials with election material wait before being shifted to their respective polling stations, a day before the Goa Assembly elections, at Taleigao in Goa

## Centre okays ₹26,275-cr police modernisation scheme

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 13:** The Centre has decided to continue the umbrella scheme of Modernisation of Police Forces (MPF) of states and the union territories for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26 with a total central financial outlay of ₹26,275 crore in the Union Budget 2022-23. This scheme comprises all rele-

vant sub-schemes that contribute to modernisation and improvement with a total Central financial outlay of ₹26,275 crore, the Ministry of Home Affairs said Sunday.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the provision has been made under the schemes for internal security, law and order; adoption of modern technology by Police, assisting States for narcotics control

and strengthening the criminal justice system by developing a robust forensic set-up in the country.

A sum of ₹4,846 crore has been allocated for modernisation of the state police forces with ₹2,080.50 crore has been approved for modernisation of forensic capacities enabling independent high-quality forensic sciences facilities in the states and Union Territories for

aiding scientific and timely investigation through modernisation of resources.

The Central outlay of ₹18,839 crore has been earmarked for the security related expenditure for the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir, insurgency affected Northeastern states and Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas, the MHA said.



### Cong's absence at Lata's funeral

**Sonia Gandhi** condoled the death of legendary playback singer Lata Mangeshkar. But senior leaders were extremely uneasy over the absence of any senior central Congress representative at Lata's funeral in Mumbai. The PM cancelled his Bijnor rally and flew down. The BJP even deferred

releasing its UP manifesto. But Rahul Gandhi went ahead with his Ludhiana rally. Party leaders wonder if Rahul could fly in a special aircraft to attend the obituary gathering for party general secretary KC Venugopal's mother in Kerala on the 13th day at a huge cost, what prevented the party from deputing a senior leader to pay homage? Silence is Golden.

### States hiding Covid deaths!

**Alarm bells are ringing over rising mortality rates** despite a shrinking epidemic, particularly in Kerala and even in Maharashtra. A close scrutiny of the database from official sources revealed that 26,303 deaths took place in the country during December and January due to Covid. Of this,

Kerala accounted for 13,860 deaths—more than 50 per cent. In the rest of the country, 12,443 deaths were recorded. The scrutiny also revealed that Maharashtra stood second with 1,575 deaths. In Delhi, 730 deaths took place during December-January, while UP accounted for just 379 fatalities. Gujarat, which was once an epicentre of Covid, showed just 345 deaths during the period. Since the country was under an intense Omicron wave, the cases rose alarmingly but deaths were relatively low. However, the official data revealed that even during these two months, the deaths were high at 26,303. It also showed that January was deadliest with 14,227 fatalities compared to 12,076 deaths in December. Health experts are worried whether other states are

hiding deaths due to Covid as Kerala alone ordered a special audit following the Supreme Court order in October last. It transpires that other states are lagging behind in ordering similar exercises.

### Maha has highest private security agencies

**Maharashtra and Gujarat** may have the largest contingent of private security agencies in the country. However, Delhi, which is emerging as the commercial capital of India, is far behind with 748 security agencies, less than even Haryana or even Punjab. If Maharashtra tops with 2,821 agencies, Gujarat has 2,203 private security agencies. In all, there are 16,427 private security agencies as on January 28, 2022. According to

official sources, the number of private security agencies is growing at a faster pace, reflecting the growth of industries and institutions. Interestingly, official sources said that data from Jammu and Kashmir is not available and there is nil registration of any such agency in the state. This may be due to a variety of reasons. But it also indicates that industrial activity is less in the troubled state. Punjab, which is considered a border state, has 842 agencies, while Haryana has 1,118. Goa has just 97 agencies. It may be mentioned that private security agencies in the country are regulated as per provisions of the Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Act, 2005 and states have been assigned the duties of issuance of license and regulation as well.

### Return of Amit Shah

**Shah is now the most active face** of the BJP. The PM has asked Shah to steer the UP polls and Modi was forced to send him sensing some danger. There were days sometime last year when Shah was cooling his heels and maintaining a low profile. But it was between Modi and Shah and no third person got a clue. That was the time when JP Nadda, the newly-appointed BJP president, was on top of the world. But the situation changed and Shah was seen holding late night meetings at the BJP headquarters with all top leaders. Shah's regular presence at the BJP headquarters reminded people of the days when he was the BJP president between 2014 and 2019 and he was at his best. This round of Assembly elections in the five states saw the return of the old Amit Shah.



# international



**The Pakistani establishment does not want the Baloch people to get educated and routinely pick up our people who are highly educated and helping our children**  
NAELA QUADRI BALOCH | CHAIRPERSON OF PEOPLE'S CONGRESS, BALOCHISTAN

## GERMAN PREZ RE-ELECTED

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier was re-elected for a second term of five years by a special parliamentary assembly Sunday. The president was elected with a big majority by a special assembly made up of the MP's of lower house and representatives of Germany's 16 states



## of the day quote

The DPRK is in a phase of provocation and they need to cease its unlawful activities and instead engage in dialogue. We continue to work to find ways to hold the DPRK accountable

The irremovable options included glorious presence of Iranians in ceremonies in support of the Islamic establishment, maintaining and strengthening Iran's peaceful nuclear capacities and defense capabilities, (as well as) regional security-making policies of Islamic Republic

The Chinese government is happy to criticise Australia... yet remains chillingly silent on Russian troops amassing on the Ukrainian border

## SHORT TAKES

### UN staffers nabbed

**United Nations:** Five United Nations staff have been kidnapped in southern Yemen while returning to Aden after a field mission, the United Nations said Saturday. The staff were kidnapped Friday in the Governorate of Abyan, said Russell Geekie, spokesman for the top UN official in Yemen. "The United Nations is in close contact with the authorities to secure their release" Geekie said. A Saudi-led military coalition has been fighting the Iran-aligned Houthi group in Yemen since 2015.

### Nepal CJ in soup

**Kathmandu:** Nepal's ruling coalition lawmakers Sunday filed an impeachment motion against Chief Justice Chandra Shamsheer JB Rana over allegations of corruption. Spokesperson of the Parliament Secretariat Rajnath Pandey said that the impeachment was registered at 11 a.m. Rana, who had assumed the post of Chief Justice on January 2, 2019, has been suspended from his post following the registration of impeachment motion against him at the House of Representatives.

### New Cov drug in US

**Washington:** US health regulators Friday authorised a new antibody drug that targets the omicron variant, a key step in restocking the nation's arsenal against the latest version of Covid-19. The Food and Drug Administration said it cleared the Eli Lilly drug for adults and adolescent patients with mild-to-moderate cases of Covid-19. Lilly announced work on the treatment late last year after testing revealed that its previous antibody therapy was ineffective against the dominant omicron variant. The Biden administration has purchased 600,000 doses before the authorization and will begin shipping initial supplies to state health authorities for distribution.

### Watery grave for 11

**Jakarta:** Eleven people drowned after being dragged by big waves on a beach in Indonesia's East Java province despite warnings to avoid the sea, officials said Sunday. They were part of a group of 24 people from several villages who took part in a local ritual that involves swimming in the ocean Saturday night, officials from the Surabaya Search and Rescue Agency said. A 2-year-old girl was among the 13 survivors at the Payangan beach in Jember district, the officials said.

## UKRAINE-RUSSIA CRISIS SIMMERS

# Flights to Ukraine halted, redirected

In an hour-long Saturday call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, President Joe Biden said that invading Ukraine would cause "widespread human suffering" and that the West was committed to diplomacy to end the crisis but "equally prepared for other scenarios," the White House said



Ukraine's SkyUp said Sunday it had to divert one flight after the owner of the leased aircraft barred it from entering Ukrainian airspace. Dutch carrier KLM said it would stop flying to Ukraine and Germany's Lufthansa said it was considering suspending flights

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Moscow, Feb 13:** Some airlines have cancelled or diverted flights to Ukraine amid heightened fears that an invasion by Russia is imminent despite intensive weekend talks between the Kremlin and the West. In an hour-long Saturday call

with Russian President Vladimir Putin, President Joe Biden said that invading Ukraine would cause "widespread human suffering" and that the West was committed to diplomacy to end the crisis but "equally prepared for other scenarios," the White House said. It offered no suggestion that the call diminished the threat of an imminent war in Europe. The two presidents spoke a day after Biden's national security ad-

viser, Jake Sullivan, warned that US intelligence shows a Russian invasion could begin within days. Dutch airline KLM has cancelled flights to Ukraine until further notice, the company said Saturday. Dutch sensitivity to potential danger in Ukrainian airspace is high in the wake of the 2014 shooting down of a Malaysian airliner over an area of eastern Ukraine held by Russia-backed rebels. All 298 people aboard died, including

**The most important point is that Ukraine itself sees no point in closing the sky. This is nonsense. And, in my opinion, it somewhat resembles a kind of partial blockade**

MYKHAILO PODOLYAK | ADVISER TO UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT'S CHIEF OF STAFF

198 Dutch citizens. The Ukrainian charter airline SkyUp said Sunday that its flight from Madeira, Portugal, to Kyiv was diverted to the Moldovan capital Chisinau after the plane's Irish lessor said it was banning flights in Ukrainian airspace. Ukrainian presidential spokesman Serhiy Nykyforov told The Associated Press that Ukraine has not closed its airspace. A statement from the Infrastructure Ministry said: "Some carriers are experiencing difficulties associated with fluctuations in the insurance markets." "President Biden was clear with President Putin that while the United States remains prepared to engage in diplomacy, in full coordination with our Allies and partners, we are equally prepared for other scenarios," the White House statement said. Yuri Ushakov, Putin's top foreign policy aide, said that while tensions have been escalating for months, in recent days "the situation has simply been brought to the point of absurdity." He said Biden mentioned the possible sanctions that could be imposed on Russia, but "this issue was not the focus during a fairly long conversation with the Russian leader."

## German leader travels to Russia, Ukraine

**Berlin:** German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is flying to Ukraine and Russia this week in an effort to help defuse escalating tensions as Western intelligence officials warn that a Russian invasion of Ukraine is increasingly imminent and Germany has called on its citizens to leave Ukraine as quickly as possible. Ahead of his first visits as chancellor to Kyiv Monday and Moscow Tuesday for meetings with the Ukrainian and Russian presidents, Scholz has renewed his warning to Russia, as well as his advocacy of continuing diplomacy in multiple formats. Scholz has repeatedly said that Moscow would pay a "high price" in the event of an attack, but his government's refusal to supply lethal weapons to Ukraine or to spell out which sanctions it would support against Russia have drawn criticism abroad and at home and raised questions about Berlin's resolve in standing up to Russia.



OLAF SCHOLZ | GERMAN CHANCELLOR

**It is our job to ensure that we prevent a war in Europe, in that we send a clear message to Russia that any military aggression would have consequences that would be very high for Russia and its prospects, and that we are united with our allies**

## VALENTINE'S DAY

### Pak college asks students to wear hijab, prayer caps



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 13:** The Islamabad International Medical College has issued guidelines for their male and female students, asking girls to wear hijab and boys to wear white prayer caps while maintaining a distance of two metres from the opposite sex at all times on Valentine's Day, Friday Times reported.

The college reportedly issued a circular forbidding students from partaking in Valentine's Day and associated "activities which lead the youth towards the wrong path", the report said. The protocol states: "All female students should be seen with properly-covered heads, necks and chests with a hijab according to the university dress code. All male students are strictly ordered to wear white prayer caps."

The circular further warns that twenty staff from the school administration will be patrolling the campus to catch Valentine's Day violations.

Those caught breaking the rules will be fined 5,000 PKR, which will be donated to a worthy cause, the report said.

People on Twitter had thoughts about the notice, with some incredulous at the rules and others supporting the school's guidelines.

"This is weird. If someone wants to not celebrate valentine's (because they're a Muslim, more power to them, but everyone practices their religion differently and imposing (your) beliefs on someone else is pure wrong," said one post.

## Pak man lynched over blasphemy allegation

REUTERS

**Lahore, Feb 13:** A mob lynched a man because he had allegedly burnt pages of Muslim holy book the Koran in central Pakistan and dozens of people have been arrested, police and officials said Sunday. Prime Minister Imran Khan ordered action against the mob and any police who acted as onlookers to the killing. "The lynching will be dealt with full severity of the law. We have zero tolerance for anyone taking the law into their own hands," he said in a statement. A government spokesman said more than 60 people suspected of involvement in the lynching have been arrested, adding that more suspects were being identified through social media videos shot by the villagers in Tulamba, Khanewal district.

The mob gathered at a mosque Saturday night after the son of its prayer leader announced that he had spotted the man burning pages of the holy book, police official Munawar Hussain told Reuters. Police arrived to find the man un-



**A government spokesman said more than 60 people suspected of involvement in the lynching have been arrested**

conscious and tied to a tree, Hussain said, adding that the mob also attacked the police.

"The villagers armed with batons, axes and iron rods killed him and hanged his body from a tree," Hussain said. He said that evidence so far gathered by police suggested the dead man, identified as Muhammad Mushtaq, was in his 50s and appeared to have had mental disabilities.

Mob killings over accusations of blasphemy - a crime that can carry the death sentence - are fairly frequent in Muslim-majority Pakistan.

In December, factory workers in the eastern city of Sialkot lynched and burnt the body of a Sri Lankan in an attack that Khan said brought shame on the country.

## GHOST CITY



Parts of the old village of Aceredo, submerged three decades ago when a hydropower dam flooded the valley, are photographed emerged due to drought at the Lindoso reservoir, in northwestern Spain, Saturday, Feb 12, 2022

## Tunisia Prez cements power over judiciary

REUTERS

**Tunis, Feb 13:** Tunisia's president cemented his grip over the judiciary Sunday with a decree that lets him dismiss judges or block their promotion, helping consolidate his power after he seized executive authority last summer in a move his foes call a coup.

President Kais Saied outraged his opponents and alarmed democratic foreign allies with his announcement last week that he was dissolving the Supreme Judicial Council, a body that guaranteed judicial independence. Several thousand people took to the streets of the capital Tunis Sunday to protest against the measures. "Shut down the coup... take your



hands off the judiciary" some chanted as they gathered in central Tunis. Anas Hamaidi, president of the Tunisian Judges Association, said he feared there could now be a wave of sackings of judges. "We will move forward in protecting the legitimate judicial authority," he said in a state-

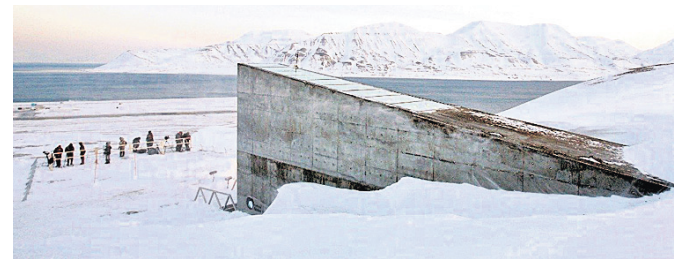
**The judiciary was seen as the last remaining institutional check on Saied's actions after he suspended parliament last year and said he could rule by decree**

ment, hinting that judges could stage more strikes, after going on strike last week.

Youssef Bouzakher, head of the dissolved Supreme Council rejected the decree, describing it as "unconstitutional that ends guarantees of the independence of the judiciary".

## ARCTIC SEED VAULT TO RECEIVE RARE DEPOSITS

**THE VAULT HOLDS OVER 1.1 MILLION SEED SAMPLES OF NEARLY 6,000 PLANT SPECIES FROM 89 SEED BANKS GLOBALLY**



REUTERS

**Oslo, Feb 13:** A vault built on an Arctic mountainside to preserve the world's crop seeds from war, disease and other catastrophes will receive new deposits Monday including one

from the first organisation that made a withdrawal from the facility.

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault, on Spitsbergen island halfway between mainland Norway and the North Pole, is only opened a few times a year to limit its seed banks' exposure to the outside world. On

Monday, gene banks from Sudan, Uganda, New Zealand, Germany and Lebanon will deposit seeds, including millet, sorghum and wheat, as back-ups to their own collections.

The International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), which moved its head-

**Svalbard facility is global back-up for seed banks. It is designed to safeguard biodiversity of crops**

quarters to Beirut from Aleppo in 2012 because of the war in Syria, will deposit some 8,000 samples. ICARDA made the first seed withdrawal from the vault in 2015 to replace a collection damaged by the war, and two further withdrawals in 2017 and 2019 to rebuild its own collections, now held in Lebanon and Morocco.

"The fact that the seed collection destroyed in Syria during the civil war has been systematically

**On Monday, gene banks from Sudan, Uganda, New Zealand, Germany and Lebanon will deposit seeds, including millet, sorghum and wheat, as back-ups to their own collections**

rebuilt shows that the vault functions as an insurance for current and future food supply and for local food security," said Norwegian International Development Minister Anne Beathe Tvinningem.

The world used to cultivate over 6,000 different plants but U.N. experts say we now get about 40% of our calories from three main crops - maize, wheat and rice - making food supplies vulnerable if climate change causes harvests to fail.



## of the day quote

**We will invest \$1 billion (around ₹7,500 crore) over the next 12-18 months on development of new projects**

**PIROJSHA GODREJ | EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, GODREJ**

**We are highly optimistic on the growth numbers for both short-term and medium-term**

**SANKET RAY | PRESIDENT, COCA-COLA**

**I think CNG is a segment which is going to grow in the coming years. This will be a subset of, I would say, the petrol, because this is being more triggered with the rising cost of petrol**

**SHAILESH CHANDRA | PRESIDENT (PV & EVS), TATA MOTORS**

## SHORT TAKES

### FPIs net sellers in February

**New Delhi:** Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have withdrawn a net ₹14,935 crore from the Indian market in the first half of February. FPIs have been net sellers for the fourth consecutive month. The total net outflow during February 1-11 stood at ₹14,935 crore. As per data from depositors, FPIs took out ₹10,080 crore from equities, ₹4,830 crore from the debt segment and ₹24 crore from hybrid instruments. "In the light of the weakness in global markets and the spurt in US 10-year bond yield to above two per cent, FPI selling is likely to continue in the coming days," V K Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

### IL&FS to pay debt of ₹55K cr

**New Delhi:** IL&FS group would resolve debt of ₹55,000 crore by March 2022, the board of the crisis-hit company has stated in its affidavit filed before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT). While updating the progress of the resolution process, the IL&FS board, led by Uday Kotak, said ₹55,000 crore debt would be resolved through asset monetisation, restructuring and insolvency proceeding initiatives. The IL&FS had a total outstanding debt of ₹99,355 crore as of October 8, 2018, of which ₹45,500 crore debt is handled through debt resolution initiatives by March 2022.

### Saudi gives 4% of Aramco to fund

**Dubai:** Saudi Arabia said Sunday it will transfer 4% of the stock in the state-run oil giant Aramco to a sovereign wealth fund, an infusion valued at nearly \$80 billion as the kingdom tries to overhaul its energy-dependent economy. The announcement on the state-run Saudi Press Agency comes as the oil firm is valued at just under \$2 trillion and as oil trades above \$90 a barrel — its highest level since 2014.

### Netflix, Google fined \$16,300

**Seoul:** South Korea's antitrust regulator said Sunday it has decided to impose a fine of a combined 19.5 million won (\$16,300) on Google, Netflix and three other video streaming services for their unfair business activity over paid subscription. Five over-the-top (OTT) media service providers -- Google, Netflix, KT, LG Uplus and Content Wave -- hampered paid subscribers' move to end their membership, according to the Fair Trade Commission (FTC).



**With a holistic and aggressive approach, the aim to achieve \$1 trillion in merchandise exports by 2030 is indeed achievable if India undertakes a strategic mission**

**TV NARENDAN | PRESIDENT, CII**

## 5G SPECTRUM AUCTION LIKELY IN MAY

The long-awaited 5G spectrum auction is expected to be held in May this year if the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) submits by March its recommendations on the rules regarding the sale process, according to a senior official of the telecom department



## INDUSTRY GROUPS WRITE TO PM

# Coal crunch catastrophic for the non-power sector

The industry players who have written to the PM include the Aluminium Association of India, Coal Consumers' Association of India, Confederation of Indian Textile Industry, Indian Captive Power Producers Association, Sponge Iron Manufacturers Association, and Fertiliser Association of India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 13:** Industry associations have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on deteriorating coal supply to the non-power sector, stating that curtailment in fuel supply by rail as well as road and road cum rail (RcR) modes over the last few weeks has pushed the sector towards a "catastrophic" situation.

Moreover, fertiliser being part of the regulated sector is also suffering immensely due to supply crunch from the indigenous sources, they said in a joint representation.

"While regular supply of coal rakes to the utilities have helped the stock of dry fuel at the country's power plants to rise, we beg to state that despite several representations by various industry players as well as the associations, the coal supply scenario to the non-power sector has deteriorated even more. Further curtailment in supply by rail as well as road and road cum rail (RcR) modes since the last few weeks has caused the plight of NRS consumers to descend towards catastrophic conditions," they said.

This adverse supply situation that started around August/September last year became further arduous as coal stock at many plants plunged below critical level. The demand-supply ratio had shown signs of improvement during November.



**Coal India Saturday** said it is currently supplying around 3.4 lakh tonne of coal per day to non-power sector which is the company's average supply to this segment and stressed that it has sufficient buffer stock to increase supply to the sector

However, the supply to the NRS consumers, including CPPs, has plummeted once again despite October-March being the highest production months for Coal India Ltd.

"Industries plan for their fuel requirement well in advance. Therefore, any sudden changes in supply commitment from the indigenous sources create huge impact in plant operations," the associations explained.

Energy-intensive and continuous process plants along with their captive power plants are highly dependent on coal as a primary source of fuel. Therefore, interruption in the fuel supply chain

is forcing many plants to run at a lower capacity and adversely affecting their cost of production. Higher cost of production will ultimately affect every section of the society, they said.

"It is our humble submission that the standard policy of the Ministry of Coal (CEA approved) may be strongly implemented to ensure a justified ratio of coal allocation between power sector and industries so that the consumers are not deprived of their legitimate entitlement and could continue their production economically for delivery of goods at affordable price to the common people," they said.

## Effective duty on crude palm oil reduced to 5.5%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 13:** The government Saturday brought down the effective duty on crude palm oil import to 5.5 per cent from 8.25 per cent earlier, a move which will help control cooking oil prices and support domestic processing companies.

Basic customs duty is already nil on crude palm oil (CPO) and now the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) through a notification has cut the agri infra development cess to 5 per cent from 7.5 per cent, effective from February 13.

The effective import duty on crude palm oil will now come down to 5.5 per cent, from 8.25 per cent, after taking into account agri development cess and social welfare cess.

The CBIC in a notification also extended the validity of reduced import duty on crude palm oil and other crude oils by six months till September 30.

Industry body SEA has been demanding that the difference of effective duty between the crude palm oil and refined palm oil should be 11 percentage points as higher imports of refined oil impacts domestic refineries. Effective import duty on refined palm oil is 13.75 per cent.



**With edible oil prices ruling high throughout last year, the government had on multiple occasions cut import duty on palm oil to increase domestic availability**

Solvent Extractors Association (SEA) Executive Director B B Mehta said the government has reduced the agri cess on CPO from 7.5 per cent to 5 per cent. So effective duty difference will be 8.25 (percentage points) between CPO and RBD Palmolein. Also current duty which was to revise upward from 1st April now extended up to 30th September. This means effective duty on CPO, sunflower oil and soybean oil is 5.5 per cent till September 30, he said.

## NFS debt jumps 11.9% in Sept quarter

The total non-financial sector debt stood at ₹371 lakh crore in the September 2021 quarter, up from ₹356 lakh crore in the March 2021 quarter and ₹361 lakh crore in the June 2021 quarter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 13:** Led by the general government debt, the country's non-financial sector (NFS) debt grew 11.9 per cent year-on-year to ₹371 lakh crore, or 170.2 per cent of GDP, in the September 2021 quarter, even as the indebtedness of the households declined marginally, according to a report.

However, this is lower than the previous fiscal, when it had touched 180.2 per cent of GDP after a three per cent contraction in the nominal GDP during FY21, according to the report by Motilal Oswal Financial Services.



At 180.2 per cent of GDP in FY21, this was the peak as against 155 per cent in FY20. Also, the debt-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio contracted to 170.2 per cent of GDP in the June 2021 quarter, with the normalisation of nominal GDP, which grew at 14.7 per cent. The general government debt

(Centre and states combined) has grown strongly by 16.1 per cent in the September 2021 quarter, while non-government, non-financial debt rose at a much slower pace of 7.7 per cent, according to the report.

As much as two-thirds of the rise in debt in the second quarter over the previous quarter was due to the government sector, as household debt growth ebbed, corporate debt growth spiked leading to an overall rise of 11.9 per cent in the second quarter, similar to the 12.2 per cent average growth over the previous two quarters.

Government borrowing has been the key driver of higher debt growth

over the past few quarters. General government debt continued to rise at 16.1 per cent in the September 2021 quarter, though the Centre and states debt rose 15.1 per cent and 13.6 per cent, respectively. However, both fell to 57.6 per cent and 29.1 per cent of GDP in Q2FY22, from the 15-year peak of 58.9 per cent and 30.5 per cent in the March 2021 quarter, respectively.

In contrast, non-government non-financial debt rose 7.7 per cent or 83.5 per cent of GDP in Q2FY22, lower than the peak of 90.9 per cent of GDP in FY21, which is the highest growth in nine quarters, but still modest.

## Mcap of nine of top-10 cos erodes by over ₹1L cr

**BIZ BUZZ**

**New Delhi:** Nine of the 10 most valued companies together lost ₹1,03,532.08 crore in market valuation last week, with Tata Consultancy Services emerging as the worst loser. The 30-share BSE benchmark last week declined 491.90 points or 0.83 per cent. Reliance Industries Limited, the most valued firm by market valuation, emerged as the only gainer from the top-10 pack. Its valuation rose by ₹30,474.79 crore to ₹16,07,857.69 crore. The market valuation of Tata Consultancy Services tumbled ₹44,037.2 crore to reach ₹13,67,021.43 crore. Reliance Industries Ltd continued to rule the top-10 chart followed by Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever Limited, State Bank of India, HDFC, Bajaj Finance and Bharti Airtel.

## Ruchi Soya Q3 profit up 3%

**New Delhi:** Edible oil major Ruchi Soya Industries Ltd Sunday reported a 3 per cent increase in its net profit to ₹234.07 crore for the quarter ended in December 2021. Its net profit stood at ₹227.44 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose by 41 per cent to ₹6,301.19 crore in the third quarter of this fiscal year from ₹4,475.59 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year, according to a regulatory filing.

# MATERNITY COVER: IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

**BY GURDEEP SINGH BATRA, HEAD - RETAIL UNDERWRITING, BAJAJ ALLIANZ GENERAL INSURANCE**

Parenthood is a wonderful thing, for the happiness and fulfilment that one feels on becoming a parent is overwhelming to say the least. The birth of a child brings immense delight and excitement to our lives.

However, parenthood is a huge responsibility, and the journey begins right from the time you start planning for your baby. With the ever-increasing healthcare cost and increase of pregnancy-related complications, childbirth has become a costly affair. Today, it has become important to have a proper

financial plan in place before entering parenthood to ensure that one enjoys the joy of becoming a parent without worrying about the finances. One of the important elements of the said financial plan is to have a good maternity insurance cover which helps reduce the financial burden of the childbirth. Let us spare a few minutes to understand about maternity insurance.

The maternity cover is a part of the base health insurance package and is not a standalone insurance plan in India as of now. You must note that all the health plans do not provide for maternity benefits, hence you should go through the terms and conditions of your base health plan to understand if the maternity cover is available and included in the plan or not. Apart from retail policies, many group medical policies also provide

maternity benefits.

**Coverage**  
Broadly speaking, maternity insurance covers all the expenses pertaining to childbirth like hospitalisation, medical treatment and costs incurred for the insured woman during pre and post-delivery. Costs like room rent charges, ambulance costs and surgeon fees are also covered. Additionally, any complications arising within 90-days post-delivery/post-natal will be covered. The cover is available for normal as well as caesarean delivery. It also covers

expenses related to medically recommended and lawful termination of pregnancy.

In addition to this, a 'New Born Baby Cover' is available. This covers the expenses related to the medical treatment of the newborn baby. It also takes care of the expenses incurred for hospitalisation of the newborn, if the baby is hospitalised due to any post-birth complication. The cover is available for 90 days from birth and this period may vary from insurer to insurer.

Few plans also offer covers for mandatory vaccinations of the baby upto 90 days. The cover is available for vaccinations for Tetanus,

Hepatitis, Measles and Typhoid etc as recommended by the Indian Paediatric Association and are taken care of under the Maternity Expenses cover.

**Sub-limits**  
First important point to note is that maternity cover usually has a sub-limit to it. For example, if the sum insured of your base health plan is ₹5,00,000, it does not imply that you have the entire ₹5,00,000 for maternity-related expenses. The maternity sub-limit will be explicitly specified in your policy document.

**Waiting period**  
One crucial piece of information is that maternity cover has a waiting period clause, which means you can file a claim for maternity-related expenses after a certain period of taking the policy. The waiting period varies from insurer to insurer and product to product;

usually, the period ranges from 9 months to 8 years.

Group medical policies can also cover maternity from day 1, with no waiting periods attached, as it can be tailor-made as per the requirements.

**Number of Deliveries and Termination:**  
Most of the health insurance policies also mention the number of deliveries and termination that are covered under the policy which one should note while buying the policy.

I hope this article gave you an overview of maternity insurance cover and how it can provide you with a financial cushion against childbirth-related expenditures. While maternity is a great cover to have in a policy, one should buy well-designed, health insurance for its overall benefits and not only with a focus on the maternity cover.





# Livingstone, Archer hit jackpot

# Coaches satisfied with major buys

ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL IPL CRICKETERS, SURESH RAINA GOES UNSOLD IN AUCTION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Feb 13:** England batter Liam Livingstone fetched a staggering ₹11.50 crore deal from Punjab Kings (PK), who also roped in West Indies fast bowler Odean Smith for ₹6 crore on the second day of the IPL mega auction here Sunday. For their left-arm variety, second-string India pacers like Khaleel Ahmed and Chetan Sakariya got handsome deals of ₹5.25 crore and ₹4.20 crore, respectively from Delhi Capitals (DC).

Among other Indians, all-rounder Shivam Dube got ₹4 crore from Chennai Super Kings (CSK) for his six-hitting abilities, while Gujarat Titans bagged another out-of-favour multi-skilled player in Vijay Shankar for ₹1.4 crore.

CSK also picked up little-known Sri Lankan spinner Mahesh Theeksa (₹70 lakh), who looked impressive against India last year.

However, the surprise package of the day was Singapore's Tim David who was bought for a whopping ₹8.25 crore by Mumbai Indians (MI).

Cheteshwar Pujara predictably went unsold at the auction while Ajinkya Rahane got a base price of ₹1 crore from Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR).

The first session's highlight was the auction for Livingstone, who hit the million dollar plus mark with five teams bidding for him. However, when Livingstone played for Rajasthan Royals (RR) in the previous season he didn't actually perform well on slow tracks. However, some of the franchises were desperate to get him.



England batter Liam Livingstone got the highest price on the second day of the IPL auction in Bangalore

Marco Jansen, the South African pacer, who tormented India during the last Test series between the two sides, was bought by Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) for ₹4.2 crore.

TOP BUYS ON 2ND DAY		
Franchise	Player	Price (in ₹)
PK	Liam Livingstone	11.5 crore
MI	Jofra Archer	8 crore
PK	Odean Smith	6 crore
DC	Khaleel Ahmed	5.25 crore
DC	Chetan Sakariya	4.2 crore
SRH	Marco Jansen	4.2 crore
CSK	Shivam Dube	4 crore
CSK	Chris Jordan	3.6 crore
SRH	Aiden Makram	2.6 crore

MI started the day with more than ₹27 crore left in their purse but had to fill up at least 10 slots. However, they were strangely subdued during the first session before bidding conservatively for Navdeep Saini, but it was Rajasthan Royals (RR) who won the bid at ₹2.40 crore.

The MI corner had something to smile about when they got Jaydev Unadkat for ₹1.30 crore. They also bagged leg-spinner Mayank Markande for ₹65 lakh, but the spark that is so typical of MI's style of bidding for match-winners was missing.

## CSK pick Senapati



**BANGALORE:** Odisha player Subhanshu Senapati became Sunday the third player from the state to find a place in an IPL franchise. He was bought by Chennai Super Kings (CSK) for ₹20 lakh. Senapati had captained the Odisha team in the recently concluded group-stage of the Vijay Hazare Trophy. He was called to the trials by CSK for his recent performance in the Vijay Hazare Trophy and Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. It should also be stated here that Senapati was the leading scorer for Odisha in the 2018-19 Ranji Trophy with 617 runs in nine matches.

Delhi Capitals (DC) got U-19 World Cup winning captain Yash Dhull for only ₹50 lakh as there wasn't much bidding over his base price of ₹20 lakh. Dhull is a product of Delhi Capitals Academy. However it was all-rounder Raj Angad Bawa who made his mark as a lot of interest was shown by franchises before PK snapped the local boy for ₹2 crore.

AGENCIES

**Bangalore, Feb 13:** Punjab Kings head coach Anil Kumble is extremely satisfied with the new players, including Liam Livingstone and Odean Smith, coming to his franchise during the IPL auction. He said that the dynamics of this auction was 'very different and challenging'.

"There is absolutely more demand than supply, but I guess there were challenges because there were 10 teams and it was different," Kumble said. "I have been in couple of big mega auctions in 2011, 2014 and smaller auctions before this one. This one has been really different and more challenging because every player, that whoever is going for, is going for a large sum of money, so the amount is dwindling no matter what value you have in your purse," Kumble said.

"The auction dynamics are very different and you have to be nimble and that is something we realised in the last one-and-a-half days. You have to be even more nimble during this auction than the previous ones," the former spin great added.

Kumble was glad to see the second rung of Indian fast bowlers getting good deals in the auction.

"Some of the players, especially the Indian fast bowlers, I am really happy for them. There has been a lot of demand for them and it is wonderful that they have been well rewarded for all their efforts," Kumble said.

"I think we have been extremely satisfied with the way we have gone about so far, that squad that

**The dynamics of this auction have been quite different. However, we have been able to achieve our objectives**

ANIL KUMBLE | HEAD COACH, PUNJAB KINGS

we wanted to put together. We are very close to achieving what we put together despite the challenging environment that you have at the auction," the former Indian captain added.

Delhi Capitals (DC) assistant coach Pravin Amre said that the franchise are pleased with their buys.

"We have a good bank of Indian fast bowlers. Our strategy is to back Indian bowlers, because with Anrich Nortje in our squad, we can use various other combinations. We will get these options of combinations with a left-arm seamer like Chetan Sakariya and Khaleel Ahmed," Amre said.

"Chetan had a tremendous IPL season the last time, and we were expecting his price to be higher. And, Khaleel is a player who was with us in the past, so we know him. He has also been performing well in T20 cricket for the past three years. So we have different combinations at our disposal," Amre added.

Simon Katich, the assistant coach at Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH), said getting Rahul Tripathi was a 'big plus' for them.

## SHORT TAKES

### Poor display

**Beijing:** India's lone participant in the Winter Olympics here, alpine skier Arif Khan, finished 45th in the giant slalom event here Sunday. The 31-year-old from Baramulla district in Jammu and Kashmir clocked a combined time of 2 minutes 47.24 seconds from two races in difficult weather conditions at the Yanqing National Alpine Skiing Centre. In the first race, Khan finished 53rd among 54 competitors while in the second he was 42nd in a field of 45 participants. His combined time, which saw him finish 45th overall, was 37.89 seconds behind gold winner Marco Odermatt of Switzerland who clocked a combined time of 2:09.35. Khan said he was happy with his performance keeping in mind the facilities available for training.

### Bayern beaten

**Berlin:** Bayern Munich dropped points in the Bundesliga title race after clinical Bochum snatched an emphatic 4-2 comeback victory thanks to goals from Christopher Antwi-Adjei, Jurgen Locadia, Cristian Gambia and Gerrit Holtmann here Saturday. Both the goals for Bayern were scored by Robert Lewandowski. In fact it was Bayern who took the lead when Lewandowski slotted home after Kingsley Coman's good build-up work. But that was the last time the Bundesliga champions smiled as Bochum made it 4-1 before the interval. Lewandowski reduced the deficit mid-way into the second half, but it was not meant to be Bayern's day. Bochum defenders held on with grit to ensure three points for the side.

### Pappana no more

**New Delhi:** The All India Football Federation (AIFF) expressed grief after former India forward N Pappana died Sunday at his residence in Mysore. He played for India in just three matches making his international debut against Hong Kong in the 1968 Merdeka Cup. At the domestic level, Pappana scored a whopping 115 goals for Mohammedan Sporting, winning the Calcutta Football League in 1967, Bordoloi Trophy (1969, 1970), Stafford Cup (1968, 1970) and many other trophies. "It is really sad to hear that Mr Pappana is no longer with us. His invaluable contribution to Indian football will always remain with us. I share the grief," AIFF president Praful Patel said in a message. AGENCIES

# France stun India

UNEXPECTED DEFEAT IN FIH PRO LEAGUE HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

AGENCIES

**Potchefstroom (South Africa), Feb 12:** Olympic bronze medallists India were stunned by 2-5 by lower-ranked France in the second match of the FIH Hockey Pro League two-leg tie here Saturday. It was a really shoddy display by the Indians who had won the first match against France 5-0 and then had followed it up with a 10-2 triumph against South Africa. -- in the FIH Pro League so far.

France were better than their fancied opponents in every aspect of the game.

A minute into the second quarter, India secured the first penalty corner of the match but poor trapping didn't give Harmanpreet Singh a shot at the goal. On the counter-attack France caught the Indian defence off guard in the very next move. They earned a penalty stroke which was beautifully converted by Victor Charlet. However, India were quick to retaliate as Jarmanpreet Singh's cross from the right went into the French goal after getting a deflection from the sticks of Stanislas Branicki in the 22nd minute.

The Frenchmen looked more purposeful after the change of ends and secured back-to-back penalty corners in the 32nd minute but failed to utilise those chances. However, they took the lead in the

35th minute when Viktor Lockwood scored with a powerful shot from the left.

India had their chances and earned five penalty corners in the third quarter, including three in succession in the 44th minute, but erred in execution.

France extended their lead to 3-1 in the 48th minute from their third penalty corner through a variation strike from Charles Masson. India pulled one back in the 57th minute through a penalty stroke conversion by Harmanpreet.

However, much to the disappointment of the Indians team, France scored two goals in the last two minutes to secure an emphatic victory.

It should however, be stated here that the Indian team looked a complacent lot and had to pay the price heavily. France were quick on the counter-attack and took advantage of Harmanpreet's lack of speed. The last two goals that they got was due to the slow moving Indian defenders.

"We were not up to the mark," head coach Graham Reid said after the game. "We were slow to reorganise our backline and had to pay the price. France were the better side on the day," he added.

India will next face hosts South Africa in the final game of the tour. It is a must-win match for them and they have to win by a large margin.

# CHELSEA WIN CLUB WORLD CUP

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS ADD THE ONLY TROPHY WHICH HAD BEEN MISSING FROM THEIR CABINET

AGENCIES

**Abu Dhabi, Feb 13:** Kai Havertz scored a penalty deep into extra time as Chelsea defeated Brazil's Palmeiras 2-1 in the Club World Cup final Saturday to complete their collection of major trophies.

Romelu Lukaku's superb header gave the European champions the lead on 54 minutes but Raphael Veiga levelled from the spot for the Copa Libertadores winners just past the hour. Havertz, the hero in the Champions League final against Manchester City, was Chelsea's match-winner again as he converted a penalty on 117 minutes awarded following a VAR review.

"It's amazing. After champions of Europe, we are now champions of the world. It sounds better," Havertz told 'Channel 4'. "I was nervous (taking the penalty), I have to be honest. It's a big penalty. I managed to hold on to my nerves. I am very happy. I dreamt always as a kid of this. This is an amazing feeling for me," he added.

Chelsea have now claimed every possible trophy since Roman Abramovich bought the club in 2003. They became the third English side to win the global tournament after Manchester United and Liverpool.

Chelsea coach Thomas Tuchel was back in the dugout having flown out to here Friday after missing the past two games following a positive test for Covid-19.

However, it was Palmeiras who



WINNER TAKES IT ALL: Chelsea footballers celebrate Saturday night with the trophy after winning the Club World Cup trophy at Abu Dhabi

had the better of the chances. Dudu stabbed well wide with a hapless Chelsea goal in front of him before Andreas Christensen made a key intervention to negate a promising attack for the Brazilians.

Lukaku has struggled to meet expectations after rejoining Chelsea from Inter Milan as the club's record signing, but the Belgian

made it two goals in as many games here early in the second half.

Callum Hudson-Odoi whipped in a cross and Lukaku soared above two Palmeiras defenders to power his header beyond Weverton.

Christian Pulisic, brought on 30 minutes for the injured Mason Mount, curled just wide after tidy interplay with Lukaku, but Chelsea

gave Palmeiras a way back in when Thiago Silva handled in the area. It was converted by Vegas to make it 1-1.

The match then went into extra time as Pulisic wasted a sitter for Chelsea. However, all those did not matter as Havertz sent Weverton the wrong way to spark wild celebrations.

## EVEN IN DEFEAT, AMERICAN STAR CREATES HISTORY

# Isner loses after 46-point tie-breaker

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Dallas, Feb 13:** John Isner has already been part of the two longest matches in Wimbledon history. Now he has another feather in his cap, of playing the longest tie-breaker in the history of professional tennis. However, he would like to forget it... as he lost the match.

Reilly Opelka beat Isner 24-22 in a second-set tie-breaker to finish a victory that put him in the final of

## TSITSIPAS ENDS QUALIFIER'S RUN

**ROTTERDAM:** Top-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas rallied past qualifier Jiri Lehecka to enter the final of the Rotterdam hard-court indoor tennis tournament to reach his first final since the French Open last June. Tsitsipas ended Czech qualifier Lehecka's run 4-6, 6-4, 6-2. He will face Felix Auger-Aliassime in Sunday's final after the third seed came back from one set down to beat defending champion Andrey Rublev 6-7, (5-7), 6-4, 6-2.



TRUE GRIT: Reilly Opelka showed determination to overcome John Isner in the longest tie-breaker in the history of professional tennis

the inaugural Dallas Open tennis tournament Saturday. The second-seeded Opelka hit a winner down the line to secure the 7-6 (9-7), 7-6 (24-22) win over Isner; the No. 3 seed who lives about a mile from the SMU tennis facility hosting the event.

Opelka will now play Jensen Brooksby also of the US for the title. Brooksby beat countryman Marcos Giron 6-4, 6-7 (4-7), 7-6 (7-5).

At Wimbledon 12 years ago, Isner played an 11-hour, five-minute

match that covered three days, beating Nicolas Mahut 70-68 in a remarkable fifth set. Eight years later, Kevin Anderson beat Isner in a Wimbledon semifinal that lasted six hours, 36 minutes, before Anderson lost to Novak Djokovic in the final.

Isner greeted the latest milestone with barely a shrug after he and Opelka combined for 60 aces and won 87 per cent of their first serve points. "More history, I guess," said Isner after the match.

# Real snow lands athletes in trouble

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Beijing, Feb 13:** The Winter Olympics finally look like, well, the Winter Olympics. Real snow fell here Sunday for the first time since the Olympics began, giving the city the appearance and feel of a real Winter Games. There was fresh snow in the mountains as well, where all events have so far been contested on artificial snow.

While the snow was mostly a welcome sight, up in the mountains it affected visibility and made it tougher for ski racers to make it down the hill, especially in the first run of the two-leg giant slalom.

Marco Odermatt of Switzerland handled the snow and poor visibility better than anyone else and won his first Olympic gold medal. "I really risked everything in the second run because I wanted not just the medal, I wanted the gold medal," Odermatt said. "It's difficult because you can lose everything but today it paid off," he added.

The snow affected the men's cross-country relay ski race so much that

workers used leaf blowers to clear it out of the tracks. The snow made the ski tracks slow, especially on the first two classic ski legs.

Just like in the women's race, the Russian men's team opened a lead on the first leg and then held on for the gold medal. Sergey Ustiugov maintained more than a minute lead on the last lap over the two-man chasing group of Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo of Norway and Maurice Manificat of France.

Ustiugov grabbed a flag on his way to the finish line and won the 10-kilometres relay in 1 hour, 54 minutes, 50.7 seconds. By comparison, the winning time in the four-man relay at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics was more than 20 minutes quicker.

Meanwhile Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva continued to practice in the hours before the Court of Arbitration for Sport was to decide whether she will be allowed to compete this week. A decision by CAS is expected roughly 24 hours before the 15-year-old Valieva is due on the ice.

# OFC go down meekly to MCFC

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Margao, Feb 13:** Mumbai City FC (MCFC) produced a dominating display to beat Odisha FC (OFC) 4-1 in an ISL here Sunday. A brace each from Igor Angulo (41st, 70th) and Bipin Singh (47th, 73rd) was enough to seal victory for Mumbai. It lifted them to fourth spot in the points table and kept their play-off hopes alive. The only goal for OFC was scored by Jonathan (90+1), but it came a little too late. OFC remained in seventh place in the table.

MCFC were denied two shouts for a penalty early in the match as they pushed for the opening goal. Both teams exchanged attacks back and forth in the early stages of the match.

However, it was MCFC who broke the deadlock through Angulo. The Spaniard was left unmarked inside the box by the Odisha defenders. He met Rahul Bheke's cross with a perfect header to put his side in the lead.

Victor Mongli came close to scoring the equaliser for OFC, but his effort went wide. In the second half, MCFC ruled play and never allowed Odisha any chance of a comeback.