



**K-DRAMA FAN**  
Actor Kiara Advani has confessed to her craze for Korean shows, saying she is hooked to TV series *Snowdrop*  
**LEISURE P2**



**INDIA HITS OUT AT PAK**  
India hits out at Pakistan at the UN, saying the world knows where the perpetrators of terror attacks come from  
**INTERNATIONAL P10**



**FIRST T20I TODAY**  
India would look for right combination with the World T20 in mind as they face West Indies in the first match  
**SPORTS P12**

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**DSP, OAS IN COMPULSORY RETIREMENT LIST**  
**Bhubaneswar:** The state government has given compulsory retirement to five more officers on charge of corruption and inefficiency in discharging their duties. The officials include a deputy superintendent of police (DSP), one OAS officer, a police inspector, two municipal executive officers. The officials are facing corruption cases and were considered fit for compulsory retirement. With this, 151 officials have been awarded compulsory retirement by the state government, so far. Rabinendra Kumar Sethi, who served as DSP in the investigation unit on crime against women (IUCAW) in Kalahandi district, was asked to retire from service. He was arrested by vigilance while accepting ₹5,000 from a complainant and sent to judicial custody. Similarly, Sushil Kujur, former Bonai Tehasildar is accused of misappropriating MGNREGA funds to the tune of ₹24.22 lakh during his tenure as BDO of Dhenkanal sadar block. He had been arrested by vigilance and sent to judicial custody.

**LALU CONVICTED IN FIFTH FODDER SCAM CASE**  
**Ranchi:** A special CBI court Tuesday convicted Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) supremo and former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad in the ₹139.5 crore Doranda treasury embezzlement case. The quantum of punishment will be pronounced February 18, a CBI counsel said. The court had January 29 completed hearing arguments in the case and reserved its verdict. Prasad had earlier been sentenced to 14 years in jail in four other fodder scam cases. "Lalu Prasad has been convicted. The quantum of punishment will be pronounced February 18," the CBI counsel said. The court of Special CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) Judge SK Shashi had completed the hearing against 99 accused including Prasad, which was underway since February last year. **Page 9**

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## RIGHTS VS RULES



Muslim women hold placards while wearing burqa and hijab in a peaceful protest in support of female Muslim students and against the Karnataka government, in Hyderabad, Tuesday

## Jamtara links in city engg college

■ Sekhar and Vishal are students of a private engineering college on the outskirts of the city

**Bhubaneswar/Sambalpur, Feb 15:** In a surprising twist to the mysterious disappearance of four engineering students from the city, the parents of the students Tuesday informed commission-erate police that they were picked up by Sambalpur police in a cyber fraud case. The parents had filed a complaint February 12 at the Tamando police station and met higher officials of the twin city police to find out their sons who went missing since February 11 from their rental accommodation at Kalinga Nagar. The Sambalpur police revealed that three persons including two engineering students who were



The three accused at Khetarajpur police station in Sambalpur, Tuesday

reported missing have been arrested for duping Saroj Dash of ₹2 lakh on the pretext of arranging a personal loan worth ₹3.90 lakh for him. The accused were identified as Rehmat Ansari, 22, alias Chhottu of Khaga police limits, Vishal Pandey, 21, of Govindpur police station area in Jharkhand and Sekhar Gautam, 21, of Bihar. Sekhar and Vishal are students of a private diploma engineering college on the outskirts of the city. The accused allegedly siphoned

off ₹2 lakh using the IDBI Bank debit card of the complainant February 5. Dash, who had applied for a personal loan of ₹3.90 lakh, encountered problems while filing the application form. He searched online for the contact number of the financial agency. However, he picked up wrongly phone numbers of the fraudsters. The fraudster in the guise of assisting him collected the bank credentials of the complainant. Later, when the financial agency transferred the loan to the account of Dash, the accused withdrew ₹2 lakh using his debit card details. With the arrest of three fraudsters including two engineering students by the Sambalpur police from Bhubaneswar, it seems the capital city has turned into a safe haven for the Jamtara-like cyber criminal gangs. Earlier, the state crime branch busted a Jamtara-like gang operating from the Rasulgarh area of the city.

## 1st phase panchayat elections today

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** The first phase of the panchayat elections will be held Wednesday in 22,379 wards under 1,669 panchayats in 71 blocks across the state. The three-tier election will be held in five phases February 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24. Over 2.79 crore voters will exercise their franchise in 6,794 panchayats and of 91,913 wards, State Election Commissioner AP Padhi said here Tuesday. Over 67.51 lakh voters will decide the fate of 726 Zilla Parishad (ZP) and other candidates for the posts of ward member, sarpanch, panchayat samiti member and ZP member in this phase. Out of a total 91,913 polling booths, 13,785 have been identified as sensitive. Polling will be held at 3,357 sensitive booths in the first phase. Poll personnel have been sent to the places that will go to poll Wednesday, Padhi said. **MORE P3**

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**  
Not him. He has voted. It's the other man who's yet to vote

## Indians told to leave Ukraine temporarily

Indian nationals in Ukraine, particularly students whose stay is not essential, may consider leaving temporarily, said the advisory

**New Delhi, Feb 15:** India Tuesday advised its citizens in Ukraine to temporarily leave that country amid escalating tension between Moscow and the NATO countries over Russia's increasing military build-up close to the Ukrainian border. In an advisory, the Indian embassy in Kyiv asked Indian nationals to avoid all non-essential travel to and within Ukraine. "In view of the uncertainties of the current situation in Ukraine, Indian nationals in Ukraine, particularly students whose stay is not essential, may consider leaving temporarily," it said. "Indian nationals are also advised to avoid all non-essential travel to and within Ukraine," the embassy said. The number of Indians residing in Ukraine at present is not immediately known. According to an official document in 2020, Ukraine had a small but vibrant Indian community and there were about 18,000 Indian students studying in that country. The data is likely to vary in view of the pandemic. In the advisory, the Indian embassy in Ukraine also asked Indian nationals to keep it informed about their status to enable the mission to reach out to them when required.

### READY FOR TALKS: PUTIN

**Moscow:** Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that Moscow is ready for talks with the US and NATO on limits for missile deployments and military transparency. Speaking after talks with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Putin said the US and NATO rejected Moscow's demand to keep Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations out of NATO and halt weapons deployments near Russian borders. They agreed to discuss a range of security measures that Russia had previously proposed. Putin is ready to engage in talks on limits on the deployment of intermediate range missiles, transparency of drills and other confidence-building measures but emphasized the need for the West to heed Russia's main demands. The statement followed the Russian Defense Ministry's announcement of a partial pullback of troops after military drills, adding to hopes that the Kremlin may not be planning to invade Ukraine imminently.

"Indian nationals are requested to keep the Embassy informed about the status of their presence in Ukraine to enable the Embassy to reach them where required," the embassy said. It said the mission continues to function normally to provide all services to Indian nationals in Ukraine. The US and its Western allies have been severely critical of Russia over its continuing build-up of forces near the Ukraine border. The US has already sent extra troops to Europe to support its allies in the backdrop of fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine. **MORE P10**

**MARKET WATCH**

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	58142.05 ↑ 1736.21
NIFTY	17352.45 ↑ 509.65
DOLLAR	75.33 ↓ ₹0.28
EURO	85.28 ↓ ₹0.24
GOLD	₹49400 ↓ ₹516
SILVER	₹62720 ↓ ₹1513

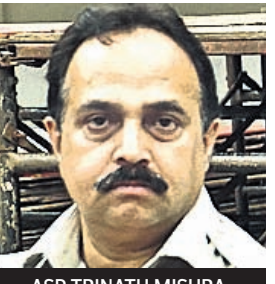
**WEATHER**

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	30.3°C	29.5°C
MIN	14.0°C	14.0°C
Humidity	74%	72%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Dry weather most likely

## VIGILANCE LENS ON ASP WITH ₹8.5CR ASSETS AND COUNTING

**Cuttack, Feb 15:** Vigilance sleuths Tuesday carried out simultaneous raids at least at 11 places including the residence of additional superintendent of police (ASP) (Communication) Trinath Mishra in Rasulgarh area of Bhubaneswar, on allegations that he has amassed assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. Sources said 11 teams of the anti-corruption wing, comprising three ASPs, 10 DSPs and 13 Inspectors raided as



ASP TRINATH MISHRA

upon movable and immovable assets worth over ₹8.5 crore belonging to the senior police official, who is posted as the ASP (Communication) at Tulasipur in Cuttack. The sleuths found the involvement of Mishra's son and his family members in several businesses including a hospital and a nursing home in Chandikhole area of Jajpur and a medicine store licensed in the name of Mishra's wife. A transport business—Shantilata Transport—with its offices at Chandikhole and Dhanmandal in Jajpur was also found in the name of Mishra's wife. Besides, a three-BHK flat in Bhubaneswar, a farmhouse in Jajpur and three plots in the Capital city and Jajpur were found in Mishra's name during the raid. The Vigilance said they have found a fleet of cars including a BMW X7, and motorcycles like Triumph Rocket 3, Hyosung GT250 and Royal Enfield Classic 500. All the vehicles bear the same fancy registration number 0005. Searches were on when the last reports came in.

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## 18<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day

(2004-2022)  
16<sup>th</sup> February, 2022

**Chief Guest & Foundation Day Lecture by**  
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United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)  
Representative & Country Director, India

Date : 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022 | Venue : KIIT Convention Centre  
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# leisure

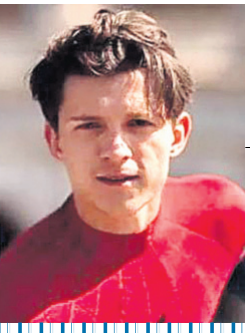


## YOU'LL STILL GET MUSIC FROM ME: RIHANNA

Singing sensation Rihanna has said her pregnancy and impending motherhood won't stop her from releasing new music. When jokingly asked if she will release lullabies, she laughed: "Oh my goodness, not a lullaby. My fans would kill me that they waited this long for a lullaby!"

## TOM HOLLAND WANTS TO SEE THE TAJ MAHAL

Hollywood star Tom Holland has confessed his love for India. While promoting his film *Uncharted*, the actor said, "I am a big fan of India but as I said I never got a chance to go there. I would love to see every part of India including the Taj Mahal."



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today you might feel home-sick if you are out of station. And if you are contacting your family members, Ganesh suggests that you get in touch with your long-neglected friends too. Knowing that you are loved gives a different kind of pleasure.

**TAURUS**  
Your skills in managing professional relationships will play a vital role today. The atmosphere, the impression you create is going to mean a lot. Be professional, but be warm and cordial. This day you will be particularly concerned about the way others see and evaluate you.

**GEMINI**  
You need a break from your daily routine. You will feel fatigue in keeping up with the demands of everybody around you. You will try to regain your courteous and pleasant manner in the afternoon. You will be able to relax and unwind if you have the company of family and friends in the evening, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You will put your family members above everything else. You will plan the entire day keeping them in mind. Your family will respond in kind and will make you feel loved and blessed. Your rivals will acknowledge your accomplishments and abilities.

**LEO**  
Ganesh foresees a mixed day for you. Your pecuniary problems may persist until later in the day, so your desire to see them sorted out is going to have to wait a little. However, chances are you may rake in money from various sources in the afternoon. Good thing is that you are likely to retain your independence at the workplace.

**VIRGO**  
Speech-craft will be your potent weapon today, predicts Ganesh. The gift of gab was never more silvery, as you enchant your way into the hearts of the opposite sex sometime late in the day. Put-off work will be completed. Doctors and public servants will have a field day, predicts Ganesh.

**LIBRA**  
Rub-a-dub and scrub and scrub: that is your motto today as you pay extra attention to sanitation. Call it the quirky side to you, but today, you may plan to wash your car, rearrange the furniture, and take up cleaning tasks in the afternoon.

**SCORPIO**  
Your day will gravitate to being constructive today, predicts Ganesh. At work, your dedication will keep others on their toes; and you miles ahead. Marital bliss will be at its best. All in all, a colourful day, says Ganesh.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The positivity in you might well be clouded today. Quite probably, find yourself to be at your wits' end more often than not ere the day passes. Ganesh sees you sitting together with your better half and talking things out.

**CAPRICORN**  
Those meddlesome neighbours of yours may suddenly come across as more seemly, and even if you can see through their ulterior motives, you will find yourself developing a good rapport with them, says Ganesh. Later in the day, you will indulge in literary works, which will provide food for thought.

**AQUARIUS**  
Cleaning up the clutter, either at your home or office, will be priority number one. Grab this chance to impress your boss or spouse and make your personal space squeaky clean. A dinner by candlelight with your beloved will ease your tired muscles, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
Your powers of concentration and focus come to the fore. Your lucidity and eye for detail will save you from many a hassle that could have developed later on. The time that this will save your bosses and peers will bring you many accolades, says Ganesh.

## Richa's incredible transformation

**Mumbai:** Actress Richa Chadha has shared a video flaunting her jaw-dropping transformation. The actress has lost 15 kgs in just three months.

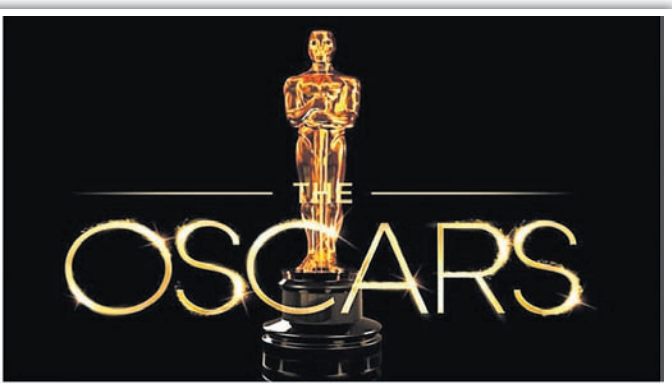
In the clip she shared, Richa also talked about her body weight and the expectations show business has towards actors.

Richa posted a video on her Instagram handle, where she is heard talking about how she has lost and gained weight but there is better conversation that needs to be made.

In a video montage featuring the actress, Richa is heard saying: "It's never easy being in front of the camera, much less for someone who wants to swim upstream. The world is going to tell you there's a premium on youth. Everyone has advice. 'You've gained weight. You've lost weight.' 'Yes I've lost weight, I've gained weight. But surely there's better conversation to be made.'"

The actress added: "You can lose cartilage, health or sanity over what ends up being a terrible film. And all your well-intentioned effort amounts to be a big fat zero. When you are harassed, people will say it's a part of your job. Well, to hell with people. This isn't some before and after montage. It's me. It's my body, ever-changing. No literally, every cell, every scar, everything dies and is reborn, every six months. Why not me?"

On the work front, Richa is currently riding high on the success of *The Great Indian Murder*. IANS



## Twitterati can vote for their favourite film

From all voters, three Twitter users will be selected for an all-expenses paid trip to Los Angeles to present an Oscar award at next year's award show

### 94TH ACADEMY AWARDS

**Los Angeles:** The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has granted special powers to Twitter users to vote for their favourite film for the 94th Academy Awards, reports Variety.

Twitter will be able to vote on their favourite film of 2021 by tweeting the title along with #OscarsFanFavorite and #Sweepstakes.

As per Variety, the winning film based on the votes submitted at the Academy's website, will then be revealed during the Academy Awards broadcast, which is set to be held

March 27. The vote will count for any film, even if it did not receive a single Oscar nomination and the users can vote up to 20 times per day.

The voting period will be open from February 14 to March 3. In addition, three Twitter users who cast their votes will be selected for an all-expenses paid trip to Los Angeles to present an Oscar award at next year's award show.

Meryl Johnson, the Academy's vice president of digital marketing, in a statement accessed by Variety, has said "We're thrilled to partner with Twitter to help build an engaged and excited digital audience leading up to this year's ceremony."

In addition, Another Twitter contest where voters can decide on their favorite movie moment of 2021, will run from February 24 through March 3. Users can vote using #OscarsCheerMoment. The winning scenes will be showcased during the Oscars with fan tweets. IANS

## Kiara's newfound love

**Mumbai:** Actress Kiara Advani has confessed her newfound craze for K-Dramas and said that she is hooked to *Snowdrop*.

*Snowdrop* features BLACKPINK's Jisoo and Something In The Rain star Jung Hae-in, the 16-episode series explores the forbidden love between a South Korean girl and a

North Korean spy during the June 1987 Democracy Movement in South Korea.

Kiara said: "Most of my friends are K-Drama fans and I just had to join the bandwagon! I'm so glad that I came across *Snowdrop* as I'm completely hooked to K-dramas and the fascinating Korean culture - thanks to this show. Jisoo is a phenomenal actress and her performance in *Snowdrop* is simply outstanding."

"Her chemistry with Jung Hae-in is to die for and being a huge fan of romance, I think their story in the series is so complex but captivating at the same time. I'm hooked to the show and have blocked my Wednesdays to watch every new episode," added the Shershaah actress.

*Snowdrop* is also available in Hindi on Disney+ Hotstar. IANS



## Series on Kamal Amrohi-Meena Kumari love story in works

*Amrohi, a picture of perfectionism, had brought imported chandeliers from Belgium and spent lakhs on exquisite carpets for the making of 'Pakeezah' which took nearly 16 years to complete, says grandson Bilal*

**B**ilal Amrohi, the grandson of the renowned filmmaker Kamal Amrohi, will be working on a fictional series that will portray the love story between Kamal Amrohi and his muse - Meena Kumari that came alive during the 16-year journey of the making of *Pakeezah*.

Talking about the series, Bilal Amrohi said: "It will be a tall order to do justice to the vision of my grandfather. I have heard stories of his tireless perfectionism and how he even drew the set design

to the last detail, ensured that the costumes of the stars and each of the supporting actors were perfect, imported chandeliers from Belgium, and spent lakhs on the exquisite carpets."

The series will be produced under the banner of Yoodlee Films, the studio production arm of Saregama.

Vikram Mehra, MD of Saregama, India, added: "The story of the making of *Pakeezah* is one of guts, gumption, and greatness. For us in Yoodlee, to partner on a series depicting the trials and tribu-

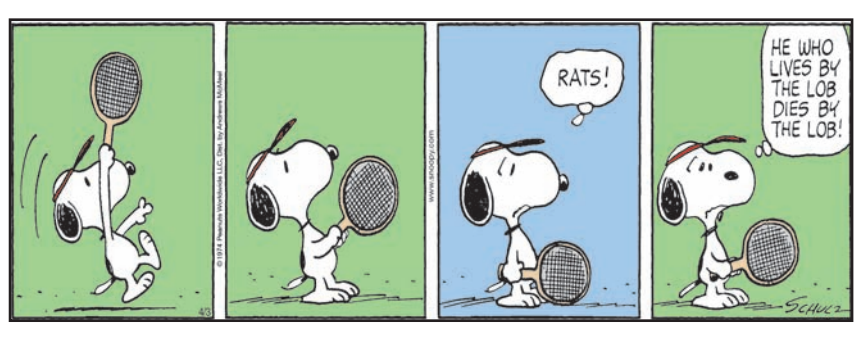
lations to make *Pakeezah*, was a project with all the right connections."

"This also gives us a chance to leverage Saregama's rich music catalogue symbiotically in this series and make it relevant to audiences of today. This is a treasure trove of a story, and we are excited and humbled that we get a chance to present this to the world", Vikram concluded.

Yoodlee Films will soon be announcing the director and the cast, and the series will go on the floors in 2023. IANS



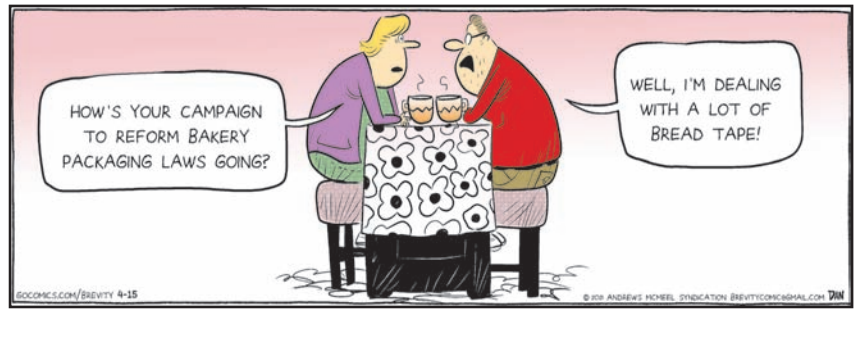
### PEANUTS



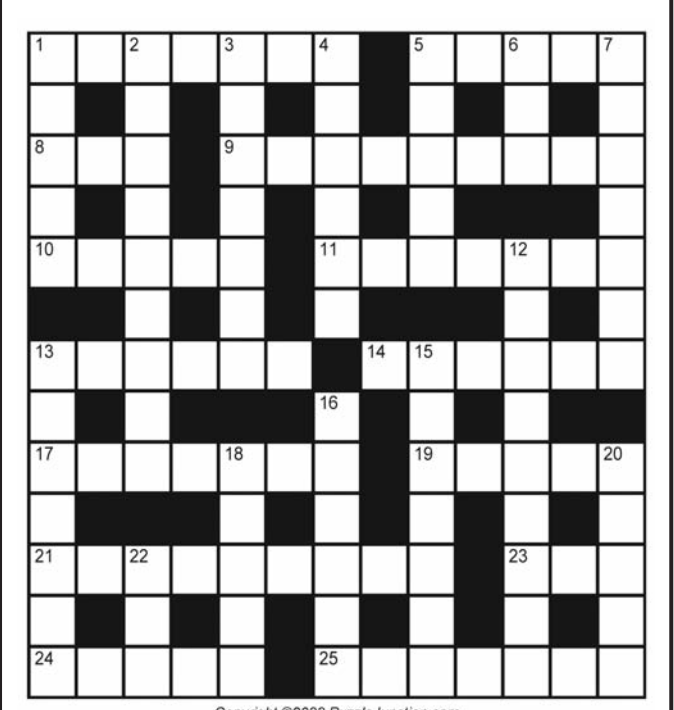
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



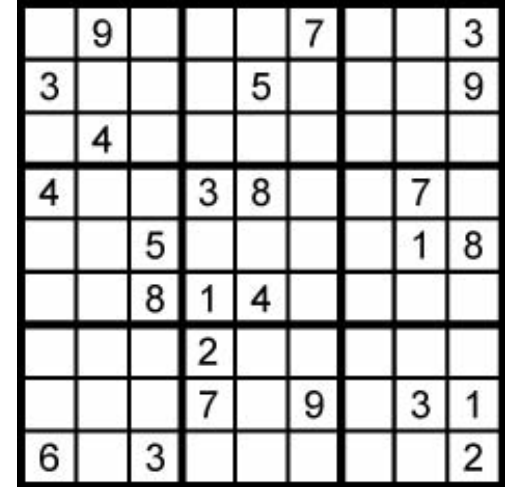
### FUN post CROSSWORD



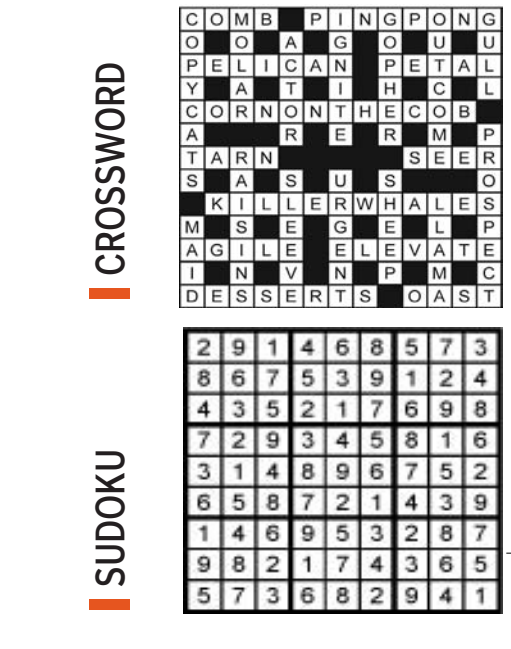
- Across**
- 1 Fantasm
  - 5 Cuban dance
  - 8 Recipe word
  - 9 Not barbaric
  - 10 Poetry Muse
  - 11 Mexican peninsula
  - 13 Liqueur bottle numbers
  - 14 On the beach
  - 17 Dust storm
  - 19 Fable writer
  - 21 Getting better, medically (2,3,4)
  - 23 Antlered animal
  - 24 Spa handout
  - 25 God of the sea
- Down**
- 1 Large edible ray
  - 2 Strive
  - 3 Annoy (4,3)
  - 4 Official emissaries
  - 5 Excavation find
  - 6 More, in Madrid
  - 7 Pasta style (2,5)
  - 12 Bride's collection
  - 13 Faint (4,3)
  - 15 Kind of comic (5-2)
  - 16 Up to date
  - 18 Angler's basket
  - 20 Tea variety
  - 22 Wrecker's job

### 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

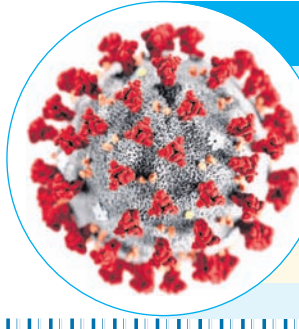


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



**CITY'S PRIDE**  
Hundreds of people throng Khandagiri-Udaygiri hills in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, as the state witnesses improvement in Covid situation



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	41,47,44,104	33,67,63,047	58,47,971
India	4,26,92,943	4,17,60,458	5,09,358
Odisha	12,79,046	12,59,796	8,926

## State seeks NOC for flight ops from Amarda airstrip

**POST NEWS NETWORK**  
Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The state government has urged Centre to instruct the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to give no-objection certificate (NOC) for operationalisation of Amarda Road Airstrip near Rasgopindpur in Mayurbhanj district under the RCS-UDAN scheme.



### CONNECTIVITY BOOST

THOUGH THE STATE GOVERNMENT HAS REQUESTED THE DRDO SEVERAL TIMES TO PROVIDE NOC FOR COMMERCIAL FLIGHT OPERATIONS FROM THE AIRSTRIP, THE CENTRAL AGENCY IS YET TO GIVE ITS RESPONSE IN THIS REGARD

THE CHIEF SECRETARY URGED THE DEFENCE SECRETARY TO INSTRUCT THE DRDO FOR USE OF THE AIRSTRIP BY THE STATE GOVERNMENT FOR FLIGHT OPERATION UNDER RCS-UDAN

Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra has written to Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar in this regard, sources said.  
In his letter, Mahapatra said the Ministry of Civil Aviation has included Bhubaneswar-Amarda Road as a special Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) route under Ude Deash Ka Aam Nagarik (UDAN) 4.1 on the request of Odisha government. Besides, Gsec Monarch has been selected as the airline operator for the route with seven flights in a week by using a 9-seater aircraft.

Though the state government has requested the DRDO several times to provide NOC for commercial flight operations from the airstrip under the RCS-UDAN, the central agency is yet to give its response in this regard, Mahapatra pointed out.

Mahapatra further said the northern part of Odisha is deprived of air-connectivity and Amarda Road Airstrip has a huge significance for the nearby places.

The airstrip will facilitate connectivity to tourist sites like Simlipal National Park, Kuldiha Sanctuary and Chandipur & Talsari beaches, promote economic growth through trade and commerce, provide jobs,

boost revenue collection and foster community relationship with neighbouring states, Mahapatra told Kumar.

The Chief Secretary urged the Defence Secretary to look into the matter and issue necessary instructions to the DRDO for use of Amarda Road Airstrip by the state government for flight operations

under RCS-UDAN in the larger public interest. He hoped that DRDO would issue the NOC in this regard at the earliest.

A few days ago, Union Minister and Mayurbhanj MP Bishweswar Tudu said that he had taken up the matter with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia.

The airstrip is located around 225 km away from the capital city of Bhubaneswar and only 90 km from the Kalaikunda air force station. It was operational during the World War-II, sources said.

The 1,000-acre piece of land in Rasgopindpur block falls under the purview of the Defence Ministry and it needs to be handed over to the Civil Aviation Ministry. The Amarda Road Airstrip, once it turns into an airport, will cater to an estimated 82 lakh people, mostly in north Odisha, South Bengal and East Jharkhand, sources said.

## EOW arrests chit fund firm director from MP in ₹10cr fraud case

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch has arrested Babu Singh Kushwaha, a chit fund firm director and promoter, in a Rs 10 crore fraud case, officials said here Tuesday.

Kushwaha, promoter of Auroxa Deal Multitrade (OPC) Pvt Ltd, has been arrested from Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh and is being brought to Bhubaneswar on the strength of a transit remand, the EOW officials said.

During investigation, the EOW found that the company—Auroxa Deal Multitrade (OPC) Private Limited was functioning in a rented building in Balasore town during the year 2019-20. At that time, Kushwaha and his associates had collected more than Rs 10 crore from around 500 investors by promising them high returns and duped them subsequently.

They duped the investors under various lucrative schemes on direct selling of various household goods/electronic goods with high returns having cash back offers.

The deposits collected by the company are nothing but ponzi schemes and binary schemes. The business model of the firm is a simple pyramid structure, works as a binary scheme in which the early entrants earn money and as the number of investors increases, the scheme collapses at a point of time.

Thus, the deceit and fraud is camouflaged under the name of direct selling marketing and business, the officials informed.

The chit fund company is registered with Registrar of Companies (ROC), Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh) during May-2019 and the accused Singh is its only director, said an official.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## Rural polls phase 1: 67.51L voters to decide fate of 726 candidates

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: Over 67.51 lakh voters will decide the fate of 726 Zilla Parishad (ZP) candidates in the first phase of panchayat polls to be held Wednesday, an official said Tuesday.

The three-tier panchayat elections in the state will be held in five phases—February 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24.

Over 2.79 crore voters will exercise their franchise in 6,794 panchayats and 91,913 wards, State Election Commissioner AP Padhi said here Tuesday. The election will be held for the positions of ward member, sarpanch, panchayat samiti member and ZP member. In the first phase of elections, 200 ZP zones in 71 blocks in all the 30 districts will go to the polls.

Voting will be carried out at 22,379 wards and 1,669 panchayats across the state. As many as 67.51 lakh voters will exercise their franchise in the first phase, Padhi said.

As many as 13,785 booths have been identified as sensitive booths across Odisha, of which polling will be held at 3,357 booths in the first phase Wednesday, he said.

Stating that security has been



Polling officials in Cuttack ready to travel to their respective booths, Tuesday

- In the first phase, 200 ZP zones in 71 blocks in all the 30 districts will go to the polls
- Voting will be carried out at 22,379 wards and 1,669 panchayats
- Around 13,785 booths have been identified as sensitive booths across Odisha, of which polling will be held at 3,357 booths Wednesday

beefed up for the elections, Padhi said 225 platoons comprising 37,245 police personnel will be deployed to maintain law and order. The polling will be held from 7 am

to 1 pm and only voters whose names are mentioned in the ward-wise voters' list will be allowed to exercise their franchise, he informed.  
At the time of polling, each voter is required to produce an Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) or any of the 13 other ID proofs approved by the SEC. As the elections are being held under Covid-19 restrictions, it is mandatory for the voters to wear masks and maintain social distance at the polling booths. Covid positive voters will be allowed to cast their votes during the last hour of polling with strict adherence to Covid protocols, Padhi added.

## Free legal aid beneficiaries in state dwindle

**AS PER DATA PRESENTED IN RAJYA SABHA RECENTLY, THE NUMBER OF WOMEN AND SC/ST BENEFICIARIES IN ODISHA IS DECLINING IN RECENT YEARS**



Authorities Act, 1987.

As per the data, altogether 3,590 women availed free legal services in Odisha during 2018-19 financial year. However, the numbers are much higher in several other states of the country.

As many as 45,748 women in Madhya Pradesh have availed free legal aid during the same period while the number was 33,327 for Kerala and 15,800 Bihar. Even, altogether 20,265 women in neighbouring Jharkhand have received free legal aid in 2018-19 fiscal. The data also revealed that the number of women receiving free legal aid in Odisha decreased further in the successive financial years.

A total of 2,639 women in the coastal state received legal aid free of cost in 2019-20 financial year.

AS PER THE DATA, ALTOGETHER 3,590 WOMEN AVAILED FREE LEGAL SERVICES IN ODISHA DURING 2018-19 FINANCIAL YEAR

A TOTAL OF 2,639 WOMEN IN THE COASTAL STATE RECEIVED LEGAL AID FREE OF COST IN 2019-20 FINANCIAL YEAR

THE NUMBER FURTHER CAME DOWN TO 1,689 IN 2020-21 FISCAL

The number further came down to 1,689 in 2020-21 fiscal. Till September 2021, altogether 939 women availed free legal aid in Odisha in 2021-22 financial year. Similarly, the state has provided free legal aid to 958 and 621 persons of the SC and ST communities respectively during 2018-19 fiscal. But, only 702 people from

SC community and 592 from ST community availed free legal services in 2019-20 fiscal, said the data.

In 2020-21 financial year, altogether 662 people from the SC community and 414 from the ST community in Odisha availed the free legal aid.

“Lack of awareness regarding the free legal aid scheme is the major cause behind the dwindling number of people availing the benefit. Due to poor remuneration,

many good and efficient lawyers are not coming forward to get themselves empanelled for providing free legal services. There should be a dedicated panel of lawyers for providing legal aid to the weaker sections,” said human rights activist Biswapriya Kanungo.

## IISERB uses organic polymers to filter micropollutants from water

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhopal (IISERB) have developed organic polymers, which can remove highly polar organic micropollutants (POMs) from water: The process will render the water safe for consumption, according to the researchers.

The major organic micropollutants found in the surface water bodies include pharmaceuticals such as antibiotics, and steroids; industrial chemicals such as dyes, food additives, endocrine disruptors and plastic precursors; and agricultural disposals such as pesticides, herbicides, and fertilisers.

“In India, the prime concern is water contamination due to anthropogenic waste discharged to surface and ground-water by domestic, agricultural, and industrial sectors,” said lead author Arkaprabha Giri, doctoral student from the varsity's Department of Chemistry. “These wastes contain large numbers of organic/inorganic micropollutants,” Giri added.



Giri noted that the presence of these organic micropollutants in water, even in trace amounts, poses a serious threat to human health and aquatic lives.

The team developed a series of organic polymers called ‘Hyper-crosslinked Porous Organic Polymers’ (HPOPs). These polymers have already been tested for polar organic micropollutants removal at a laboratory scale.

The researchers found that a teaspoon of the powder of these polymers will cover an internal surface area of 1,000-2,000 m<sup>2</sup>/g, which is close to 10 tennis courts.

Large-scale fabrication of these ma-

**We need efficient adsorbent materials that can not only scavenge highly polar organic micropollutants (POMs) from water rapidly but also can be synthesised easily on a large-scale through simple fabrication techniques**

ABHIJIT PATRA | ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY, IISERB

terials in collaboration with industrial partners will open up a promising avenue for real-time scavenging of toxic polar organic micropollutants from water, the researchers said.

The findings have been published in the peer-reviewed journal ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces.

“We need efficient adsorbent materials that can not only scavenge highly polar organic micropollutants (POMs) from water rapidly but also can be synthesised easily on a large-scale through simple fabrication techniques,” said Abhijit Patra, Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry.

## SBI STATE BANK OF INDIA POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the STATE BANK OF INDIA under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued a Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon the Borrower/Guarantor to repay the amount mentioned in the notice with interest, cost, other charges etc. within 60 days from the date of the notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charges of the State Bank of India for an amount and further interest, cost and other charges thereon.

Name & Address of the Borrower/Guarantor	Description of the Security Interest taken over possession	Liabilities due on the specified date as per Notice	Date of Demand / Possession Notice
<b>Borrower: M/s. S P Engineering, Prop.: Sri Brundaban Padhiary, S/o. Late Dwidjagar Padhiary, At: Plot No.: 1262, Jagasahi, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar/ Guarantor: Sri Jyoti Prakash Biswal, At: Plot No.: 1732/1216, Khandagiri Bari, PS.: Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar</b>	All that part and parcel of the property in the name of Sri Brundaban Padhiary situated at Mouza: Ghatikia, Dist.: Khurda, Sub Registrar: Khandagiri, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar bearing Khata No.: 326/410, Plot No.: 1215/1465, Plot No.: 1732/1216, Khandagiri Bari, PS.: Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar	₹ 9,88,416/- as on 11.02.2022 + further interest, cost & incidental charges etc. thereon	27.08.2021 / 11.02.2022

## Bank of India POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of India, Sastri Nagar Branch under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices calling upon the Borrowers/Guarantor in the loan account given below to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice plus interest & expenses thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrowers/Guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the Bank of India, Sastri Nagar Branch for an amount mentioned below with interest & expenses thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

SASTRI NAGAR BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrowers/Guarantor	Liabilities due as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice/ Date of Possession	Description of the Immovable Properties
<b>Borrowers: 1) Mr. Arunjiyoti Patnaik, S/o. Late Sachidananda Patnaik, 2) Mrs. Madhusmita Patnaik, W/o. Mr. Arunjiyoti Patnaik, Both are At: Flat No.: 303, Block - D, Appolo Ashiyana, Palasuni, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar, PIN - 751010</b>	₹7,71,719/- + interest & expenses thereon	04.05.2018 / 11.02.2022	All that part and parcel of the property situated over Khata No.: 229/518, Plot No.: 562/742/1500, Area: Ac.0.092 Dec., KISSAM: Gharabari at Mouza: Jagasara, PS.: Jatni, Tahasil: Jatni, Dist.: Khurda, standing in the name of Mr. Arunjiyoti Patnaik, S/o. Late Sachidananda Patnaik, Bounded by North: Plot No.: 562/742 (P), South: Plot No.: 562/742 (P), East: Road, West: Plot No.: L-4/7
<b>Borrowers: 1) Mr. Manamohan Sahoo, 2) Mrs. Swarnalata Sahoo, W/o. Mr. Manamohan Sahoo, Both are At: Flat No.: L-4/9, 1st Floor, Nandighosh Enclave, Ranasinghpur, Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar - 751030, Odisha</b>	₹24,32,424/- + interest & expenses thereon	21.10.2021 / 11.02.2022	All that part and parcel of Land & Building situated at Flat No.: L-4/9, Nandighosh Enclave, Mouza: Ranasinghpur, Tahasil: Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, Super built up Area: 581.255 Sq.ft., standing in the name of Mr. Manamohan Sahoo, S/o. Basudev Sahoo, Bounded by North: Corridor/Passage, South: Open to Air, East: Flat No.: L-4/11, West: Flat No.: L-4/7
<b>Borrower: Mr. Siva Charan Patra, S/o. Purna Chandra Patra, At: Ekatala, Kerendatangi, PS.: Ranpur, Dist.: Nayagarh, Odisha - 752024 / Guarantor: Mr. Pramod Samantasinghar, S/o: Lokanath Samantasinghar, At: Gopinathpur, P.O.: Kuhudi, Dist.: Khurda-752027</b>	₹12,79,005.40 + interest & expenses thereon	29.10.2021 / 11.02.2022	All that part and parcel of Land and Building situated over Mutation Khata No.: 421/168, Plot No.: 120, Area: Ac.0.070 Dec., KISSAM: Gharabari at Mouza: Ekatala, PS.: Ranpur, SRO: Ranpur, Tahasil: Ranpur, Dist.: Nayagarh, standing in the name of Mr. Siva Charan Patra, S/o.: Purna Chandra Patra, Bounded by North: Sabita Sahoo, South: Siba Charan Patra, East: Road, West: Surendra Pradhan

ECoR 1st to load 200MT freight in 2021-22 fiscal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The East Coast Railway (ECoR) has achieved the 200MT milestone in freight loading with an incremental growth of 26.67MT and registering an increase of 15 per cent than the corresponding period of last fiscal i.e. from April 1, 2021 to February 14, 2022.

During the period, the ECoR has loaded 200.50MT of freight as against 173.82MT carried in the corresponding period of last fiscal. It can be mentioned here that the ECoR has achieved this remarkable feat in just 320 days as against 360 days in the last fiscal. It had loaded similar amount of cargo in 366 days in 2019-20 fiscal and taken 360 days time in 2020-21 fiscal.

This was possible due to the outstanding performance of all the three divisions of ECoR i.e. Khurda Road, Waltair and Sambalpur. During the period, the ECoR loaded 113.35MT of coal, 7.06MT of raw material for steel plants, 18.46MT of iron & steel, 27.22MT of iron ore, 1.13MT of cement, 2.56MT of food grains, 5MT of fertilizer, 2.34MT of POL and 23.37MT of freight loaded in containers and other cargo.

A total of 132.54MT of freight were carried from Khurda Road Division, 57.21MT from Waltair Division and 10.73MT from Sambalpur Division. Khurda Road Division utilised 9,452 wagons per day which is about 174 rakes per day. It also surpassed its last year annual loading performance of 131.36MT. Similarly, Waltair and Sambalpur also performed better than previous year. From the above loading, the ECoR earned ₹19,884.3 crore which is 20 per cent more than the corresponding period of last fiscal.

Global Institute of Management refresher prog

Bhubaneswar: As an initiative for development of faculty members, a refresher program on Emerging Issues in Indian Financial System was conducted at Global Institute of Management during January 20-25. This program was fully funded by ISTE under the faculty development initiative of AICTE. The inaugural meeting was attended by ISTE President Pratapsingh Desai and Col B Venkat, Director, Faculty Development Cell, AICTE. They highlighted the significance of updating the knowledge of faculty members through such initiatives.

LOST

I, Sri Jagadish Prasad Naik, MD, D N Homes Pvt. Ltd. having our office at N6-440, IRC Village, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar do hereby inform that I have lost my property's document, vide (1) RSD document number 2215 dated 22/04/2013 and (2) registered consent deed document number 2597 dated 07.05.2013. I am unable to trace those documents with my best efforts and also hereby undertake that it has not been utilised in any manner.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

I, Omm Prasan Sahoo changed my name from Prasanna Kumar Sahoo belongs to Matric Certificate to Omm Prasan Sahoo by the Notary, BBSR.

Before Notary Public Berhampur, Ganjam I Gopal Krishna Pattnaik, S/o. Late Nabin Chandra Pattnaik, Santinagar; Goilundi say that some educational certificate my surname mentioned as Pattnaik instead of Pattnaik. Henceforth I shall known as in my new surname Gopal Krishna Pattnaik for all purposes.

PREZ VISIT PREP



Senior police officials, including ADGP (Law and Order) Radha Kishan Sharma and Puri SP Kanwar Vishal Singh, take stock of security arrangements in the Holy City, Tuesday, ahead of the President's visit

State's future pact with J-Pal for gender equity

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The government of Odisha is going to sign a non-financial MoU with J-PAL to improve gender outcome in the state, read a press release by the state School and Mass Education (S&ME) department released Tuesday.

This move is expected to accelerate gender equity by changing attitude and behaviour among school going adolescents. The programme does not involve additional financial outlay and requires minimal in-kind support from the state government.

The programme will focus on integrating gender equity curriculum into school syllabi for Classes VI-X. The purpose of the programme is in sync with the goal of the 5T School Transformation programme which is to help children dream big and move forward with confidence to face all challenges in life.

The curriculum will come as a supplementary textbook for Social Studies and allied subjects like Geography, History and Political Science this year, and will be printed by the government. From 2023 onwards, the curriculum will be integrated to the existing SCERT Social Studies textbooks. The partner team would undertake a formative study across 5 districts to understand the local nuances for curriculum customisation to the state context.



J-PAL South Asia will be the key knowledge and learning partner supporting the government in measurement of impact and implementation. The gender equity curriculum will be adapted and customised to the local context through formative research. The partner team will work with the S&ME department to train the gender resource coordinators as master trainers, who will be empowered to cascade the curriculum to social studies teachers across all Upper Primary and Secondary schools in state using a train-the-trainer model. That is, these master trainers will in turn cascade the training to teachers at the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs). Master trainers and teachers will undergo the training on core gender and inclusion concepts, instructional design concepts, facilitation skills and subject orientation on the curriculum to be rolled out.

The State Project Director of OSEPA has been appointed as the state nodal officer for implementation of the programme.

SC denies bail to Khurda ganja smuggler

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 15: The Supreme Court Tuesday refused to grant bail to Sk Ishak, a resident of Khurda, who was arrested by Odisha Police on charges of smuggling 96 kilograms of cannabis.

A three-judge bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana, asked the counsel appearing for the accused to file a bail plea after six months if the trial does not proceed in the matter.

During the hearing, the counsel submitted that his client has been in jail for a year and trial in the case has not started yet.

"Wait for another six months. If trial does not progress, we will grant you bail," the bench observed.

Notably, Ishak was arrested by the Odisha Police when he was allegedly smuggling 96 kilograms of cannabis into Bhubaneswar in 2018. "A patrolling team of Khandagiri police intercepted him in Baramunda area and recovered a gunny bag containing the contraband," said a source.

Extortion alleged in Jharpada Special Jail

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: A convict has reportedly been extorting money from the prisoners inside the special jail at Jharpada here. The issue came to fore recently when an under trial prisoner (UTP) filed a complaint with the Laxmisagar police seeking justice.

It also raised grave questions over the security arrangements inside the special jail here where high profile accused and convicts have been lodged. The complaint also brought to fore the illegal activities inside the jail like illegal use of phone and food from outside.

The complainant Prajna Prakash Naik has been lodged in the special jail since December 4, 2021.

Naik alleged that one convict identified as Hemanta Kumar Bhoi demanded Rs 10,000 from him by making threats to kill him. Bhoi reportedly sought help from the victim to fight an appeal case filed by him in the Orissa High Court. He



had also assured him to secretly provide mobile phone and food inside the prison.

The scared complainant arranged Rs 5,000 through his lawyer for the accused. However, Bhoi started demanding more money from Naik by threatening to shoot him inside the jail. Naik accused Bhoi of extorting money from other prisoners as well.

Finding no other way, he lodged a complaint with the police through the Superintendent of the special jail. The Laxmisagar Police have been investigating into the matter by registering a case in this regard.

NO TO 'STYLE WITHOUT SUBSTANCE'

Campus beauty not enough to impress UGC, NAAC teams

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: The Higher Education (HE) department Tuesday directed all the degree colleges to improve their academic performance and keep the campuses clean and beautiful throughout the year.

In a letter to all the principals, HE department secretary Saswat Mishra said, "College principals often seek permission to spend money for beautifying their campuses before the visit of UGC/NAAC team. This has prompted the department to issue certain advisories to colleges."

A robust academic performance will impress the UGC/NAAC team. Therefore, colleges should strive hard to improve their academic performance so that they can get a good assessment for the UGC/NAAC team, added the secretary.

According to Mishra, the college campuses should be kept clean and beautiful round-the-year for creation of a conducive academic atmosphere for the students and employees. "If a college campus remains clean and beautiful throughout the year, the authorities need not bother about the visit of UGC/NAAC team. Therefore, cleanliness and beautification



If the academic performance of a college is not satisfactory, it cannot impress the UGC/NAAC team by showcasing peripheral activities like compost pit, medicinal plant garden, landscaping and wall paintings

SASWAT MISHRA | SECRETARY, HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

drives should be round-the-year activities and they should not be taken up only for the visit of UGC/NAAC team," he said.

If the academic performance of a college is not satisfactory, it cannot impress the UGC/NAAC

team by showcasing peripheral activities like compost pit, medicinal plant garden, landscaping and wall paintings, said the secretary.

It would be a case like 'style without substance'. Therefore, such peripheral activities should not be undertaken by any college just to impress the UGC/NAAC team. The members of the team are matured and experienced to understand the game plan, he opined.

"Such peripheral activities should be undertaken only if there is a need to improve the academic performance and boost study environment. Such activities should be undertaken as and when there is a need for them, irrespective of the visit of UGC/NAAC team," he said.

MOCKING 'CATCH ME IF YOU CAN'

14 wedding rings and a handcuff for Odisha's Don Juan

"HIS EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS NEED TO BE VERIFIED, BUT HE CERTAINLY IS NOT AN MBBS DOCTOR," A POLICE OFFICER SAID

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 15: He lured with love college teachers, even hard-boiled policewomen and capacious lawyers, as he went about striking companionship desperate middle-aged women with cupid's arrow, marrying 14 of them across seven states over 38 years before running out of luck Monday.

Ramesh Chandra Swain, the 66-year-old from a coastal village in Kendrapara district, is now cooling his heels in a jail in judicial custody. Swain, according to police, posed as a doctor posted as a Deputy Director General under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. His victims failed to see through his fake identity and, as the adage goes, did just as the doctor ordered.

According to police, the sexagenarian duped his wives, three of whom live in Delhi, three in Odisha, two each in Madhya Pradesh,

Punjab, and Assam, and one each in Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, of lakhs of rupees before moving on to greener pastures.

"The police have so far located 9 of the 14 wives of the man and urged others to come forward. We suspect many women who were cheated by him are not coming forward because of social stigma. We appeal them to contact Odisha police," Bhubaneswar Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Umashankar Dash told reporters Monday.

Swain was remanded in judicial custody by a local court and the police are in the process of seeking his remand for further questioning.

Swain got married for the first time in 1982, and the last in 2020, 38 years apart. His last marriage to a teacher was solemnised at an Arya Samaj temple in Delhi.

He, however, rejected the accusations. "I have not married all



these women and I am indeed a doctor," Swain asserted while being escorted to the court.

Ramesh Chandra Swain, who acquired different names like Bibhu Prakash Swain and Ramani Ranjan Swain, may not be a doc-

tor but two of his three children with the first wife are doctors and settled abroad, while his second wife also is a medical practitioner. She currently lives in Prayag Raj.

According to Bhubaneswar Special Squad Assistant

Commissioner of Police (ACP) Sanjeev Satpathy Swain cheated the educated women looking for companionship. His victims include an assistant commandant of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, school and college teachers, and even a Delhi High Court lawyer.

Swain befriended women on matrimonial websites and deftly concealed his matrimonial status.

However, he ran out of luck while living in Bhubaneswar with his teacher wife from Delhi in a rented accommodation. The woman got a whiff of his first marriage and lodged an FIR at the Women's police station here July 5, 2021.

He fled Bhubaneswar after his latest wife inquired about his first, who lives in Kendrapara. He lived in Assam with another of his wives for six months during which the complainant woman returned to Delhi. He returned to Bhubaneswar after confirming that his last wife had left the city.

However, before leaving, the complainant had arranged for people to track the man and informed police about his return to Bhubaneswar. He was promptly arrested.

Satpathy said Swain used to target middle-aged single women, mostly divorcees, who sought companionship on matrimonial websites. He was claimed to have cheated some of them of lakh of rupees before deserting them.

He allegedly duped his wife from Punjab of Rs 10 lakh, and the Gurudwara, where his marriage was solemnised, of Rs 11 lakh with the promise of facilitating setting up a medical college.

Police seized 11 ATM cards, four Aadhaar cards and documents including Bihar school certificates acquired under different identities.

He was earlier arrested twice for cheating unemployed youth and loan fraud in Hyderabad in 2010 and Ernakulam in 2006, police said.

Swain, officials claimed, passed ISC from Kendrapara College and pursued a course in medical laboratory technology from a college in Kochi and another in alternative medicine in Kolkata.

"His educational qualifications need to be verified, but he certainly is not an MBBS doctor," a police officer said.

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SHORT TAKES

Presiding officer dies of stroke

Boinda: A teacher appointed as presiding officer for polling booths in Banarpal and Kaniha blocks of Angul district for the three-tier panchayat polls died of cardiac arrest Tuesday. The deceased was identified as Suvendu Kumar Nayak, 51, a native of Kumursinga under Ganiakata panchayat and a teacher of Rajamunda primary school under Kishorenagar block. He was travelling with his son to Banarpal early in the morning at around 4 am to join duty at the booth when he suffered cardiac arrest leading to his death. Nayak was rushed to the community health centre at Kishorenagar where he was pronounced dead by the doctors. Police registered a case and sent the body for post-mortem.

90 names missing from voters' list

Lathore: As many as 90 people of Lathore village under Khaprakhole block of Bolangir district will be deprived of exercising their franchise Wednesday as their names are missing from the final voters' list. These voters have blamed some of the officials for the error. Such anomalies have been reported from other places too. When contacted, panchayat executive officer Sushant Pani said people were earlier given time to rectify errors. The anomalies of people, who had reported their errors earlier, have been rectified, he added.

Baripada civic body under Vigilance glare

Baripada: Following allegations of large-scale irregularities in tax collections, Vigilance officials have raided the office of the Baripada municipality Tuesday. As per reports, Vigilance officials had received complaints about massive irregularities in collection of tax from parking lots and other sources. Forged receipt books were allegedly used for tax collections at parking lots.

Rare bird spotted in Chilika

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balugaon, Feb 15: A rare species of white Leucistic Temminck's Stint migratory bird has been spotted in Chilika Lake, said sources Tuesday.

The rare winged guest was sighted by a trustee of Mangalajodi Conservation Trust and bird guide Madhu Behera.

Behera said he noticed the bird moving in and around the places near Mangalajodi sanctuary while he was ferrying some tourists in a boat. He captured the avian wonder in his camera.

The bird has two small brown spots each on its wings while its legs are yellow, like other sub-species of the Temminck's Stint family. The bird was searching for food near Baliajori creek when he spotted it, the bird guide added.

The bird was identified as a species of Leucistic Temminck's Stint by honorary wildlife warden Subhendu Mallick.

It is pertinent to mention here that Leucistic Temminck's Stint species of birds are usually seen in northern Europe and Asian

countries. The winged birds prefer to breed in south Scandinavia, Russia, Norway, Finland and Sweden and to migrate to India during winter.

Two other species of the family - Leucistic Northern shoveler and Leucistic Common moorhen - were spotted in Mangalajodi last year, Mallick stated.

POLL DUTY



Polling officials leave for their respective booths with ballot boxes ahead of the first phase of panchayat polls in Angul, Tuesday

Rebels in Rengali give BJD, BJP jitters

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 15: Although the stage is all set for the first phase panchayat elections in Jujumara and Rairakhole blocks of Sambalpur, disgruntled party workers and rebels have been giving jitters to Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress as well in the region.

Meanwhile, almost all zilla parishad (ZP) seats in the two blocks under Rengali constituency will see fight between BJD and BJP. There are five ZP zones in Rengali constituency. In the last panchayat elections, the BJP had made a clean sweep.

However, this time the ruling party is quite optimistic of winning all the five ZP seats. BJD heavyweights like Susanta Singh, Naba Kishore Das and others have widely campaigned for their party nominees.

On the other hand, Union Minister Bisweshwar Tudu and several other state-level BJP leaders had campaigned for the party



The BJD claims that the party will bag all the 5 seats while the saffron party is optimistic of repeating its previous performance

candidates. However, many leaders and workers are unhappy about ticket distribution, assignment of work contracts and misunderstanding among cadres, it was said. Grapevines have it that the or-

ganisation of BJP was in good stead before Nauri Nayak became the MLA. The party has lost some ground now. The cadres of the BJP in Dhankauda, Rengali and Maneswar blocks have started lobbying for their candidates for ZP chairperson post much ahead of the elections.

The Rengali MLA, however, denied the reports about differences of opinions among the party workers.

Similarly, the BJD is also a divided house in the assembly segment. BJD's secretary (Organisation) Pranab Prakash Das had campaigned for the party candidates and tried to iron out differences. The BJD's frontline leaders have been claiming that the party will bag all the five seats this time while the BJP is sanguine of repeating its previous performance.

BJD's district unit president Sidharth Das said people have faith in Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and his developmental agenda.

- Almost all ZP seats in the two blocks under Rengali constituency will see a fight between the BJD and BJP
There are five ZP zones in Rengali constituency. In the last elections, the BJP had made a clean sweep
BJD dist president Sidharth Das said people have faith in the Chief Minister and his developmental agenda

ULTRAS KILL YOUTH IN KANDHAMAL SUSPECTING INFORMER

Red menace clouds polls

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani, Feb 15: Maoist violence has once again rocked Kandhamal district as the ultras killed a youth late Monday night by slitting his throat on suspicion of being a police informer.

The incident was reported from Upargumu village in Bhandrangi panchayat under Belghar police station. The deceased was identified as Kapil Majhi, 32, of the village. Police are, however, yet to reach the spot and seize the body for post-mortem when the last report came in.

The incident has created panic among the residents and concern for the police officials with panchayat polls are scheduled to take place in the second phase, February 18. The district administration is also concerned as to how it will conduct the polls in the sensitive and hyper-sensitive booths with the fear of Maoist menace looming large.

Earlier, the ultras had asked the people to boycott the upcoming panchayat polls by putting up posters and banners in the panchayat.

The rebels had also brutally killed Bhabani Shankar Patra, 21, the son of Bhandrangi sarpanch and Hemant Patra, 25 of Gochhaguda village on suspicion

- The Maoists killed the youth of Upargumu village in Bhandrangi panchayat under Belghar police station. The deceased was identified as 32-year-old Kapil Majhi
The incident has created panic among the residents and emerged as a grave concern for the police officials with panchayat polls here are scheduled to take place in the second phase

of police informer, January 29. Then, Kapil was also under their scanner. However, initially they had failed to eliminate him as he left for Kerala to work.

The rebels targeted him after he returned home a few days back. On being tipped off about Kapil's arrival, the rebels picked him up from home and killed him, late Monday night

The rebels had also put up banners and posters at Kiamunda village under Sadingia panchayat in Phiringia police limits. Later, they torched road construction equipment as well as vehicles of a contractor at Kiamunda opposing the construction of a road from Mashripada to Kantamal, February 8.

A cowherd Pinku Kanhar was killed in a landmine blast planted by the Maoists, the next day (February 9).



Hadagarh oustees vow to boycott polls this time too

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Feb 15: People of Balipal in Kanlei panchayat under Hatadihi block of Keonjhar district who have been displaced by Hadagarh project are adamant on their stand of boycotting the panchayat polls, even though the administration and Anandapur MLA tried to placate the families.

Reports said nearly 150 families had been displaced by Hadagarh irrigation project.

They are living in a hill-locked area, 40 km from the block headquarters. These villagers had boycotted the last panchayat elections over lack of basic facilities.

"More than 50 years have passed since our displacement. We are leading a miserable life in this hilly terrain without basic amenities. The panchayat office is 11 km from the village. We have to trek miles through hilly tracks to bring PDS ration as there is no all-weather road," they lamented.

Hilltop temple in Ganjam faces stone quarry threat

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, Feb 15: Rampant stone mining on Ukhudei hill under Belguntha block in Ganjam district has posed a serious threat to Ukhudei temple on the hilltop, as per sources.

The temple on Kanteipali-Badapada road houses a female deity and is highly revered by the residents. Thousands of devotees visit the shrine from far and wide every year. The temple witnesses huge tourist footfall on 'Sankranti' of every month. The serene and picturesque surroundings of the hill and the temple also help in attracting the devotees to the place.

Locals alleged that the mindless stone quarrying is slowly denuding the hill. They demanded inclusion of the shrine in state sponsored eco-tourism project to save the temple and the ecology.

The Revenue department has leased out various parts of the hill



REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

for stone mining while illegal stone quarrying continues due to lack of effective monitoring and action on part of the revenue and police officials. The stone mining is slowly denuding the hill and is emerging as a major threat to the shrine.

Reports said though scores of devotees visit the temple, the state government has not done enough for the development of the reli-

gious place except for constructing a community centre - Kalyan Mandap - in 2016 and sanctioning ₹4,76,836 for the development of the temple and an adjoining park in last financial year. Six months ago, devotees visiting the temple found the steps broken when they tried to climb it.

The temple needs complete renovation as it does not have a permanent sanctum sanctorum, kitchen or even mandap. The temple has no source of regular income of its own and is run on the money collected from the temple land which has been leased out for cultivation, Pankaj Nayak, temple priest said.

'Utkal Kalakar Mahasangha' secretary Sisir Kanta Das and residents Bhagaban Nayak, Babula Nayak, Surya Nayak, Karaj Swain and Jeetendra Behera have urged the state government to take steps to renovate the temple and stop stone mining on the hill.

EAST COAST RAILWAY 'E' PROCUREMENT SYSTEM Tender Notice No. PCEECOR2122TP08 & 09, Dt. 14.02.2022. The following tenders have been uploaded on website www.ireps.gov.in

EAST COAST RAILWAY Letter No. S&T/OT/FOB/TESTING-VHF/KUR Divn/2022 Dt. 09.02.2022 (1) ST-OT-FOB-KUR-DIVN-259 Dt. 09.02.2022

Water woes, lack of mandis hit sugarcane farming

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, Feb 15: Cultivation of sugarcane, a cash crop, is on the wane in this district due to lack of mandis, irrigation facilities and sugar mills, said sources.

Earlier, sugarcane cultivation was carried out in more than 15,000 hectare but this year it has come down to less than 1,000 hectare. Similarly, a research centre which had earned a name for promoting jute cultivation in the district is now lying defunct.

This has happened because of absence of proper water management policy, lack of mandis and failure in river linking for irrigation. As a result, farmers cultivating cash crops like pigeon pea (arhar) and sunflower are facing difficulties in carrying out farming.

Senior citizens have claimed that empowering the farmers with

modern agricultural practices and construction of a large canal by linking it with major rivers in remote areas can solve the water crisis.

Akshaya Behera, a sugarcane farmer of Pattamundai, said that farmers in Garadpur, Marshaghai, Derabish, Pattamundai, Aul and Rajkanika block used to cultivate sugarcane in over 15,000 hectare of land 10 years back as a sugarcane mill at Krushnadapur was functioning. However, the closure of the mill, and lack of water and marketing facilities have hit the sugarcane farming.

Niranjan Parida, a farmer of Kansar village under Kendrapara block, said it is now increasingly becoming difficult to depend solely on cultivation for livelihood.

He is now cultivating pigeon pea and sunflower on 15 acre of land. However, this year he will not be able to take up the cultivation due to rise in labour costs and lack of irrigation facilities. His two sons



have migrated to Surat for livelihood as they failed to earn a living from agriculture.

Farmer leader Duryodhan Sahu said that the Centre's Atma Nirbhar Bharat slogan and the promise of the state government to take spe-

cial care of agriculture in Kendrapara district have turned into an eyewash.

The canals have not been dredged for the last 25 years for which farmers are finding it difficult to drain out the water from farmlands dur-

ing paddy cultivation. The state government should promote sugarcane cultivation as there is an annual requirement of 2.21 lakh MT sugar in the state, he said. Sugarcane cultivation is declining in the district while sugar mills have been closed in most of the places.

Mir Abbu Obeda, a person with fair knowledge of sugarcane farming, said linking of rivers in remote areas can solve the problem to a great extent.

Surya Narayan Mishra, senior scientist of Krushi Vigyan Kendra at Jajanga, said Kendrapara district is situated in natural calamity zone. The district receives proper rainfall but has got four types of soil for which stress is being laid on integrated farming.

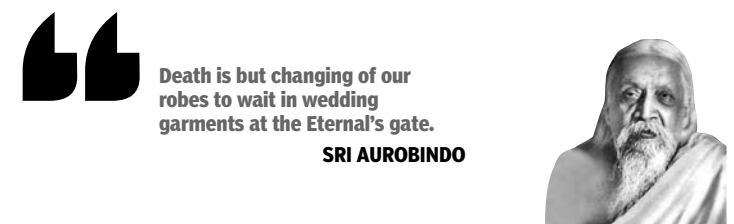
Farmers are being advised to take alternative farming like vegetable, fruit, mushroom, turmeric, medicinal plants as well as goat farming, fishery and poultry to

LINKING OF RIVERS MOOTED

Earlier, sugarcane cultivation was being carried out in more than 15,000 hectare but this year it has come down to less than 1,000 hectare

This has happened because of absence of proper water management policy, lack of mandis and failure in river linking for irrigation

boost earnings. Horticulture officer Kanda Jena said regular training programmes on latest technological interventions are being organised for the farmers but lack of marketing facilities has posed a serious problem to sugarcane cultivation.



Death is but changing of our robes to wait in wedding garments at the Eternal's gate.

SRI AUROBINDO

# Heavy Religion

It is Imran Khan, Pakistan's iconic pace bowler, who made 'reverse swing' a special weapon in his armoury to fox batsmen and bowl the opposition out thereby winning matches. But, now as prime minister of his country he is facing a different kind of 'reverse swing' from fanatics. Religious bigots have been using the law of blasphemy to target individuals and mete out street justice to hapless victims. Over 60 persons were killed in kangaroo courts on the streets during the past three decades. But, the latest lynching surpassed all previous crimes as a mob stoned to death a middle-aged man who supposedly was mentally deranged. There is outrage in Pakistan itself and worldwide condemnation of the killing when law enforcers stood mute spectators as the man bled to death. His crime was alleged desecration of the Quran February 13.

The incident took place in Jungle Dera village of Khanewal district where locals gathered following the announcement that a man, identified only by his first name Mushtaq, had torn some pages of the holy book and set them ablaze. As is normally observed in countries like Pakistan and India, this act was enough to ignite the passion of a mob of fanatics who started pelting stones at him till he bled to death. Reports suggest the police had arrived at the spot before the lynching and had arrested Mushtaq. But the mob snatched him from their custody, lynched him and then hanged him from a tree. The incident drew widespread condemnation from the country's top leaders, including the prime minister. Police claim they are scanning CCTV footage in the area to identify the assailants. Apparently becoming wise after the event, Imran Khan said, "We have zero tolerance for anyone taking the law into their own hands and mob lynching will be dealt with full severity of the law." Interestingly, many such similar lynching incidents have been reported from different parts of India too. However, no one from the Central government openly addresses and condemns these issues.

Religion seems to have become the overbearing factor in this subcontinent. Although globally also the confrontations over religious issues have reportedly grown. In a country like the United States, while religious beliefs concerning abortion have always been in the centre stage of debate, the issues concerning racial discrimination have gained strength. So much so that many whites, including white police officers are unhesitatingly shooting and killing black people at random. Racism seems to have gone beyond religious boundaries. Coming back to the Indian subcontinent, one is reminded of the event of Saturday, 18 December 2021, at the Golden Temple in Amritsar of Punjab. A young man barged into the inner sanctum of the holiest of Sikh shrines and attempted 'sacrilege' by grabbing the ceremonial sword. While live camera broadcast was in progress, the man was beaten to death by people present there. While such incidents get highly noticed in the media, there are many other smaller religious confrontations that go unnoticed.

The hijab issue of Karnataka is another interesting religious point to note. Indian Moslems have successfully convinced a segment of their womenfolk to cover their heads with the hijab. There are voices which clamour for the 'right' of Moslem women to wear the hijab and for liberal minded Hindus to support this. A parallel can be drawn to the 'ghoonghat' used by Hindoo women in Rajasthan. That state is also known for child marriages and even few incidents of Sati. A liberal thinking Indian, no matter Hindoo or Moslem, is expected to speak up for women to be treated as equals in society. Any religious practice that debars women from being treated as equals whether in matters of clothing or methods of prayers should not be supported in a modern civilized society and such practices definitely should not affect government or institutional functioning.

**Piate**  
Tathagata Satpathy

# RISK OF NUCLEAR DISASTER

FOCUS UKRAINE

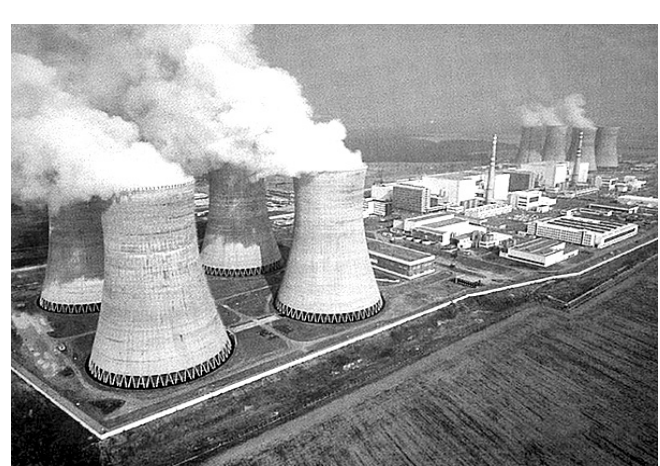
Russia's military mobilisation on Ukraine's border has grim historic precedents. But should the Kremlin pull the trigger, it will encounter a hazard that no invading army has ever faced before: 15 nuclear power reactors, which generate roughly 50 per cent of Ukraine's energy needs at four sites. The reactors present a daunting specter. If struck, the installations could effectively become radiological mines. And Russia itself would be a victim of the ensuing wind-borne radioactive debris. Given the vulnerability of Ukraine's nuclear reactors and the human and environmental devastation that would follow if combat were to damage them, Russian President Vladimir Putin should think again about whether Ukraine is worth a war. Power plants are common targets in modern conflict, because destroying them inhibits a country's ability to carry on fighting. But nuclear reactors are not like other energy sources. They contain enormous amounts of radioactive material, which can be released in any number of ways. Aerial bombing or artillery fire, for example, could break a reactor's containment building or sever vital coolant lines that keep its core stable. So, too, could a cyberattack that interrupts plant operations, as would a disruption of offsite power that nuclear plants rely on to keep functioning.



Bennett Ramberg

**GIVEN CHERNOBYL'S LEGACY, ONE MIGHT THINK THAT RUSSIA WOULD SHUN ATTACKS ON OPERATING REACTORS. AND AVOIDANCE IS INDEED THE HISTORIC NORM**

Were a reactor core to melt, explosive gases or belching radioactive debris would exit the containment structure. Once in the atmosphere, the effluents would settle over thousands of miles, dumping light to very toxic radioactive elements on urban and rural landscapes. And spent nuclear fuel could cause further devastation if storage pools were set afire. The health consequences of such fallout would depend on the population exposed and the toxicity of the radioactive elements. The UN Chernobyl Forum estimated that the 1986 Ukraine accident would inflict 5,000 excess cancer deaths over 50 years, though some environmental groups think that figure grossly understates the likely toll. Indeed, thousands of thyroid cancers emerged in the



**Of all the obvious dangers that come with war, one of the most far-reaching in the current Russia-Ukraine conflict has been woefully underappreciated. Even if commanders took pains to avoid striking Ukraine's 15 nuclear power reactors, that might not be enough to avoid a catastrophe**

years immediately following the accident. In the midst of a pandemic that has killed millions, nuclear-reactor fatalities may seem trivial. But that would be an unconscionable misreading of the risk. To reduce the uptake of radiation that settled on the ground after Chernobyl, Soviet authorities had to relocate hundreds of thousands of people and remove large swaths of agricultural land and forests from production for decades.

In and around the reactor, 600,000 'liquidators' were deployed to clean up the site. Engineers built a giant 'sarcophagus' over the reactor building to contain further releases. Millions of people suffered psychological trauma, and some seven million received social compensation. Eventually, the economic losses mounted into hundreds of billions of dollars. Japan is still counting the hundreds of billions that the 2011 Fukushima disaster will cost, and that incident released only one-tenth of the radiation that Chernobyl did, mostly into the ocean.

A war would magnify these risks, because the reactor operators who might mitigate the fallout would be more prone to flee for fear of being shot or bombed. If a reactor is in the middle of a chaotic

battlefield, there may not even be any first responders, and ill-informed populations hearing rumours would be on their own wandering - and panicking - in contaminated zones. After the guns went silent, Ukraine would be saddled with the long-lingering effects that follow from any nuclear accident. And, as Chernobyl demonstrated, it would not be alone. Radiation releases do not observe national borders, and Russia's proximity would make it a sink for radioactive aerosol deposits.

Given Chernobyl's legacy, one might think that Russia would shun attacks on operating reactors. And avoidance is indeed the historic norm. True, Israel has attacked Syrian and Iraqi suspected nuclear-weapons plants, and Iraq bombed two reactors in Bushehr, Iran, during the 1980s war. But in those cases, the plants were still under construction. There have also been instances when attacks on operating nuclear power plants were considered: Serbia weighed a strike against Slovenia's Krško nuclear plant early in the Balkan War, and Azerbaijan contemplated attacking Armenia's Metsamor plant in the 2020 war.

But there are other cases when only dumb luck, rather than reason, prevailed. These include Iraq's failed Scud attacks on Israel's Dimona weapons reactor during the Gulf War and the US strike on a small research reactor at Iraq's Tuwaitha Nuclear Research Center outside Baghdad during the same conflict. Ukrainian anxieties about its nuclear vulnerability bubbled up in 2014 when Russia invaded and annexed Crimea. Concerned that further conflict could result in a reactor attack, it appealed to the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Nuclear Security Summit to help boost its defences. Unfortunately, there is no defence that can withstand a Russian bombardment.

Is a reactor strike a bridge too far for Putin to cross? Russia's combat behaviour since the breakup of the Soviet Union gives cause for concern. In the Afghan, Chechen, and Syrian wars, Russian forces acted with scant regard for conventional boundaries. Then there are the vagaries of war generally. Bad stuff happens; combatants make mistakes; soldiers in the field ignore restraints.

A case in point was the March 26, 2017, bombing of the Islamic State-held Tabqa Dam in Syria. Standing 18 stories high and holding back a 25-mile-long reservoir on the Euphrates River, the dam's destruction would have drowned tens of thousands of innocent people downstream. Yet, violating strict 'no-strike' orders and bypassing safeguards, US airmen struck it anyway. Dumb luck saved the day again: the bunker-busting bomb failed to detonate.

For the Kremlin, the lesson ought to be clear. Invading Ukraine poses the risk of a radiological disaster that will affect not only the host country but also Russia itself. No war of choice merits such a gamble.

*The writer, a former foreign affairs officer in the US State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, is the author of Nuclear Power Plants as Weapons for the Enemy.*

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## WISDOM CORNER

- If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading.** LAO TZU
- Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.** CONFUCIUS
- Many of us have been running all our lives. Practice stopping.** THICH NHAT HANH

## WORDSWORTH

**Sam Hill**  
There is a story sometimes told (for example in Edwin Mitchell's Encyclopedia of American Politics in 1946) that one Colonel Samuel Hill of Guilford, Connecticut, would often run for political office at some point in the early nineteenth century but always without success. Hence, "to run like Sam Hill" or "go like Sam Hill". The problem is that nobody has found any trace of this monumentally unsuccessful candidate. On the other hand, an article in the New England Magazine in December 1889 entitled Two Centuries and a Half in Guilford Connecticut mentioned that, "Between 1727 and 1752 Mr. Sam. Hill represented Guilford in forty-three out of forty-nine sessions of the Legislature, and when he was gathered to his fathers, his son Nathaniel reigned in his stead" and a footnote queried whether this might be the source of the "popular Connecticut adjuration to 'Give 'em Sam Hill!'" So the tale has long legs. The expression has been known since the late 1830s. Despite the story, it seems to be no more than a personalised euphemism for "hell".

## San fairy ann

When the British Tommy arrived in France to fight in the First World War, he was presented with a language he struggled to make sense of. What he did to the pronunciation of French and Belgian place names is a wonder, such as turning Ypres into Wipers. He picked up a lot of French expressions, but he changed them into something that sounded English. This was the fate of ça ne fait rien, "it does not matter", which became a British Army catchphrase in that war as an expression of resigned - or cynical - acceptance of some state of affairs, usually brought about by bungling officers. One English version of it was the one you quote, others were san fairy anna and even send for Mary Ann, though perhaps san fairy ann was the most common. It largely fell out of use after the War, and seems not to have been taken up by servicemen in the Second World War.

## LOL

**Loud, mad, or sad**  
The psychology instructor had just finished a lecture on mental health and was giving an oral test. Speaking specifically about manic depression, she asked, "How would you diagnose a patient who walks back and forth screaming at the top of his lungs one minute, then sits in a chair weeping uncontrollably the next?" A young man in the rear raised his hand and answered, "A basketball coach?"

## IN JEST THIS

# No slithering on the plane please



Melvin Durai

**THERE IS AN UNWRITTEN RULE ON PLANES THAT SLITHERING IS PROHIBITED, WHETHER YOU'RE A SNAKE OR A HUMAN. TRUST ME, IF YOU TRY TO SLITHER DOWN THE AISLE OF A PLANE, PEOPLE WILL PANIC**

I haven't stepped on a plane in almost a decade and I'm not eager to fly again anytime soon, largely because of all the animals I might encounter on a plane - and I'm not just referring to rude passengers. I'm mainly referring to other members of the animal kingdom, the ones without middle fingers. On a recent domestic flight in Malaysia, for example, a snake was spotted slithering inside an overhead light fixture.

The AirAsia flight was heading from Kuala Lumpur to Tawau but had to be diverted to Kuching. I'm not sure why Kuching was selected, but perhaps the snake had boarded the wrong flight and was planning to vacation in Kuching. The pilot must have first made an announcement to determine if the Kuching landing was necessary, being careful to not cause any panic: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. If any of you is traveling with a companion, can you please confirm that your companion is still with you and has not



slithered away without your knowledge? If your companion is missing, please let us know and we will do our best to reunite you." Any passenger taking a snake aboard the plane would have done so illegally, of course. While most airlines allow small dogs and cats to travel in pet carriers and be kept inside passenger cabins, snakes must be stored in the luggage compartment (or cargo hold) of a plane. The International Air Transport Association's Live Animals Regulations include specific storage instructions for snakes to ensure that the snakes remain alive during a flight, and just as importantly, remain in place.

I haven't read the instructions, but as far as I know, when the pilot turns off the seat belt sign, snakes aren't allowed to move around the plane. Please do not feel sorry for them. They do not have any legs to stretch. There is also an unwritten rule on planes that slithering is prohibited, whether you're a snake or a human. Trust me, if you try to slither down the aisle of a plane, people will panic. They will think you are trying to attack someone, or even worse, attack the liquor cart.

A video of the AirAsia snake went viral after someone shared it on TikTok. AirAsia's chief security officer Liang Tien Ling confirmed the incident in a statement to CNN Turk. "As soon as the captain was notified, the plane was diverted to Kuching to be disinfected," he said, noting that no passenger was injured in the incident. The pilot must have made another announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen, as some of you may have noticed, we have a snake traveling with us today. Please do not panic. The snake is participating

in a new form of in-flight entertainment that we are debuting today. We call it 'Bringing the Zoo to You.' Unfortunately the snake is feeling air sick and wants to get off the plane at the nearest airport. That is why we are landing in Kuching."

I'm not sure how the plane was "disinfected," but I hope the snake was not harmed. I hope AirAsia called the right employee to handle the snake, perhaps the airline's Director of Snake Relations or Chief Reptile Officer (CRO).

Would an airline really have a CRO on its staff? Well, just look at what Ling, the chief security officer, told Channel News Asia: "This is a very rare incident which can occur on any aircraft from time to time."

In other words, snake sightings "can occur on any aircraft from time to time." This is why every airline needs a CRO and why I won't be flying again until some of the unwritten rules of flying, such as "no slithering" and "no flicking of tongues," are actually written down and enforced.

## Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

## Ill-conceived proposal

Sir, The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change's proposed amendments to the Biological Diversity Act 2002 may lead to commercialisation of natural resources instead of their conservation and deprive people who depend on these resources of their rights. The Ministry had proposed amendments to the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 through the Biological Diversity Act (Amendment) Bill 2021. Diluting the original Act for exploiting natural resources has far reaching consequences. The Act laid emphasis on conservation of biodiversity and recognition of rights of communities which are protectors of biodiversity. The amendment Bill, on the other hand, does not seem to give importance to these. As per the original Act, prior approval from the National Biodiversity Authority was required for accessing biological resources for certain categories of people and corporate bodies but as per the amendment, no company which is incorporated or registered in India needs to take the approval of the National Biodiversity Authority. When organisations or researchers use indigenous biological resources for commercial purposes without permission, it leads to exploitation of bio-resources. Environmentalists point out that the amendment was cleared without adequate consultation and without seeking the public comments. Such hasty decisions taken without consulting people and experts will have far reaching consequences. The 2002 Act considers all offences against the environment as criminal offences. The new Bill, on the other hand, proposes to reduce such offences against the environment to only civil offences. Considering the ill effects of the new Bill, the government must make appropriate changes in it so that our bio-resources are not damaged.

Venu GS, KOLLAM (KERALA)

## Uneasy calm

Sir, An uneasy calm prevailed in Karnataka as Classes IX and X reopened across the state after the state government ordered them to shut down for three days following unrest earlier this week. Prohibitory orders were in place, and the authorities persuaded female Muslim teachers and students to remove their hijab and follow the High Court's interim order. However, several students in Shivamogga, Kodagu and Belagavi showed up in headscarves despite the order, forcing the authorities to send back those refusing to remove them. Meanwhile, the Karnataka government decided to reopen pre-university and degree colleges from Wednesday.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

## of the day quote

Ashta Lakshmi is not a political slogan. Modi-j scripted it after studying the Northeast's hidden potential in trade, commerce, natural resources and diverse culture. He has given a new identity to the Northeast

**SARBANANDA SONOWAL** | UNION MINISTER

The individual voices are being throttled and suppressed by the BJP. The party made so many promises before the elections, but after the election the BJP ignored Manipur and the Northeast region. Everything has been imposed from the Centre

**PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA** | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

In view of the increase in population, newer options must be promoted to meet the growing demand for agricultural produces

**KALRAJ MISHRA** | RAJASTHAN GOVERNOR

## SHORT TAKES

### Four youths run over by train

**Gurgaon:** Four youths died after being hit by a train while taking a selfie near an under-construction railway overbridge (ORB) in Gurgaon on the outskirts of Delhi Tuesday. According to the Government Railway Police (GRP), the accident occurred at around 5 PM just before Basai railway station when an Ajmer-bound Jan Shatabdi Express from Delhi's Sarai Rohilla was moving from Gurgaon railway station towards Basai.

### Man arrested

**Chennai:** A 32-year-old bus driver was arrested by the Madukkarai police under the Coimbatore rural district for sexually assaulting and impregnating his live-in partner's minor daughter. The woman, who was living with her daughter after her husband passed away 13 years ago, entered into a relationship with a bus driver who had separated from his wife.

### SP worker killed

**Shahjahanpur (Uttar Pradesh):** In the first incident of poll-related violence, a Samajwadi Party leader was shot dead and another person injured when some people attacked them in his village under Nigohi police circle Tuesday. The police said that the deceased has been identified as Sudhir Kumar and both president of Samajwadi Party in the Vikrampur Chakora village. The injured person is Sunil. The accused have been identified as Antu and Sarvesh of the same village.

### Woman dies

**Patna:** An eight-month-old pregnant woman, who was burnt alive in Bihar's Darbhanga district on February 10, succumbed to her injuries in the Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH) Tuesday. The deceased Pinki Jha, along with three of her family members, were burnt alive when a group of men, said to be around a dozen, attacked them. The attackers partially demolished the house and then set the family members, including Pinki, on fire.

### UP cop booked

**Bulandshahr:** Sudhir Kumar Tyagi, currently posted as a circle officer in Bulandshahr, has been booked for allegedly hiding information about a criminal case filed against him in order to seek promotion from the rank of 'senior inspector' to 'deputy superintendent of police'. Tyagi has been charged under Sections 420, 467, and 471 of the IPC.



An AAP government would ensure the safety of every person in Punjab, irrespective of their religion or caste

**ARVIND KEJRIWAL** | DELHI CM

## 80 PC DROP IN HOME ISOLATION CASES

Amid a decline in daily Covid cases in Delhi, the number of patients under home isolation here has gradually fallen to 2,361, a steep drop of 80 per cent in the last 14 days, according to official data



# Look out notices against ABG Shipyard bosses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 15:** The CBI Tuesday said it has issued look out notices against Rishi Kamlesh Agarwal, the former chairman and managing director of ABG Shipyard, and eight others in a bank fraud case of over ₹22,842 crore.

The agency in a statement said Look Out Circulars (LOCs) have already been opened by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against the accused, while maintaining that the accused have been located in India. The look out notices have been issued to prevent them from leaving the country, officials said.

The State Bank of India (SBI) had also opened LOC against the main accused in 2019. The CBI has booked ABG Shipyard Ltd and its then chairman and managing director Rishi Kamlesh Agarwal along with others for allegedly cheating a consortium of banks of over ₹22,842 crore.

The agency has also named the then executive director Santhanam Muthaswamy, directors Ashwini Kumar, Sushil Kumar Agarwal and Ravi Vimal Venetia and another company ABG International Pvt Ltd for alleged offences of criminal conspiracy, cheating, criminal breach of trust and abuse of official position under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Prevention of Corruption Act, they said.

In continuation of the investi-



gation, the CBI conducted searches at 13 locations on February 12. Officials claimed they had received several incriminating documents, such as books of accounts of the accused borrower company, which was being scrutinised. The bank had first filed a complaint on November 8, 2019 on which the central investigation agency had sought some clarifications on March 12, 2020.

The bank filed a fresh complaint in August that year. After "scrutinising" for over one-and-a-half-years, the CBI acted on the complaint, filing an FIR on February 7, 2022.

The company was sanctioned credit facilities from 28 banks and financial institutions led by ICICI Bank, with the SBI, having exposure of ₹2,468.51 crore, they said. A forensic audit by Ernst and Young has shown that between 2012-17, the accused colluded together and committed illegal activities, including diversion of funds, misappropriation and criminal breach of trust, they said.

It is the biggest bank fraud case registered by the CBI. Funds were used for purposes other than for which they were released by banks, it said. The loan account was declared as a non-performing asset (NPA) in July 2016 and a fraud in 2019.

In its complaint, the SBI said ABG Shipyard Ltd (ABGSL) is the flagship company of the ABG Group which engaged in the business of ship building and ship-repair.

The ABGSL, being a major player in Indian ship-building industry, operates from shipyards that are located at Dahej and Surat in Gujarat, with a capacity to build vessels up to 18,000 dead weight tonnage (DWT) at Surat Shipyard and 1,20,000 dead weight tonnage (DWT) at Dahej Shipyard.

The company has constructed over 165 vessels (including 46 for export market) in the last 16 years, including specialised vessels like the newspaper carriers. Self-discharging and loading bulk cement carriers, floating cranes etc with class

The CBI has booked ABG Shipyard Ltd and its then chairman and managing director Rishi Kamlesh Agarwal along with others for allegedly cheating a consortium of banks of over ₹22,842 crore

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approval of all international classification societies like Lloyds, American Bureau of Shipping, Bureau Veritas, IRS, DNV, the complaint said.

"Global crisis has impacted the shipping industry due to fall in commodity demand and prices and subsequent fall in cargo demand. The cancellation of contracts for few ships and vessels resulted in piling up of inventory. This has resulted in paucity of working capital and caused significant increase in the operating cycle, thereby aggravating the liquidity problem and financial problem," the complaint said.

The SBI said there was no demand of commercial vessels as the industry was going through a downturn even in 2015 which was further aggravated due to lack of defence orders, making it difficult for the company to maintain re-payment schedule, it said.

## DEEP SIDHU DIES IN ROAD ACCIDENT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, Feb 15:** Punjabi actor-turned-activist Deep Sidhu, who had been named in connection with the violence at Red Fort in Delhi on Republic Day last year, died in a road accident near Delhi Tuesday.

The 38-year-old actor was active in the farmers' protest against the three now repealed Central farm laws. The accident took place on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway that bypasses the national capital. Sidhu was going from Delhi to Bathinda in Punjab when the car in which he was travelling rammed into a trailer truck at 9.30 p.m., the police said. His woman co-driver escaped in the accident.



Sidhu was declared brought dead at the Kharakhoda hospital in Haryana's Sonapat district. On January 26 last year, Sidhu was seen amid the crowd that reached the iconic Red Fort by violating the planned route of the proposed farmers' tractor march, and was accused of provoking the protesters to install a Nishan Sahib, a symbol of Sikh religion, on its ramparts.

Belonging to Muktsar's Udekaran village in Punjab, Sidhu's family had left the village in the 80s. His father was an advocate who practised at Gidderbaha.



Police use water cannon to disperse BJP activists during their protest demanding CBI probe into Rajasthan Eligibility Examination for Teachers 2021 exam paper leak case, in Jaipur

# Several injured during protest in Patna

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Patna, Feb 15:** Several supporters of Lok Janshakti Party (R) president Chirag Paswan Tuesday were injured when police resorted to lathi charge during a protest march in Patna Tuesday.

The protest march led by Chirag Paswan, began from Gandhi Maidan. When it reached at Dak Bunglow intersection, Patna police tried to stop them. The protesters stormed towards the Income Tax roundabout where police again tried to stop them but failed. When the march reached Hartali Mor, police intercepted them using riot control vehicles, and tried to disperse the protesters using water cannons.

When the march did not stop, the police fired tear gas shells. When they still did not stop, the cops resorted to lathi charge and de-



Police detain Lok Janshakti Party (Ramvilas) chief Chirag Paswan and his supporters during their 'Bihar Bachao' protest march towards Raj Bhawan, in Patna

tained several JLP supporters including Chirag Paswan. Chirag Paswan was taken in custody at secretariat police station. He was released after the bail was given by his mother Reena Paswan.

"Chief Minister Nitish Kumar

is afraid of me. That is why he is using such force on me and on those who believe in democracy. He rules like a dictator and he uses power on the people who have challenged his dictatorship," Chirag Paswan said.

"On the direction of Nitish

## STUDENTS SKIP SCHOOL

# K'taka HC urged to allow hijab

Teachers have also turned out students who came to attend classes with skull caps. Many students chose to be absent as hijab-wearing students were not allowed into schools



Parents of female Muslim students talk to school officials and police after the students were asked to take off hijab before entering the school campus, at a government school at Indavara, near Chikmagalur

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, Feb 15:** The Karnataka High Court was Tuesday urged to direct the government to allow students wearing the hijab in classes as more students remained out in schools across the state, refusing to shun the head covering.

Teachers have also turned out students who came to attend classes with skull caps. Many students chose to be absent as hijab-wearing students were not allowed into schools. A bench of Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, and Justices Krishna S. Dixit and Khaji Jaibunnesa Mohiyuddin adjourned the hearing of petitions to Wednesday after hearing arguments and counter arguments for 2 hours and 15 minutes.

Senior advocates Devdatt Kamat, Mohammad Tahir, and Ravi Varma Kumar presented their arguments in favor of girls demanding to wear hijab, while Advocate General Prabhuling Navadagi represented the government.

The petitioners submitted that since the colleges are being started from Wednesday, the bench must pass an order allowing Muslim students to wear hijab while attending classes. They also quoted a judgment of the South African court, where a Tamil girl was not allowed to attend classes for wearing a nose ring. When it was questioned in

the court, the student was allowed to attend classes, counsel submitted.

The petitioners also submitted that the Karnataka government is yet to make guidelines on uniform, and without this, it is improper to make the uniform compulsory for students. When one of the petitioners submitted that students with hijab are not allowed in Urdu schools in the state, the Advocate General objected to lacking arguments without submitting an application before the court.

The bench asked counsel to submit an application in this regard. The petitioners also argued that the government does not have supreme power of prohibition in the name of public order.

Meanwhile, 25 girl students of the Government School in Indavara of Chikmagalur district boycotted exams as they were asked to take off their hijab. More than 20 students went back to home without attending school for the same reason in Nelya village of Madikeri district. The school authorities of Sasvehalli near Honnali in Davanagere district had a difficult time as more than 20 boys came in skull caps to attend classes. The teachers had sent them back. They sat in front of the school along with girl students wearing hijab and demanded that they should be allowed inside classes with hijab and skull caps.

## POLL MANIFESTO

# SAD-BSP alliance promises solar energy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, Feb 15:** The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)-Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) alliance Tuesday released election manifesto promising what it called "brave and path-breaking initiatives", including a revolutionary shift to clean solar energy to ensure zero-bill electricity to every house and student cards of ₹10 lakh each for quality education, anywhere.

The alliance promised ₹10 lakh free annual health insurance for all Punjabis, ₹2,000 per month to all women heads of 'blue card' families, 5 lakh houses and five marla plots each to homeless poor and hiking old-age pension to ₹3,100 and shagun scheme of ₹75,000.

The manifesto promises ₹5 lakh interest-free loan to every youth, especially women to start their own enterprise.

Releasing the manifesto jointly, SAD President Sukhbir Singh Badal said, "Our blueprint for taking Punjab and Punjabis into the brave new era makes a strong pitch for combining the much needed thrust on social welfare with path-breaking initiatives for sustained, inclusive and futuristic progress and development."

"We will completely transform the lives of the people of our state in every sphere. We have prepared a practical road for revolutionising agriculture by a state-sponsored shift to the commercial exploitation of our farmers' potential."

The manifesto promised to encourage and promote the lucrative water-based farming which requires no fertilisers, insecticides or pesticides and saves 90 per cent water, said Badal at a press meet.

# 300% increase in heroin seizures in last five yrs

India has witnessed an exponential increase of 300 per cent in heroin seizures -- from 2,146 kg in 2017 to 7,282 kg in 2021 -- in the last five years

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 15:** India has witnessed an exponential increase of 300 per cent in heroin seizures -- from 2146 kg in 2017 to 7282 kg in 2021 -- in the last five years. Similarly, there is an increase of 172 per cent in the seizure of opium -- from 2551 kg in 2017 to 4386 kg in 2021 -- and a 191 per cent increase in the seizure of cannabis from 3,52,539 kg in 2017 to 6,75,631 kg in 2021.

These figures were revealed by the Narcotics Control Bureau Director General SN Pradhan on Tuesday during Darkathon 2022 organised by the bureau to find ways to counter drug trafficking through the darknet.

He said that the concern of Prime Minister Narendra Modi over cybercrime and the darknet led to the event. The Prime Minister had recognized this challenge during one of the reviews of the NCB and had directed that a solution to this problem of drug trafficking through the darknet market be found by organizing a hackathon primarily involving youths and technical students of the country.

Acting on these instructions, the NCB organized a hackathon by the name Darkathon 2022. It is being organized in three phases from February 15 to April 22.



It was organized as the bureau finds that the anonymity offered by the darkweb has drawn criminals in various garbs to flock to it for aiding and abetting their crimes. Darknet markets offering illegal substances and services to people

have emerged as one of the major challenges to law enforcement across the globe. Drugs are the most widely offered illegal substance in all of the darknet markets.

During the inaugural address, Pradhan highlighted the changing drug trafficking and abuse scenario. He said that there has been a rise in drug trafficking through maritime routes and the darknet. He stressed upon this fact by highlighting the UNODC World Drug Report 2021 which says that 94 per cent of the sales in darknet markets are related to drugs. He added that effective enforcement activities have resulted in the enhanced seizure of all major drugs in recent years.

Professor Anil D Sahasrabudhe, Chairman, All India Council for Technical Education and Lt Gen (Retd) Rajesh Pant, National Cyber Security Coordinator, also stressed

## Elite idol wing of TN police struggles sans work force

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 15: The elite idol wing of the Tamil Nadu CB-CID is struggling as cases are mounting up with less manpower for the unit. The unit has in the past years recovered stolen antiques worth Rs 100 crore and the number of cases is mounting.

The idol wing has recently arrested the owner of a major antique chain headquartered in Chennai and spread in major cities of the country for selling stolen antique idols worth crores of rupees.

After his arrest, the wing got information on certain old cases of temple theft but the lack of manpower is hindering further investigations into the case.



for the investigation process.

Highly placed sources in the idol wing told IANS that there was a dearth of officers of such ranks in the wing and the special CB-CID unit of the idol wing has already petitioned the DGP for induction of new manpower into the team.

According to information available, the strength of the idol wing has come down to 135 from the earlier 350 people in the wing and this has totally curtailed much of the activities of the wing.

The Idol Wing of the state police is functioning under an Additional Director General of Police and investigates cases related to the theft of idols that are more than 100 years old. The wing investigates the case if the value of the idol or antique stolen is Rs 5 lakh and above.

## HIJAB DISPUTE REACHES UP

A group of more than two dozen young men reached the Dharma Samaj College in Aligarh district Monday and handed a memorandum to its officials seeking a complete ban on the hijab within its compound

REUTERS

Lucknow, Feb 15: The dispute over restrictions on the wearing of the hijab by female students in the southern Indian state of Karnataka has now reached India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, with a group of youngsters asking a college to ban the head covering.

Authorities closed colleges in Karnataka last week after a new uniform policy barred students from wearing headscarves in classrooms, leading to protests by Muslim students and counter protests by Hindu students.

Muslims have criticised the ban as another way of marginalising a community that accounts for about 13% of Hindu-majority India's 1.35 billion people.

In Uttar Pradesh, in the country's north and bordering New Delhi, a group of more than two dozen young men reached the Dharma Samaj College in Aligarh district Monday and handed a memorandum to its officials seeking a com-



plete ban on the hijab within its compound.

They had saffron shawls around their necks - typically worn by Hindus - said the college's chief proctor, Mukesh Bharadwaj, adding he did not recognise the people. Currently, religious garb is not allowed in classrooms, but can be worn elsewhere on campus.

"Two years ago, the same issue was raised and it has been raised again. We do not allow any type of religious uniform and we have a civil code of uniform for everyone," Bharadwaj told Reuters by phone Tuesday.

"There is a changing room for

girls and they can change their dress there before attending class," he said. "We are investigating the matter."

Uttar Pradesh, estimated to have as many people as Brazil, is ruled by Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu monk from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party and is in the midst of a multi-phase election that ends next month. Hindu-Muslim disputes are often used for political gains in the state.

The hijab issue has already reached court in Karnataka. Hearings resumed Tuesday on whether the hijab should be allowed in class.

## TAMIL NADU BIRD SURVEY

### Several nearly extinct & vulnerable species seen

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 15: A bird survey in Tamil Nadu has recorded the presence of several threatened species that were categorised as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The inland wetland survey was conducted recently by the state wildlife department covering 339 wetlands of 25 districts. The survey comprised 14 inland water bird sanctuaries, including Vedanthangal.

The state's Chief Wildlife Warden Shekar Kumar Neeraj told IANS, "A synchronised survey is done to get a rough estimate about the population of both migratory and resident water birds and the findings have been astonishing with the presence of some bird species like River Tern and Common Pochard that are categorised as vulnerable by the IUCN."

According to the enumerators and wildlife authorities of Tamil Nadu, the survey recorded the presence of near-threatened species like Spot-billed Pelican, Eurasian Spoonbill, Oriental Darter, Painted Stork, and Black-headed Ibis.

While releasing the findings of



the survey, Shekar Kumar Neeraj said that other than Tirunelveli, the near-threatened Oriental Darter were seen in maximum numbers in Koonthankulam, Vedathangal and the Vadavoor bird sanctuaries.

About 20 individual birds of Common Pochard have been recorded from a satellite wetland of Koonthankulam bird sanctuary.

River Terns, which are seen mostly at dam sites, were recorded from the Anamalai Tiger Reserve. These two species, Common Pochard and River Tern are notified as vulnerable species by the IUCN.

According to a statement by the Chief Wildlife Warden, the Koonthankulam bird sanctuary and its satellite wetlands attract about 2,000 Bar-headed geese which is the highest number recorded in this census.

The survey also said that the presence of Greater Flamingo was much less when compared to earlier years due to higher-water level conditions following incessant rains.

## Neutrino Observatory project gains traction after NTCA nod



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 15: The upcoming Indian Neutrino Observatory project (INO) in Tamil Nadu's Theni has gained momentum following a 'no objection' certificate by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), which is one of the partners of the prestigious project, Monday submitted before the Supreme Court that the NTCA had given a no-objection certificate to the Union Environment Minister in March last year.

The TIFR in its contention said that Rajendra C Garawad, Deputy Inspector General of Forests at NTCA had in an e-mail to the Union Environment Minister said: "Approximately 0.88 km of un-

The underground lab coming up at the project will house a 50-kilo tonne magnetised iron calorimeter detector to detect atmospheric neutrinos

derground tunnel of the proposed project is inside the tiger corridor. Further, this authority has no objection to the proposed project as the tunnel is underground."

The apex court will hear the matter further February 22. Notably, the Neutrino project of the Centre is to come up at the

Pottipuram village in the Bodi West Hill bordering Kerala and will be the largest basic science project in India.

The underground laboratory coming up at the project will house a 50-kilo tonne magnetised iron calorimeter detector to detect atmospheric neutrinos.

In a statement Monday, the Neutrino Project Director Gobinda Majumdar said that the project comprises 26,825 hectares of revenue land above ground and 4,62 hectares of land underground comprising the tunnels and lab caverns.

He said that the surface facilities are purely restricted to the revenue land and lie totally outside the forest land and that there won't be any disturbance to the forest land or tiger corridor.

As far as the underground construction is concerned, the tunnel entrance commences at the revenue land and the horizontal tunnel is deep before it enters the forest land.

However, the state forest officials are skeptical of the project and dismissive of the idea and a senior officer said: "As per Section 38-O(1)(g) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, areas linking one tiger reserve or protected area with another tiger reserve or protected area are not diverted for ecologically sustainable uses, except in public interest and with the approval of the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) and on advice of NTCA."



Telangana Governor Tamilsai Soundararajan during the flagging off ceremony of the first ever All Women Officers Offshore Sailing Expedition, at Chennai Port PHOTO

## TN rights should be protected: OPS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Feb 15: Tamil Nadu former Chief Minister O Panneerselvam Tuesday urged Chief Minister MK Stalin to ensure that the state's rights over Mullaperiyar dam are protected.

Condemning the Tamil Nadu government's silence on the visits by Kerala Ministers and officials to inspect the dam, its shutters and ordering release of waters,

### MULLAPERIYAR DAM

Panneerselvam said such actions by Kerala should be nipped in the bud. AIAMDK Coordinator Panneerselvam also added that if Tamil Nadu remains silent on such acts, it may lead to Kerala claiming such rights later. The Mullaperiyar dam is owned by Tamil Nadu and its maintenance is undertaken by it is irrefutable truth, Panneerselvam added.

Kerala and Tamil Nadu have been at loggerheads over the dam, built under an 1886 accord between the then Maharaja of Travancore and the erstwhile British Raj.

Though the dam is located in Kerala, it is owned, maintained and operated by Tamil Nadu.

The Supreme Court May 5, 2014 had decreed in favour of Tamil Nadu and permitted the state to raise the water level in the Mullaperiyar dam to 142 feet from

its earlier storage level of 136 feet. In 2012, the Supreme Court empowered committee had said the Mullaperiyar dam is structurally safe.

Even in 2006, the apex court had said that Kerala cannot obstruct Tamil Nadu from increasing the water level in the dam to 142 feet and from carrying out repair works.

The Kerala government wants to build a new dam so that its control will be with it.

## Made in India perfume launched in NY has UP roots

The perfume, which draws inspiration from the world of Indian culinary, a first of its kind, was launched at the Consulate General of India in New York, as the country commemorates the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' to mark its 75th year of independence



Khanna has made a foray in the global fragrance industry with the launch of its flagship perfume 'Vikas Khanna' by Zighrana.

Interestingly, the perfume was launched Monday, which was celebrated as Valentine's Day.

Zighrana owner and entrepreneur Swapnil Pathak Sharma said the signature perfume highlights the unique amalgamation of "vocal for local" and global excellence.

The new perfume is a "unique blend of spices like cloves, cardamom, nutmeg, sandalwood, jasmine and rose which have come to define the unique smells of India



for more than a millennia." Consul General of India in New York Randhir Jaiswal said the launch of the perfume celebrates India's traditional knowledge,

It's a symbol of new India, where the growth is led by entrepreneurs, where women have become an equal part in the developmental journey and where Make in India products are increasingly reaching out to the world. We need to take it forward by becoming vocal for local

SWAPNIL PATHAK SHARMA | OWNER, ZIGHRANA

which is making strides in the 21st century as well as the rich history of Kannauj in Uttar Pradesh and its distinct identity as the perfume capital of India. India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador TS Tirumurti, addressing the launch event, expressed hope that Zighrana's maiden venture in the US will be a "pathbreaking effort in the world of perfumes." He added that fragrances for worship have a very strong spiritual connection in India.

Khanna said the perfume showcases the flavours of spices, flow-

ers, history and heritage of India in the bottle. Zighrana's parent company has a family history of creating fragrances since 1911. Sharma is the fourth generation entrepreneur and aims to take her family's traditional business of Indian essence and wellness products to the global stage through Zighrana and its products.

The signature perfume, suitable for men and women alike, uses precious and exclusive ingredients to create its distinct aroma. Zighrana has used precious ingredients like pure rose oil that is both resource and labour intensive to generate, taking nearly 100 kgs of flowers to make as little as 20 gms of rose oil.

Sharma added that her company's next two offerings will be fragrances dedicated to India's 75th year of independence and to her hometown the city of Kannauj. The 'India at 75' fragrance will be designed to celebrate 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' and will be dedicated to Kannauj, the perfume capital of India famous for "creating liquid treasures and spreading the glory of its fragrances throughout the world."

## BATTLE FOR UP

### Phase 3: SP leads in criminal candidates

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 15: Thirty out of 58 candidates fielded by the Samajwadi Party in the third phase of elections in Uttar Pradesh are from a criminal background.

According to an analysis report released by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) on Tuesday, 25 out of 55 candidates analysed from the BJP, 23 out of 59 candidates from the BSP, 20 out of 56 candidates from the Congress and 11 out of 49 candidates from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have declared criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits.

The Samajwadi Party again leads when it comes to candidates with serious criminal charges. The Samajwadi party has 21 such candidates while the BJP has 20, BSP has 18, Congress 10 and AAP 11. Eleven of these candidates have



declared cases related to crime against women. Out of 11 candidates, two have declared cases related to rape (IPC Section-376). Two candidates have declared cases related to murder (IPC Section-302) against themselves and 18 have cases related to attempt to murder. On basis of the number of criminals contesting elections, 26 out of the 59 constituencies in this phase have been declared Red Alert constituencies.



# national

## of the day quote

The Centre is ready to talk with the militant outfits of the Northeastern region to resolve their problems as the government always wants to end the violence permanently

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

Over the last seven years, there has been a renewed focus to build new museums with engaging exhibits and content, leveraging modern technologies such as digital, augmented reality and virtual reality

G KISHAN REDDY | UNION MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND CULTURE

The Congress and Telangana Rashtra Samithi should answer whether they are with the Indian army or Pakistan

ANURAG THAKUR | UNION INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Four cops dead

**Jaipur:** Five people, including four policemen, died when a vehicle of Gujarat police carrying an accused from Delhi to Gujarat met with an accident in Bhabro area of Jaipur, police officials said. The accident was so severe that the SUV of Gujarat police had to be cut to pull out the dead bodies. Police said that the accident took place at around 2 a.m. in Bhabro police station area after the man driving the vehicle on Jaipur-Delhi highway suddenly lost his balance. The car first hit the divider. After that it went down from the road and hit a tree.

### Sweeper arrested

**New Delhi:** Delhi Police have arrested a 30-year-old man for allegedly raping an 87-year-old woman at her residence in the national capital's Tilak Nagar area. The police said they have also recovered the stolen mobile phone from the accused, identified as Ankit. "He was living in a nearby locality and worked as a sweeper," Additional DCP (west district) Prashant Gautam said. The official said soon after the incident, several teams were constituted to nab the accused.

### Eight youths held

**Kochi:** A team of officials from the Kerala Excise and Customs took into custody four youths from a hotel near here after they were found in possession of MDMA - a psychoactive drug. In all, 55 grams of MDMA have been confiscated from the arrested which included 30 grams from their vehicle while 25 grams was found in the hotel room. After taking them into custody, the team waited in the hotel and in the wee hours of Tuesday, nabbed four more, including a woman, who had come to buy the drug from the first team.

### 4 killed, 15 hurt

**Bhopal:** Four labourers were killed and 15 others injured after a van in which they were traveling overturned and fell into Sindh river in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri district Tuesday. According to the police, the labourers, hailing from West Bengal, were proceeding towards a bridge construction site in Vira village.

### Driver injured

**Jammu:** A car crashed inside Jammu and Kashmir's Qazigund-Banihal tunnel on Tuesday in which the driver of the car was injured. Police sources said a car travelling from Jammu to Srinagar crashed inside the tunnel after it went out of the driver's control.



Digital learning should not lead to digital divide  
M. VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

## CHOUHAN TESTS COVID POSITIVE

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan Tuesday said he has tested positive for Covid-19 and isolated himself at home



# LAKHIMPUR KHERI CASE Ashish walks free after 4 months

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lakhimpur Kheri (UP), Feb 15:** After over four months, Union minister Ajay Mishra's son Ashish Mishra was released from jail here Tuesday evening after fulfilling bail conditions pronounced by the Allahabad High Court.

He has been released from jail after completion of bail formalities. Lakhimpur Kheri Jail Superintendent P P Singh told reporters. Ashish Mishra had been lodged in the jail since October 10 last year in the case related to the killing of four farmers in the violence that had erupted in the course of farmers' agitation in Tikonia in the district.

The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court had last week granted bail to Ashish Mishra in the case. The discharge process started after an order from the district court here reached the Lakhimpur Kheri jail.

While a posse of mediapersons and people gathered at the main gate of the jail, Ashish Mishra was taken out of the prison from a gate adjacent to jail superintendent's residence within the campus.

Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra is present in the district but mediapersons, who visited his home in Lakhimpur town, could not meet him. The Allahabad High Court had on Monday corrected its order granting bail to Ashish Mishra.

Ashish Mishra had moved the Lucknow bench of the high court



on Friday seeking insertion of sections 302 (murder) and 120 B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) that were "inadvertently" not mentioned in the high court order as the jail authorities would not release him due to the omission.

"It is a mere typographical error, while the court already considered the bail under these sections too and, as such, the same may be allowed making the addition of these sections in the order," said the application. A bench of Justice Rajeev Singh had on February 10 granted bail to Ashish Mishra in the case. The court had passed the order on the correction application the previous day.

In the bail order passed on Thursday, sections 147, 148, 149,

**ASHISH MISHRA WAS ARRESTED OCTOBER 9 LAST YEAR BY THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATION TEAM THAT WAS PROBING THE INCIDENT**

**FOUR OF THE DEAD WERE FARMERS WHO WERE MOWED DOWN BY A SPEEDING SUV, BELONGING TO ASHISH MISHRA. ONE JOURNALIST COVERING THE INCIDENT WAS ALSO KILLED IN THE INCIDENT**

307, 326, 427 read with section 34 of the IPC, section 30 of the Arms Act and section 177 of the Motor Vehicle Act were mentioned, but section 302 and section 120 (B) were left out. The Special Investigation Team (SIT) had named Ashish Mishra as

the main accused in the knocking down of the farmers' incident in its charge sheet submitted to the court.

Farmers were staging protest in Tikonia viage on October 3 last year against the visit of deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Murya to Ajay Mishra's native Banbir village when four of the agitating farmers were crushed under the wheels of a convoy of cars. In the subsequent violence, four others comprising two BJP workers, driver and a journalist were killed. Voting will take place in eight assembly segments in Lakhimpur Kheri in the fourth phase on February 23.

Earlier in the day, reacting to the bail granted to Ashish Mishra, Rakesh Tikait, a prominent face of the farmers' stir and the national spokesperson of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), said, "The whole country and whole world watched the most infamous Lakhimpur Kheri episode of Ajay Mishra and Ashish Mishra, who despite having committed a heinous crime gets bail within three months. Everybody is seeing that and he will walk out of jail today."

"So is such dictatorial government needed, or this type of system needed in which someone who mows down people under a vehicle walks out of jail within three months. How will they behave with the public in times to come? These are our issues that people need to understand," the farmer leader told reporters.

# ED conducts raids linked to Dawood



Police stand guard at a building during a raid by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case against Dawood Ibrahim, in Mumbai

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, Feb 15:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Tuesday conducted raids at multiple locations linked to underworld don Dawood Ibrahim in Mumbai and nearby areas in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) case.

The house of Dawood Ibrahim's sister, the late Haseena Parkar was raided in the early morning by a team of elite officials of the ED.

Sources have said that they recovered a few incriminating documents during the raid. A politician of Maharashtra is also under the lens of ED for links with Dawood Ibrahim, said the source.

"We are conducting raids at ten locations in Mumbai and surrounding areas. These are related to a previous money laundering case involving gangster Dawood Ibrahim and his associates. A property deal is under scanner, wherein

a senior politician from Maharashtra is also allegedly involved along with others," said the source.

ED is also scanning the money transactions of the politicians and alleged aides of Dawood. They said that they had been working on the case for a long time.

Dawood is still controlling the real estate business through his middlemen. The money is sent to him and his aides through the Hawala network. This money is further allegedly being used by different terror modules to spread anti-national and terrorists activities across India. It is learnt that Pakistan's ISI is supporting Dawood in running his business and to spread terror activities from the money earned from the business.

As of now ED has not given any official statement. A property deal had come on their radar after which a money laundering probe was initiated, sources said.

# Lalu convicted in fifth fodder scam case

*Soon after the conviction, the ailing politician was shifted to Birsa Munda Central Jail in Ranchi and then he was admitted to the state-run Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences, an official said*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ranchi, Feb 15:** A special CBI court Tuesday convicted RJD supremo and former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad in the Rs 139.5 crore Doranda treasury embezzlement case, the fifth and final case against him in the fodder scam.

Soon after the conviction, the ailing 73-year-old politician was shifted to Birsa Munda Central Jail in Ranchi and then he was admitted to the state-run Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), an official said.

"Lalu Prasad has been admitted to the RIMS on health grounds and will be examined by a team of doctors," he said. The senior politician requested the court to pass an order to shift him to the RIMS on health grounds. CBI Judge Sudhanshu Kumar Shashi turned down Prasad's plea but ordered the jail authorities to decide whether he needs any medical attention or not.

In jail since December 2017, Prasad served most of his sentence

period at the RIMS. He was taken to All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi in January last year after his health condition deteriorated. Prasad, who was present in the court, was taken into custody and arguments on the quantum of his sentence will be heard on February 21. The CBI counsel had earlier said the court will hear the arguments on sentence on February 18.

Welcoming the court's decision, BJP Rajya Sabha MP and former Bihar deputy chief minister Sushil Kumar Modi, one of the petitioners in the fodder scam matter in the Patna High Court, said justice has finally been served to those who "pushed the state into darkness" for 15 years.

Prasad had earlier been sentenced to 14 years in jail in four other fodder scam cases. The final case was related to withdrawals of Rs 139.35 crore from Doranda treasury during his tenure as the chief minister of undivided Bihar.

"Of the 99 accused in the case, 24 were acquitted, while three-year jail terms have been pronounced for 34 accused. A total of 41 convicts have been sent to prison," CBI counsel BMP Singh said.

On Prasad's plea, directions were given to the jail superintendent and RIMS director to take necessary action keeping in mind his health, he said. The ebullient leader suffers from multiple ailments, including renal problems.

The CBI had examined 575 witnesses in the case, and filed charge sheet against 170 people.

## COVID PRECAUTION



Students undergo thermal testing before entering the school as all educational institutions re-opened after ease in Covid-induced restrictions, in Srinagar

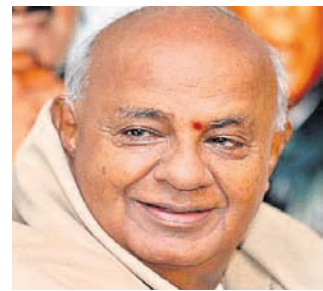
PTI PHOTO

## KCR's anti-BJP plans get thumbs up from Gowda

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Hyderabad, Feb 15:** Former Prime Minister and Janata Dal-Secular party President H.D. Deve Gowda has extended his support to the fight launched by Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao against the religious polarisation of politics by the BJP government at the Centre.

According to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), Deve Gowda on Tuesday spoke to Chandrasekhar



Rao over phone. The CMO said Rao's fight against politics of po-

larisation is getting support from several quarters.

Deve Gowda congratulated KCR for fighting against the communal politics in the country. "Rao Saab, you are fighting very well. Everyone should fight against the communal elements. To protect our country's secularism, culture and its diverse culture we will be with you and support you. Continue your fight and our total support will be there for you," the CMO quoted the former Prime Minister as saying.

## GROWING THREAT

# Parl panel expresses concern over rising cyber crimes

*"The criminals not only target the innocent and vulnerable, especially elderly people and dupe them of their savings but also well-known persons and celebrities," the panel said*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 15:** The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has raised concerns over the rising number of cyber crimes in the country in its latest report submitted on February 10 in Parliament.

The Committee, headed by the Congress lawmaker Anand Sharma, said, quoting the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) data that the cyber crime cases have increased from 27,248 in 2018 to 50,035 in 2020 mainly related to financial transactions.

"The criminals not only target the innocent and vulnerable, especially elderly people, and dupe them of their savings but also well-known persons and celebrities," the panel said, adding that specialised training was required to deal with the increasing cyber crimes in the country.

The Committee also recommended that the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA), North Eastern



Police Academy (NEPA) should coordinate with the state training academies to train police personnel with requisite knowledge of cyber laws, cyber crime investigation, digital forensics and upgrade them from time to time on new technological tools to deal with cyber crimes. The training

academies may be advised to recruit cyber experts as trainers on cyber technologies.

Noting that with an advancement of technology, cyber crimes have emerged as a major issue all across the globe and transcended geographical boundaries making it tough to track criminals, the panel expressed

its deep concerns over the rising trend of cybercrimes in the country.

The panel also observed that traditional training of the police personnel was not sufficient to deal with cyber crimes as these criminals are tech-savvy and are following new modus-operandi on a regular basis, the MHA officials informed the panel that to strengthen training on the cyber crime investigation, a specialised centre of SVPNPA, namely National Digital Crime Resource & Training Centre (NDCRTC), set up in 2015, provides training in cyber crime investigation and cyber security to all law enforcement officers across the country.

"Some of the courses conducted by NDCRTC encompass the areas of disk forensics, mobile forensics and

call detail record analysis, windows forensics, internet-based crimes, network forensics, dark web, open source intelligence, block chain, social media analysis and investigation of digital payment frauds. NDCRTC has conducted over 290 physical courses and trained more than 8800 officers in the last five years from more than 24 organizations," the MHA informed the panel.

The MHA also informed the committee that the National Police Academy has the capacity to train around 200 officers at most in a year while the Central Detective and Training Institute (CDTI) and the Bureau of Police Research and Development (PR&D) have another modest initiative, mainly for ranks of sub-inspectors and inspectors.

# international



The close integration of our economy with India would be very beneficial, one third of our tourist arrivals are from India  
BASIL RAJAPAKSA | SL'S FINANCE MINISTER

## EXERCISING AFTER GETTING COVID VACCINE BOOSTS ANTIBODIES

Mild- to moderate-intensity exercise for 90 minutes after getting a flu or Covid-19 vaccine may boost the levels of antibodies in the body, according to a study



### of the day quote

This undercuts the ASEAN-centred regional cooperation architecture formed over the years and poses a serious threat to regional cooperation outcomes and development prospects

WANG WENBIN | CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON

If Pakistan is the first to grant recognition, the international pressure will become too much for us as we try to turn our economy around

IMRAN KHAN | PAKISTAN, PM

Both ministers (India and the Philippines) agreed to coordinate closely at multilateral fora and reaffirmed their strong commitment to a multifaceted partnership that would facilitate the developmental aspirations and shared priorities of the two democracies in the Indo-Pacific region

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

### SHORT TAKES

#### Madagascar braces for another cyclone

**United Nations:** Madagascar is bracing for another tropical storm only 10 days after cyclone Batsirai killed at least 121 people earlier this month, a UN spokesman said. Tropical cyclone Dumako is on track to hit the country's northeast Tuesday, said Stephane Dujarric, the chief spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Cyclone Batsirai hit Madagascar's southeast the February 5 weekend, displacing 29,000 people and destroying, flooding or damaging almost 19,000 homes, reports said.

#### 247 rescued from Mediterranean Sea

**Geneva:** At least 247 people have been rescued within the last 48 hours from the Mediterranean Sea, the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) said. The Geneva-based IFRC said that among the 247 survivors were 52 unaccompanied minors and a five-month-old baby, reports Xinhua news agency. Most of those rescued came from Egypt, Bangladesh, Syria, Ethiopia, Tunisia and Ivory Coast. Five search and rescue missions were carried out over the weekend by the ship Ocean Viking, which is operated by SOS MEDITERRANEE and IFRC.

#### Trudeau declares emergency

**Ottawa:** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has declared a public order emergency for the first time in the country's history to support provinces in ending the ongoing blockades caused by the ongoing anti-Covid truckers protests.

## Six months of Taliban: Afghans safer, poorer, less hopeful

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Kabul, Feb 15:** Afghanistan has undergone a dramatic transformation in half a year of Taliban rule.

The country feels safer, less violent than it has in decades, but the once aid-fueled economy is barreling toward collapse. Tens of thousands of Afghans have fled or have been evacuated, including large numbers of the educated elites.

They either fear for their economic future or lack of freedom under a group that ascribes to a strict interpretation of Islam and during its previous rule in the late 1990s barred girls from school and women from work.

Tuesday marks six months since the Afghan capital of Kabul was

ceded to the Taliban with the sudden and secret departure of the country's US-backed president. The takeover of Kabul had been preceded by a months-long Taliban military campaign to take control of provincial areas, many of which fell with hardly a fight.

Today the sight of armed Taliban fighters roaming the street still jars and frightens residents. But women have returned to the streets, and many young men have put on Western clothes again after initially shedding them for the traditional shalwar kameez, the long shirt and baggy pants favoured by the Taliban. Unlike in the 1990s, the Taliban are allowing some women to work. Women are back in their jobs in the health and education ministries, as well as at Kabul



Taliban fighters patrol a street in Kabul

International airport, often next to men. But women are still waiting to return to work in other ministries. Thousands of jobs have been lost in the economic downward

spiral, and women have been hit hardest. The Taliban have cracked down on women's protests and harassed journalists, including briefly detaining two foreign journalists

■ Unlike in the 1990s, the Taliban are allowing some women to work. Women are back in their jobs in the health and education ministries, as well as at Kabul International airport, often next to men

■ Thousands of jobs have been lost in the economic downward spiral, and women have been hit hardest

■ The takeover of Kabul had been preceded by a months-long Taliban military campaign to take control of provincial areas, many of which fell with hardly a fight

working with the UN refugee agency last week. On Monday, the detention of some young men selling heart-shaped flowers in recognition of Valentine's Day was a stark

reminder that the new all-male religion-driven administration has no tolerance for Western ideas of romance. Girls in grades 1-6 have been going to school, but those in the higher grades are still locked out in most parts of the country.

The Taliban promised all girls will be in school after the Afghan new year at the end of March. Universities are gradually reopening and private universities and schools never closed.

Poverty is deepening. Even those who have money have a hard time accessing it. At banks, lines are long as residents wait for hours, sometimes even days, to withdraw a limit of \$200 a week.

More than \$9 billion in Afghanistan's foreign assets were frozen after the Taliban takeover.

## TOUCHING THE SKY



Indonesian Air Forces Jupiter Aerobatic Team takes part in an aerial display during the Singapore Airshow 2022 at Changi Exhibition Centre in Singapore

PTI PHOTO

## Russia pulling back troops

Western military analysts said it was too soon to be sure of the extent of any de-escalation

AGENCIES

**Moscow, Feb 15:** Russia said Tuesday that some units participating in military exercises were returning to their bases, adding to glimmers of hope that the Kremlin may not be planning to invade Ukraine imminently. But it gave no details on where the troops were pulling back from, or how many.

That muddled efforts to determine the significance of the announcement, which buoyed world financial markets and the long-suffering ruble after weeks of escalation in Europe's worst East-West standoff in decades. It came a day after Russia's foreign minister indicated the country was ready to keep talking about the security grievances that led to the Ukraine crisis — a gesture that changed the tenor after weeks of tensions.

Yet hours before the Russian Defence Ministry statement about the troops, a US Defense official said Russian units were moving closer to the Ukrainian border — not away from it. And Western officials continued to warn that the Russian military could attack at any time, with some floating Wednesday as a possible invasion day. NATO's chief said the alliance had no proof



### CAUTIOUS RESPONSE

Video footage published by Russia's defence ministry showed some tanks and other armoured vehicles being loaded onto railway flatcars. But Western military analysts said they needed more information to judge the significance of the latest troop movements. "One should maintain an air of cautious scepticism," said Henry Boyd of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. "There have been past discrepancies between Russia's official announcements and its actions on the ground." Konrad Muzyka, director of the Poland-based Rochan consultancy, told Reuters it would take several days to verify the latest moves via satellite imagery. "It should also be noted that new trains with equipment from Central Russia keep on arriving near the border and that Russian forces continue to move towards staging areas. The announcement stands in a direct opposition to what Russia has been doing for the past few days," he said.

yet of a Russian retreat.

The fears of an invasion grew from the fact that Russia has massed more than 130,000 troops near Ukraine. Russia denies it has any

such plans, despite placing troops on Ukraine's borders to the north, south and east and launching massive military drills nearby. US and other NATO allies, meanwhile,

have moved troops and military supplies toward Ukraine's western flank, although not to confront Russian forces, and promised more financial aid to the ex-Soviet nation.

Moscow brandished Tuesday's pullback announcement as proof that fears of war were fabricated by a hostile, US-led West. "February 15, 2022, will go down in history as the day Western war propaganda failed. Humiliated and destroyed without a single shot fired," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova tweeted. Yet Ukraine remains effectively surrounded on three sides by military forces from its much more powerful neighbor, and even if the immediate threat recedes, longer-term risk remains. Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, and some 14,000 people have been killed in fighting between Ukrainian troops and pro-Russia separatists in the country's east.

The Russian Defence Ministry did not indicate where the withdrawing troops had been deployed or how many were leaving. It released images of tanks and armored vehicles rolling onto a train, and a tank commander saluting his forces while a military band played.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, Feb 15:** India is a driving force of the Quad and an engine for regional growth, the White House has said, days after the foreign ministers of the four-nation grouping met in Melbourne to discuss a host of issues, including China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific and mounting tensions between the West and Russia over Ukraine.

"We recognise that India is a like-minded partner and leader in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, active in and connected to Southeast Asia, a driving force of the Quad, and an engine for regional growth and development," White House Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters here.

The foreign ministers of Quad or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue comprising India, the US, Japan and Australia last week met in Melbourne where they vowed to expand cooperation to keep the Indo-Pacific free from "coercion", denounced the use of terrorist proxies for cross-border terrorism, assessed the Ukraine crisis and asserted that Afghan territory should not be used to threaten

## Carmen Herrera, Cuban-born abstract artist, dies at 106



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**New York, Feb 15:** Cuban-born artist Carmen Herrera, whose radiant color and geometric paintings were overlooked for decades before the art world took notice, has died. She was 106.

Artist Antonio Bechara told *The New York Times* that Herrera had died at her Manhattan home Saturday. Fame finally came at age 89, when Herrera sold her first painting in 2004.

It may have taken 60 years for Herrera to be discovered, but today her paintings — minimalist compositions of straight lines, form and color — are found in permanent collections of major museums including the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Tate Modern in London.

## India a driving force of Quad, says WH



or attack any country. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar were part of the Quad meeting.

"It was an opportunity to discuss Russia's ongoing threat to Ukraine. They discussed the threat that Russia's aggression poses not only to Ukraine but to the entire international rules-based order, which has provided a foundation for decades of shared security and prosperity for the region and around the globe," she said about the Melbourne meeting.

The US, she said, will continue to build a strategic partnership in which the US and India work together to promote stability in South Asia, collaborate in new domains such as health, space, cyberspace, deepen the economic and technology cooperation, and contribute to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

## US seeks arrest, extradition of ex-Honduras President

AGENCIES

**Tegucigalpa (Honduras), Feb 15:** After years of speculation in Honduras, the United States formally requested the arrest and extradition of former President Juan Orlando Hernández less than three weeks after he left office.

Honduran security forces surrounded Hernández's neighbourhood Monday night and the Supreme Court of Justice scheduled an urgent meeting Tuesday morning to select a judge to handle the



extradition request. In a video released by Hernández's legal team from apparently inside his home, attorney Félix Ávila said that everything would have to wait until the Supreme Court designated a judge Tuesday to consider the case.

## India hits out at Pak at UN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**United Nations, Feb 15:** India has strongly hit out at Pakistan at the UN, saying the world knows where the perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai, 2016 Pathankot and 2019 Pulwama terror attacks came from and it is "regretful" that the facilitators of these "dastardly" acts continue to enjoy State support and hospitality.

Counsellor in India's Permanent Mission to the UN Rajesh Parihar began his remarks to the open briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Monday by recalling

that exactly three years ago on February 14, 2019, 40 brave men of Indian security personnel were killed in a "dastardly terrorist attack" in Pulwama carried out by Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM).

"The world had witnessed the horrors of the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, the 2016 Pathankot terror attack, and the 2019 Pulwama terrorist attack. We all know from where the perpetrators of these attacks came from," Parihar said, delivering India's national statement at the open briefing on the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee

Executive Directorate (CTED) with the Member States of South and South-East Asia.

He said it is "regretful" that victims of these dastardly attacks are yet to get justice, and the perpetrators, facilitators and financiers of these attacks continue to walk free, "still enjoying State support and hospitality," making a reference to Pakistan. "This epicentre of terrorism nurtures terrorist entities with links to more than 150 UN-designated entities and individuals, and its leaders often extol terrorists as 'martyrs'," he said.

## Spanish fishing boat sinks off Canada; 4 dead, 15 missing

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Madrid, Feb 15:** A Spanish fishing boat sank Tuesday off Newfoundland, in eastern Canada, killing at least four people, Spain's maritime rescue service said. Three crew members were rescued and 15 others were missing.

Search operations were ongoing to locate other members of the 22-strong crew of the sunken vessel, Spanish government spokeswoman Isabel Rodriguez said, adding that authorities were following the incident "with concern."

A Canadian helicopter had reached the area, which is about 450 kilometers (280 miles) off the island of Newfoundland, and a rescue vessel was on the way to the site, a spokeswoman of the Spanish rescue service said.

The boat, called Villa de Pitaxo, operates out of northwest Spain's Galicia region and sank around 0600 GMT (1 am EST) in rough seas, the regional representative of the Spanish government, Maica Larriba, told Spanish public radio.

She said that the crew included 12 Spaniards, eight Peruvians and two from Ghana.

A Spanish fishing boat working not far from the site was the first to arrive in the area and found three survivors and four bodies in one of the four lifeboats of the fishing vessel, the Spanish rescue center's spokeswoman said.

# business



**Cryptocurrencies** have specifically been developed to bypass the regulated financial system. These should be reason enough to treat them with caution

T RABI SANKAR | RBI DEPUTY GOVERNOR

## MAAZA BIGGER THAN COKE

Fruit drink brand Maaza had reported total sales of ₹2,826 crore in FY21 in the domestic market, which is higher than the sales of Coke in India, according to a top official of The Coca-Cola Company



## of the day quote

Since inception, we have remained focused on adding value to Indian customers' driving experiences through our ground-breaking vehicles and services



TAE-JIN PARK | KIA INDIA MD & CEO

Sebi has to initiate next generation of reforms to improve ease of doing business and be prepared for the possible market turbulence on account of US Fed actions



NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

Very happy that within such a short time frame, superb response has been received from the semiconductor industry participants



ASHWINI VAISHNAW | UNION MINISTER FOR ELECTRONICS & IT

## SHORT TAKES

### IT sector to grow 15.5%

**Mumbai:** India's IT sector is set to grow at 15.5 per cent – the fastest in over a decade – to USD 227 billion in FY22, as the pandemic pushes up demand for digitisation at companies across the world, industry grouping Nasscom said Tuesday. The revenue growth is much higher than the 2.3 per cent achieved in FY21 in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and double that of the pre-pandemic FY20, Debjani Ghosh, president of Nasscom, told reporters at its strategic review. Global IT spends grew at 9 per cent to USD 1.9 trillion in the period. She termed FY22 – the first when overall revenues crossed USD 200 billion – as a year of resurgence for the sector, as against FY21 which tested its resilience.

### Gridco holds landmark meet

**Bhubaneswar:** The 200th landmark meeting of Board of Directors of GRIDCO Limited was held February 11 under the Chairmanship of Nikunja B. Dhal, IAS, Principal Secretary Energy & Chairman, GRIDCO Ltd. Lauding the 200th board meeting as a milestone and historic event for the company, the Chairman took stock of the journey of the company and expressed satisfaction over the role of the Board in maintaining balance between power demand for the state and power procurement from various sources while complying to the statutory and regulatory requirements through its brilliant decision making process in foregoing years. Through judicious decision making by the Board of GRIDCO, Odisha has turned into a state capable of running its power sector without any direct financial subsidy from the state government.

### SpiceJet posts ₹42cr profit

**New Delhi:** Propelled primarily by higher revenues from passenger and cargo segments, SpiceJet Tuesday reported a consolidated profit of ₹42.45 crore in the quarter ended December 2021 and is set to expand its aircraft fleet as well as freighter capacity. SpiceJet, which is currently going through turbulent times amid legal woes, saw its shares surge over 9 per cent after the announcement of the quarterly results as the airline had a consolidated loss of ₹66.78 crore in 2020 December quarter. Total income in the latest December quarter climbed to ₹267.73 crore compared to ₹187.06 crore in the same period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing. On a standalone basis, the airline recorded a profit of ₹23.28 crore in the third quarter of the current fiscal year.

## In relief for India Inc, Sebi makes bifurcating CMD role voluntary



The top 500 listed entities were required to split the roles of Chairperson and Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer before the April 2022 deadline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 15:** In a significant move, markets watchdog Sebi Tuesday decided to implement the requirement to separate the positions of Chairperson and Managing Director at listed companies on a voluntary basis and not make it mandatory for now.

The development also comes against the backdrop of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman recently saying the regulator should hear if Indian companies have a view on the matter even as she made it clear that she was not 'giving a diktat'.

The top 500 listed entities were required to split the roles of

Chairperson and Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer before the April 2022 deadline.

Sebi cited "rather unsatisfactory level of compliance achieved so far" as among the reasons for the latest decision, which came after its board meeting Tuesday.

Initially, the listed entities were required to separate the roles of Chairperson and MD/CEO from April 1, 2020 onwards. However, based on industry representations, an additional time period of two years was given for compliance.

"Considering rather unsatisfactory level of compliance achieved so far, with respect to this corporate governance reform, various representations received, constraints imposed by the prevailing pandemic situation and with a view to enabling the companies to plan for a smoother transition, as a way forward, Sebi board at this juncture, decided that this provision may not be retained as a mandatory requirement and instead be made applicable to the listed entities on a voluntary basis," it added.

As the revised deadline for com-

pliance is less than two months away, Sebi said that on a review it is seen that the compliance level, which stood at 50.4 per cent amongst the top 500 listed companies as on September 2019 has progressed to only 54 per cent as on December 31, 2021.

Thus, there has been barely a 4 per cent incremental improvement in compliance by the top 500 listed companies over the last two years. Hence, expecting the remaining about 46 per cent of the top 500 listed companies to comply with these norms by the target date would be a tall order, it added.

Sebi also noted that it continues to receive representations from industry bodies and corporates expressing various compelling reasons, difficulties and challenges for not being able to comply with this regulatory mandate.

Many companies have the post of CMD (Chairman-cum-Managing Director), leading to some overlapping of the board and management, which could lead to conflict of interest. Against this backdrop, Sebi, in May 2018, came out with the norms to split the post.

The norms were part of the series of recommendations given by the Sebi-appointed Uday Kotak committee on corporate governance. The main rationale for the recommendation was that separation of powers of the Chairperson and MD/CEO may provide a better and more balanced governance structure by enabling more effective and objective supervision of the management.

## Despite rising inflation, RBI unlikely to hike rates till Aug



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 15:** Despite retail inflation rising to 6.01 per cent in January, and likely to remain elevated till April, a foreign brokerage report expects RBI to leave key policy rates unchanged throughout the first half of 2022.

Swiss brokerage UBS Securities India sees the policy to change only from the second half wherein the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) may deliver a 50 basis points hike in the second half starting from the August policy.

The official data released Monday showed that retail inflation spurred to a seven-month high in January at 6.01 per cent—but lower than the previous high of 6.26 per cent in June 2021. Wholesale inflation stayed in double-digit at 12.96 per cent. The government also revised upwards the CPI inflation for December 2021 to 5.66 from 5.59 per cent.

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das had said the rise in inflation was primarily due to statistical reasons, especially in the third quarter of FY22, and the same base effect will play in different ways in the coming months.

Das had said the RBI has already factored in high inflation

numbers in its recent bi-monthly monetary policy, and retail inflation in January above 6 per cent "should not surprise or create any alarm."

RBI expects retail inflation to soften to 4.5 per cent next fiscal year, while projecting it at 5.3 per cent for 2021-22 and based on this it had left all the key rates unchanged and retained its dovish stance.

Tanvee Gupta-Jain, the chief economist at UBS Securities India said, the latest numbers are on expected line and the uptick was largely driven by an adverse base effect and continued supply side constraints.

Core inflation remained sticky at 6 per cent versus 6.1 per cent in the previous month, reflecting gradual pass-through of higher input cost to the consumers.

She also said price pressure in rural areas is higher at 6.1 per cent than in urban areas which was marginally lower at 5.9 per cent. She expects retail inflation to remain elevated in the 5.5-6 per cent range until April given the massive spike in commodity prices, especially oil, supply-side disruptions along with rising input costs pressures which will keep inflation higher over the coming months.

## Sensex claws back lost ground with 1,736-pt leap

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 15:** Equity indices staged a stellar comeback Tuesday after suffering their worst losses in a year in the previous session as bargain hunters piled into energy, finance and IT stocks amid signs of easing Russia-Ukraine tensions.

European markets clambered up following reports that some Russian troops near Ukraine were returning to their bases, which could de-escalate tensions between Moscow and the West.

A strengthening rupee further bolstered sentiment, traders said. Recouping the previous day's losses, the 30-share BSE Sensex surged 1,736.21 points or 3.08 per cent to end at 58,142.05. This was its biggest one-day jump since February 1, 2021.

Likewise, the NSE Nifty soared 509.65 points or 3.03 per cent to settle at 17,352.45.

On the Sensex chart, all 30 shares closed with gains -- with Bajaj Finance, SBI, Bajaj FinServ, L&T, Titan, Wipro and Asian Paints rallying as much as 5.13 per cent.

"A ray of hope that tension between Russian and Ukraine is de-escalating, prompting a smart recovery in global equities. The domestic market followed the trend as oil prices edged lower. India's CPI inflation for January rose to 6.01 per cent, breaching RBI's tolerance level due to high food inflation and low base effect, this will be a point of concern for domestic market in the near-term," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

The retail inflation rate breached

## LIC policyholders need to update PAN by Feb 28 to participate in IPO



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 15:** Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has asked all its policyholders to update their Permanent Account Number (PAN) details in their policy record to be eligible for participating in its upcoming public issue, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP).

February 13, the state-run insurer filed draft papers with capital market regulator Sebi for sale of 5 per cent stake by the government for an estimated ₹63,000 crore.

The initial public offering (IPO) of over 31.6 crore shares or 5 per cent government stake is likely to hit the market in March and employees and policyholders of the insurance behemoth would get a discount over the floor price.

"A policyholder of our Corporation shall ensure that his/her PAN details are updated in the policy records of our Corporation at the earliest. A policyholder who has not updated his/her PAN de-

tails with our Corporation before expiry of two weeks from the date of the filing of this DRHP with SEBI (i.e., by February 28, 2022) shall not be considered as an Eligible Policyholder," as per the DRHP.

The PAN updation can be done on LIC's website either directly or with the help of agents. It further said policyholders having one or more policies of LIC as on the date of the DRHP and bid/offer opening date and who are residents of India would be eligible to apply in this offer, under the Policyholder Reservation Portion.

The aggregate of reservation for eligible policyholders shall not exceed 10 per cent of the total offer size. The portion of the offer available for allocation to eligible policyholders on a proportionate basis is subject to the receipt of necessary approvals from the government.

LIC issued approximately 21 million individual policies in FY 2021, accounting for nearly 75 per cent of new individual policy issuances.

## Exports jump 25%; trade deficit widens

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 15:** India's exports in January rose 25.28 per cent to USD 34.50 billion on account of healthy performance by mainly engineering, petroleum and gems and jewellery sectors, even as trade deficit widened to 17.43 billion, according to data released by the commerce ministry Tuesday.

Imports grew by 23.54 per cent to USD 51.93 billion during the month under review.



Trade deficit, difference between imports and exports, stood at USD 14.49 billion in January 2021.

Cumulatively, exports increased by 46.73 per cent to USD 335.88 billion during April 2021-January 2022, from USD USD 228.92 billion in the corresponding period a year ago.

Imports during the April-January period expanded by 62.65 per cent to USD 495.75 billion. Trade deficit stood at USD 159.87 billion during the ten-month period as against USD 75.87 billion in the same period a year earlier.

According to the data, gold imports in January 2022 dipped by 40.52 per cent to USD 2.4 billion. Crude oil imports rose by 26.9 per cent to USD 11.96 billion in January.

Exports of engineering, petroleum and gems and jewellery in January 2022 increased by 24.11 per cent, 95.23 per cent and 13.64 per cent to USD 9.2 billion, USD 4.17 billion and USD 3.23 billion, respectively. Pharmaceuticals exports, however, dipped by 1.15 per cent to USD 2.05 billion in January.

## SC relief for Future Retail

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 15:** The Supreme Court Tuesday granted liberty to Future Retail Ltd (FRL) to move the Delhi High Court for seeking continuation of its merger proceedings with Reliance Retail before the National Company Law Tribunal beyond the eighth stage of meeting of shareholders and creditors.

A bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana took note of the submission that FRL, incurring expenditure on daily basis, has been facing imminent threat of insolvency and any delay in the merger proceedings before the NCLT may virtually render the deal "redundant", besides putting at stake the livelihood of over 22,000 employees.

"In view of the submissions, we grant liberty to FRL to approach the High Court by filing an application seeking continuation of the NCLT proceedings beyond the 8th Stage (Meeting of Shareholders and creditors). Accordingly, we request the learned Single Judge of the Delhi High Court to consider all the contentions raised by both the parties in this regard and pass appropriate order as to continuation of the NCLT proceedings beyond the stage mentioned at serial no. 8 and other regulatory approvals expeditiously, uninfluenced by any observations made herein," the bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and Hima Kohli, said in the order.

## 'Indian firms rank 5th in their concern for climate change'

Indian companies are more likely to be implementing tougher climate actions compared with their global counterpart, says advisory firm Deloitte in its report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 15:** Indian businesses have ranked fifth based on their concern for climate change and Indian companies are more likely to be implementing tougher climate actions compared with their global counterpart, advisory firm Deloitte said in a report Tuesday.

The Deloitte survey, done across 21 countries during September-October 2021, has found a higher number of top-level executives in India responding to the issue of

climate change compared to the survey conducted in January-February 2021.

Deloitte said 2,000 top-level executives participated in the survey, including 163 CXO from India. "Indian businesses rank 5th in their concern for climate change," Deloitte's Global 2022 CXO Sustainability Survey report said.

According to the report, 80 per cent of Indian executives see the world at a tipping point for responding to climate change compared with just 53 per cent eight months ago.



Despite the gravity of the moment, there is a prevailing sense of optimism as 94 per cent currently (compared with 61 per cent eight months ago) agree that immediate action can limit the worst impacts of climate change.

"The surge in concern as well as optimism demonstrates that more leaders are cognizant of the need to act now," the Deloitte report said.

The survey results reassure us that Indian CXOs are taking cognisance and action towards climate change, and the new climate-centric regulations being introduced

will help boost accountability.

"The report reveals that Indian companies are ahead of their global peers in identifying those bold actions and making them part of their culture," Deloitte India partner Viral Thakker said.

According to the report, 80 per cent of Indian executives see the world at a tipping point for responding to climate change compared with just 53 per cent eight months ago. It found that the CXO are more focused on incorporating climate into their strategies and operations over the next three years.

# INDIA FOCUS ON COMBINATION

### TIME FOR ISHANS, IYERS TO IMPRESS AS ROHIT-LED TEAM INDIA HOPES TO REBUILD SIDE AHEAD OF T20 WORLD CUP



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Feb 15:** Flush with exciting talent and focussed on the T20 World Cup in exactly eight months' time, the Rohit Sharma-led Team India would be aiming to get its combinations right when it takes on the West Indies in a three-match series beginning here Wednesday.

India were the pre-tournament favourites but made a shocking group stage exit in the last T20 World Cup held in the UAE in October-November. The shambolic campaign exposed loopholes in the team combination and temperament, spoiling Virat Kohli's swansong as T20 skipper.

India will look to make amends and rebuild the side with a packed T20 calendar lined up ahead of the marquee event in Australia beginning October 16.

Rohit, under whom Mumbai Indians have won five IPL titles, would be looking to sort out issues such as the opening blues, the middle-order conundrum and also the bowling strategies. And he will have a happy headache of plenty while trying to firm up the squad. Just the other day at the IPL mega auction, wicketkeeper-bat-

ter Ishan Kishan hit the jackpot by landing a Rs 15.25 crore deal with Rohit's franchise Mumbai Indians.

In fact, 10 players from the current squad landed massive deals and all eyes would also be on the likes of Shreyas Iyer (KKR, ₹12.25 crore), Harshal Patel (RCB, ₹10.75 crore) and Shardul Thakur (DC, ₹10.75 crore).

#### Opening puzzle

First up would be the opening combination and who would be ideal to partner the skipper in the shortest format with his regular KL Rahul out with a left hamstring strain.

Ishan opened in the first match of their preceding three-match ODI series against the Caribbean team in Ahmedabad but the skipper also tried out Rishabh Pant and Shikhar Dhawan.

While Ishan may be the preferred choice, Rohit also has options in Maharashtra run machine Rituraj Gaikwad who has been in red hot form but has only been warming the bench.

Then there is Venkatesh Iyer, the KKR all-rounder who shot to prominence in the UAE leg of the last IPL as a big-hitting opener with 320 runs at an average of 40 and a strike rate of 125. He was

just behind Gaikwad who had more runs (407) in this period.

It will also be interesting if Virat Kohli comes out to open with Rohit to get among runs as he's been dealing with a lean patch. His last International century came at this very venue way back in November 2019 in the pink ball day/night Test against Bangladesh.

#### Middle and lower order conundrum

India have a packed white ball calendar in the run up to their T20 World Cup opener against Pakistan on October 23. So, it would not be a bad ploy for the think tank to give some much deserved rest to the dashing Pant as Ishan seems to be a confirmed selection in the side. This will help Rohit try out both Shreyas Iyer and Suryakumar Yadav in the same XI. The duo was in fine form in the recently-concluded ODI series.

Suryakumar was the top scorer in the ODI series with 104 runs at an average of 52.00, while Iyer scored a match-winning 80 in their 3-0 series sweeping win in the third ODI.

India also have some exciting options lower down the order with the likes of Shardul Thakur, Deepak Chahar and Harshal Patel.

#### Bishnoi will fancy his chances

Fresh from a stupendous comeback series in the ODIs, Yuzvendra Chahal will be India's regular spin option but it remains to be seen if exciting Rajasthan leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi gets a maiden call up. He was rewarded after an impressive run in the IPL and domestic circuit to be selected for the series.

With Washington Sundar ruled out of the series with a hamstring injury, it remains to be seen if the youngster from Jodhpur will get his maiden International cap.

#### Deaf factor, a concern?

With the chill in the air, dew can be a concern for both the teams at the Eden. The CAB has kept four pitches ready for the three matches to be played in five days.

#### INDIA SQUAD

Rohit Sharma (C), Ishan Kishan (wk), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Surya Kumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (wk), Venkatesh Iyer, Deepak Chahar, Shardul Thakur, Ravi Bishnoi, Yuzvendra Chahal, Mohammed Siraj, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Avesh Khan, Harshal Patel, Rituraj Gaikwad, Deepak Hooda, Kuldeep Yadav and Harpreet Brar.

# No concern over Virat's form: Rohit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Feb 15:** In no mood to talk about the prolonged lean patch that Virat Kohli is enduring, India captain Rohit Sharma on Tuesday said "everything will fall in place" if the chatter around him stops.

Ahead of the T20 series against the West Indies starting Wednesday, media queries were once again focussed on Kohli's batting form and Rohit wasn't pleased.

"I think it starts from you guys," Rohit was curt in his first response. "If you guys (media) can keep quiet for a while, everything will be alright. If talking from your side stops, everything will be taken care of," he added, in support of his predecessor.

Rohit said Kohli is not under any pressure and will come good soon. "He is in a very good space and he has been part of international team for more than a decade. He has spent so much time in international cricket that he knows how to handle pressure situations," Rohit said, not amused at repeated queries on Kohli's form.

"So I think everything starts from you guys. If you guys can keep it quiet for a bit everything will fall in place," he added.

Kohli has not scored a hundred for more than two years in international cricket. In ODIs, it has been three years since his last century. He has 44 hundreds in the format overall. But Kohli has scored a lot of half centuries which is an indication that he is not exactly in wretched form.

Tuesday, it was apparent that Rohit isn't pleased about Kohli being singled out for scrutiny at every media interaction. After the last game in the ODI series, Rohit was more playful when asked if Kohli needs a bit of confidence.

"Virat Kohli ko confidence ki zaroorat hai. Kya baat kar rahe ho yaar (Virat Kohli lacks confidence? What are you saying?)," he had said in jest. Tuesday, he looked dead serious.

"Need to give juniors security" "Experiment" is the buzz word in any global tournament year but Indian captain Rohit Sharma finds it a tad "over-rated" and he does not want the juniors in the team to feel insecure.

With T20 World Cup in Australia scheduled later this year, Rohit knows that some of the slots, like



pace and spin bowling all-rounders still need to be filled and he wants youngsters to get adequate chances.

"The word 'experiment' is a little overrated in my terms. We are trying to fill in that gap in our squad, so whatever it takes we will try and do," said Rohit.

So is he going to experiment in the lead up to the World T20, the skipper answered in negative. "Not necessarily experiment, because all these guys are very young, not played a lot of cricket to keep experimenting with them.

"We need to give them that assurance that game time, once we have that then we can try out. Till then we need to fill those gaps. Whatever it takes, we will do that," the team leader said.

India have a packed white ball calendar in the build up to the T20 World Cup in exactly eight months' time. They next face Sri Lanka in three T20Is which will be followed by a Test series.

"The idea is to identify the players who are going to play the World Cup and give them the game time. There are a lot of players who are injured. Come the World Cup, we don't know who's going to be fit and who's not.

"We just want to give the other guys the chance and be ready for that. We have a very packed schedule and injuries are bound to happen. So it's important that we give the guys who are going to fill those roles enough game time as well," he said.

Can Hardik play as pure batter? There were question marks over Hardik Pandya's bowling fitness in the last T20 World Cup in November last year in UAE. He has been out of International cricket since then recovering from his recurring back injury. But skipper Rohit said that the door is still open for him.

"Door is open to everyone. It's too early to make a decision on who will play in the World Cup. We have to make sure we have the right combination," Rohit said.

Since Hardik's injury, India have tried out many options to find a replacement for the ace pace bowling all-rounder with the likes of Venkatesh Iyer, Shardul Thakur but none has been able to leave a Pandya-like impression.

Asked whether they're looking at bringing in Hardik as a pure batter, Rohit said they have not had any discussion on the all-rounder as yet.

# Odisha FC take on CFC in do-or-die encounter



Javi Hernandez (L) and Jonathas would be crucial for Odisha against CFC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Vasco, Feb 15:** With their playoff berth hopes hanging by a thread, it will be a do-or-die affair for Chennaiyin FC (CFC) and Odisha FC when they meet in a crunch Indian Super League (ISL) match here Wednesday.

Odisha are placed seventh in the standings with 21 points from 16 games. Chennaiyin are a rung below them at eighth place with 19 points from 16 matches.

A play-off spot is an uphill task for both teams with only four games remaining but anything short of a win Wednesday will make this virtually impossible.

Odisha were drubbed 1-4 by Mumbai City FC in their last outing while Chennaiyin suffered their heaviest defeat to FC Goa which resulted in them parting ways with their head coach Bozidar Bandovic.

Assistant coach Sabir Pasha will be in charge Wednesday. CFC are winless in the last four matches, failing to score a single goal in three of their last four outings.

For Odisha, a win will take them in touching distance with the top four and head coach Kino Garcia said the heavy loss to Mumbai is now behind them and all their focus is on the Chennaiyin game. "We have focused on recovery as we play two games in a short period."

Asked about Odisha's struggling backline, he added: "It's not just the defence but the whole team. When we concede a goal it's the whole team which is accountable. We need to improve some aspects. We are in the way of improving and we are working hard."

"It's going to be a difficult game for both. Both teams are coming off big losses. Both will go for a win and it will be a good game."

# India eves suffer 3-wicket loss

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Queenstown, Feb 15:** India felt the absence of experienced pacer Jhulan Goswami as they failed to defend an imposing 270 to go down by three wickets in the second women's ODI against New Zealand here Tuesday. The loss meant that the visitors have now conceded a 0-2 lead in the five-match series.

Deepthi Sharma took 4/52 while her spin colleagues Poonam Yadav, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, and Harmanpreet Kaur took a wicket apiece. But India failed in the pace department with Pooja Vastrakar and debutant Simran Bahadur leaking runs without taking any wickets.

The presence of Goswami, rested from this game to try out new talent, could have made the difference after Indian batters rose to the occasion to set a stiff target of 271 for New Zealand despite the continued absence of star opener Smriti Mandhana, who inexplicably remains in extended quarantine.

But Amelia Kerr made the difference with her unbeaten 119 off 135 balls (7x4) as New Zealand surpassed the target with one over to spare by reaching 273/7.

The Indian bowlers lost the plot in the middle overs when they allowed Amelia Kerr and Maddy Green (52, 61b, 5x4) to stitch a 128-run stand from 24.4 overs for the fourth wicket.

Green was dropped by Taniya Bhatia when on 23 while Kerr survived a few half chances towards the end of New Zealand run chase. New Zealand did not have the best of starts as they were 55/3 in the ninth over.



Deepthi Sharma (L) celebrates after getting a wicket, Tuesday

Sophie Devine (33), first match centurion Suzie Bates (16) and captain Amy Satterthwaite (0) returned to the dressing room before the 10th over.

Earlier, captain Mithali Raj continued her fine form with an unbeaten 66 (81b, 3x4) while Richa Ghosh (65, 64b, 6x4, 1x6) also struck a half century as India posted 270/6. Ghosh and Raj shared 108 runs in 17.4 overs for the fifth wicket to help India set a stiff target for the home side. In the later part of her innings, Gosh struggled while running for quick runs.

Sabbhini Meghana also made a significant contribution with a 50-

ball 49 (7x4) to stitch 61 runs for the opening wicket with Shafali Varma (24), who, however, failed to convert a good start yet again.

Yastika Bhatia contributed 31 from 38 balls this time as the Indian top-order, except for vice-captain Harmanpreet Kaur, gave a good account of itself. For New Zealand, Sophie Devine was the pick of the bowlers with 2/42.

**Brief scores:** India Women 270/6 (Mithali Raj 66 n o, Richa Ghosh 65, Sabbhini Meghana 49; Sophie Devine 2/42) lost to New Zealand Women 273/7 (Amelia Kerr 119 n o, Maddy Green 52; Deepthi Sharma 4/52) by 3 wickets.

# BADMINTON ASIA TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS Indian men go down tamely against Korea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shah Alam (Malaysia), Feb 15:** The young Indian men's team, led by world championship bronze medallist Lakshya Sen, suffered an embarrassing 0-5 defeat against Korea in the opening group A match of the Badminton Asia Team Championships, here Tuesday.

A lot was expected from India Open winner Lakshya but the World No.13 Indian went down 11-21, 19-21 to Jeon Hyeok Jin in 42 minutes.

The pairing of Ravikrishna PS and Sankar Prasad Udayakumar, who had reached the finals of the Odisha Open, then slumped to a 8-21, 10-21 defeat against Hwi Tae Kim and Kim Jaehwan as India lagged 0-2.

World No.75 Kiran George, who had won his maiden super 100 crown in Odisha, then failed to get across Joo Wan Kim, losing 18-21, 14-21 to Joo Wan Kim in 42 minutes as Korea grabbed an unassailable 3-0 lead.

Nothing changed in the second doubles with Manjit Singh Khwairakpam and Dingku Singh Konthoujam losing 7-21, 15-21 to Yong Jin and Na Sung Seung.

Mithun Manjunath then put up a brave effort before going down 16-21, 27-25, 14-21 against Min Sun Jeong in the fifth and final match.

The men's team will next face Hong Kong Thursday. The Indian women's team will start their campaign against hosts Malaysia in group Y Wednesday.



Lakshya Sen fails to impress at Asia Team Championships

# Kohli all set for 100th Test in Mohali; D/N tie in Bangalore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 15:** The BCCI Tuesday announced a revised itinerary for the home series against Sri Lanka, beginning February 25, confirming that the T20I series will be played before the two Tests.

Originally, the two-Test series was planned before the T20s but the BCCI has made the change following a request from Sri Lanka Cricket. It was widely reported that the

T20s against the Lankan side will take place before Test matches in Mohali and Bangalore and the cricket body has now confirmed it.

Virat Kohli is expected to play his 100th game in Mohali from March 4-8. The second Test will be played in Bangalore from February 12-16 and will be a day-night affair.

The first T20 will be played in Lucknow February 25 before the teams travel to Dharamsala for 2nd and 3rd game Feb 26 and 27.

# FEDERATION CUP VOLLEYBALL C'SHIP INAUGURATED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 15:** The 34th Federation Cup Volleyball (Men & Women) Championship has been inaugurated Biju Patnaik Indoor Stadium, KIIT Deemed to be University here, Tuesday.

The seven-day tournament, which will conclude February 21, is jointly organised by Volleyball Federation of India (VFI), Odisha Volleyball Association (OVA) & KIIT - Deemed to be University,

Bhubaneswar with the support of the Sports & Youth Services Department, Govt. of Odisha.

This Championship will feature nine men's teams (Haryana, Assam, Kerala, Railways, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Services, Rajasthan and Odisha) and five women's teams (Kerala, Railways, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh and Odisha).

#### ARADHYA REIGNS SUPREME

Odisha's Aradhya Verma had contrasting fortunes at the AITA



Championship Series Tennis Tournament in Rohtak, Haryana. Aradhya won the title in the U-16 girls' singles category in the event, which concluded February 11.

However, she had to settle for runner-up position in the U-14 girls' singles category after suffering a loss in the summit clash.

"Odisha girl Aradhya Verma won the U-16 singles title and finished U-14 runner-up at the AITA Championship Series Tennis Tournament in Rohtak, Haryana.

Congratulations!" tweeted Department of Sports and Youth Services, Govt. of Odisha.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik also congratulated the youngster. "Congratulations young tennis player from Odisha, Aradhya Verma on winning the U-16 singles title and finishing U-14 runners-up at the AITA Championship Series Tennis Tournament in Rohtak, Haryana. Wish her all the very best for future," read a post from Patnaik's official Twitter handle.