



CREATIVE COLLABORATION
Actor-director Nandita Das has roped in comedian Kapil Sharma as lead for her next untitled film to be shot in Bhubaneswar **LEISURE P2**



SPACEWALKING & MORE
Jared Isaacman, who chartered the first all-civilian orbital spaceflight, announces 3 more missions with 'SpaceX' **INTERNATIONAL P10**



INDIA EYE SERIES WIN
India look to seal T20I series against West Indies by winning the second game of the 3-match rubber **SPORTS P12**

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I-T raids former NSE chief's residence
New Delhi/Mumbai: The Income Tax Department raided Thursday the premises of former NSE MD and CEO Chitra Ramkrishna and group operating officer Anand Subramanian in Mumbai and Chennai as part of a tax evasion investigation against them, official sources said in New Delhi. The premises were raided by officials of the Mumbai investigation wing of the department. A premise in Chennai linked to Ramkrishna was also searched. The teams have taken possession of some documents from all the premises searched, they said. Ramkrishna hit the headlines after a recent Sebi order said she was steered by a yogi, dwelling in the Himalayan ranges, in the appointment of Subramanian as the exchange's group operating officer and advisor to the managing director (MD). Sebi also alleged that she had shared confidential information with the sage. It levied a fine of ₹3 crore on Ramkrishna and ₹2 crore on Subramanian.

Russia will attack Ukraine anytime: US
United Nations: The US told Thursday the UN Security Council (UNSC) that its information indicates that over 1,50,000 Russian forces have amassed around Ukraine's borders. They are preparing to launch an attack against Ukraine 'in the coming days'. "As we meet today, the most immediate threat to peace and security is Russia's looming aggression against Ukraine," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the UNSC. "Russia says it's reducing those forces. We do not see that happening. Our information indicates clearly that these forces including ground troops, aircraft and ships are preparing to launch an attack against Ukraine anytime in the coming days," he added.

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36 ARRESTED FOR POLL VIOLENCE



8 persons allegedly involved in attacking journalists in Puri have been arrested

Since reports of violence in some districts emerged, police have launched a manhunt to trace the alleged miscreants and have been rounding them up from various places

video which has gone viral. In it, both Karunakar and Maninatha are allegedly seen depositing ballot papers in boxes with the help of others. They are allegedly carrying out the act in the presence of election officials at booth No. 5 in Rudrapur panchayat.

With the new arrests a total of 14 persons have so far been nabbed in Jajpur district for incidents related to poll violence.

Officials also informed that 16 people have been apprehended in Puri district. Among them are the eight who had allegedly assaulted mediapersons covering the panchayat polls. The journalists were attacked by a group of people at a booth in Badala panchayat under Kanas block of Puri district. The alleged offenders were produced in court Thursday and sent to judicial custody.

Six persons have also been arrested in Dhenkanal district for their involvement in booth cap-

Aspirants nabbed for cash distribution

NAYAGARH: Three persons, including an aspirant to the sarpanch post and a samiti member candidate were arrested in Mayurajhalia panchayat under Ranapur block of Nayagarh district for allegedly distributing cash and liquor among voters to woo them. The accused have been identified as sarpanch aspirant Sushant Kumar Kalasa, samiti member candidate Manmanth Tripathi and Nanda Maharana, husband of a ward member candidate. Sources said that the three were detained late Wednesday night when they were distributing cash and liquor among the villagers of Mayurajhalia. The three were then handed over to Chandpur police. Two motorcycles and 10 litres of liquor were seized from the possession of the trio. Police said that they are probing the incident and trying to find out if others are also involved with the three arrested.

turing and tampering with the election process.

Earlier in the day, State Election Commissioner Aditya Prasad Padhi had a meeting with Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra and DGP Sunil Bansal to discuss steps needed to conduct the elections in the remaining four phases peacefully. After the meeting Bansal said violence will not be tolerated and the perpetrators will be arrested.



Polling officials walk on a narrow plank to board a boat at Kenduguda ghat under Tentulikhunti block of Nabarangpur district which will take them to a booth on the other side of the Indrabati reservoir for the panchayat elections scheduled Friday

Repolling at 25 booths in 4 districts proposed

In the 1st phase, the highest turnout was registered in Boudh district while Ganjam recorded the lowest polling percentage

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: The State Election Commission (SEC) has received proposal for re-polling at 25 places in four districts based on reports from the concerned district collectors. A decision on this issue will be taken soon, an official of the SEC said Thursday. Secretary to State Election Commission, Rabintra Sahu said that the recommendation for re-polling has been done for 11 booths in Jajpur district, five booths each in Jajpur district, five booths each in Puri and Bhadrak districts and four in Dhenkanal district. Close to 50 persons were injured in incidents of violence in some of the districts during the first phase

of the three-tier panchayat polls Wednesday.

The SEC also said a total of 77.2 per cent of the 67.51 lakh voters exercised their franchise in the first phase. The SEC released the final polling data Thursday. Boudh district recorded the highest voter turnout of 84.7 per cent while Ganjam with 64.96 per cent polling emerged the lowest.

Among other districts Angul registered 82.6 per cent polling while it was 76.58 per cent in Balasore. The percentage in other districts were Bolangir (70.24%), Bargarh (79.37%), Bhadrak (76.5%), Cuttack (76.87%), Deogarh (83.75%), Dhenkanal (78.94%), Gajapati (79.57%), Jagatsinghpur (77.57%), Jajpur (74.5%), Jharsuguda (82.1%), Kalahandi (81.12%), Kandhamal (76.33%), Kendrapara (71.76%), Keonjhar (78.43%), Khurda (71%), Koraput (80.2%), Malkangiri (77.86%), Mayurbhanj (78.42%), Nabarangpur (80.54%), Nayagarh (73.63%), Nuapada (75.57%), Puri

SECURITY BEEFED UP FOR 2ND PHASE

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Police have deployed 240 platoons and 1,753 mobile patrolling units as part of its security arrangement to ensure smooth conduct of second phase of the three-tier panchayat polls in the state Friday. Over 62 lakh voters will cast their votes to elect sarpanchs, samiti members and ward members in 1,514 panchayats under 186 Zilla Parishad (ZP) zones. Also district police officers have been engaged all across the state as part of the security measures. A total of 20,435 booths will be operational for the polls out of which 3,065 have been identified as sensitive.

(76.32%), Rayagada (76.95%), Sambalpur (77.25%), Subarnapur (81.56%) and Sundargarh (72.69%). Elections were held for 200 Zilla Parishad seats at 22,379 booths in 1,669 panchayats of 70 blocks in the first phase.

Odisha's Don Juan failed to clear even Matric examination

Despite his lack of education, Swain had managed to con well-educated women

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: 'Fake doctor' Ramesh Swain, who was recently arrested for conning and marrying 17 women in different parts of India has actually failed to clear matriculation exams. This information was given by Bhubaneswar DCP Umashankar Dash here Thursday. The police are surprised as to how Swain managed to con his victims who were all educated and successful in their professional worlds.

Dash informed that Capital city police had got in touch with relatives of Swain following his arrest to know his background. They have informed that Swain failed to complete his Class X studies. "This is being verified," Dash said. However, the misdeeds of Swain have not just been limited to conning women. They informed that the 'fake doctor' has also duped a large number of people on the pretext of providing employment and arranging seats for MBBS courses. Swain had set up two clinics after obtaining franchises of a premier healthcare centre in Cuttack. One clinic was set up in Badamba and the other in Cuttack city, the Bhubaneswar DCP said.

Dash informed that Swain had not paid salaries to 15 women employed at the Badamba clinic. "He had also duped a doctor of some lakhs after engaging him at the clinic in Cuttack city," informed Dash.

More and more women and other victims of Swain are coming forward with complaints. "We have received three more complaints since his arrest. We suspect some more people are involved with Swain and have helped him to commit the frauds," Dash stated. Police also conducted searches at the rented house of Swain in Patrapada. Several documents have been seized by the sleuths. Notably, Swain had taken the house on rent after identifying himself as the Deputy Director of Health Department.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Sansad TV is off YouTube because it was hacked. It has nothing to do with us telling half truths in the House

NCW chief for CBI probe into Mamita murder

CUTTACK: National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Rekha Sharma has demanded a probe by the CBI into the murder of Kalahandi school teacher Mamita Meher. Her observations came after she met with Odisha DGP Sunil Bansal. During the meeting, Sharma asked the top cop to recommend to the Odisha government for CBI probe into the case. "The chargesheet filed in the court in the case can be strengthened

by adding new evidence. This was my suggestion to the DGP as I feel the probe may be inefficient. So the CBI can be roped in to investigate the case and additions can be made in the chargesheet," Sharma told reporters after the meeting.

Sharma also expressed surprise that Minister of State for Home Dibyashankar Mishra has not been questioned on the case despite reports of his alleged links with the victim.

'Wildfires, noise pollution push human mortality'

The UNEP is concerned about various factors leading to climate changes which in turn is affecting the human life cycle drastically

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



Report. In its first report in 2016 it had warned the world about the growing risk of zoonotic (infectious illness caused by bacteria or virus) diseases, four years before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The 'Frontiers Report' identifies and offers solutions to three environmental issues that merit attention and action from

governments and the public at large," UNEP executive director Inger Andersen said in the report.

"Urban noise pollution, wildfires and phenological shifts are issues that highlight the urgent need to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. These factors can also reduce mortality not only in animals, but also in human

beings," Andersen said. The latest edition of the 'Frontiers Report', *Noise, Blazes and Mismatches: Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern*, has been released days before the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) resumes. The report says noise pollution in cities is a growing hazard to public health. Unwanted, prolonged and high-level sounds from road traffic, railways, or leisure activities impair human health and well-being. This includes chronic annoyance and sleep disturbance, resulting in severe heart diseases and metabolic disorders such as diabetes, hearing impairment, and poorer mental health. Ultimately it reduces the life span.

Noise pollution already leads to 12,000 premature deaths each year in the EU and affects one in five EU citizens (no information for India available). Acceptable noise levels are surpassed in many cities world-

wide, including Algiers, Bangkok, Damascus, Dhaka, Ho Chi Minh City, Ibadan, Islamabad and New York, the report states.

Particularly affected are the very young, the elderly and marginalised communities near high traffic roads, and industrial areas and far from green spaces.

According to the report, dangerous wildfire weather is projected to get worse. Each year, between 2002 and 2016, an average of about 423 million hectares or 4.23 million sq km of the earth's land surface - an area about the size of the entire European Union - has been burnt. The wildfires are becoming more common in mixed forest and savannah ecosystems.

This in turn is affecting climate making the earth a hotter place to stay in which in turn is also leading to metabolic disorders and diseases in human beings and reducing their life span, the report said.

More and more women and other victims of Swain are coming forward with complaints. "We have received three more complaints since his arrest. We suspect some more people are involved with Swain and have helped him to commit the frauds," Dash stated.

Police also conducted searches at the rented house of Swain in Patrapada. Several documents have been seized by the sleuths. Notably, Swain had taken the house on rent after identifying himself as the Deputy Director of Health Department.

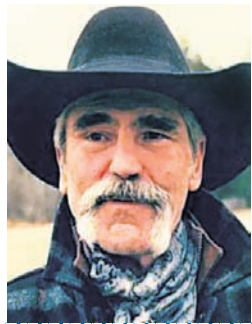
MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	57892.01 ↓ 104.67
NIFTY	17304.60 ↓ 17.60
DOLLAR	75.36 ↓ ₹0.05
EURO	85.41 ↓ ₹0.16
GOLD	₹50,229 ↑ ₹611
SILVER	₹63,728 ↑ ₹429

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	30.8°C	30.0°C
TEMP MIN	17.4°C	17.5°C
Humidity	89%	86%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather most likely	

leisure

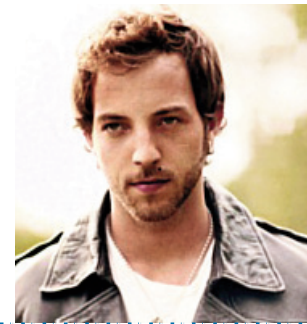


FORRIE REFUSES TO GET VAXED, WON'T ATTEND SAG AWARDS

Actor Forrie J Smith, who stars as Lloyd Pierce in drama series *Yellowstone*, will give a miss to the upcoming Screen Actors Guild Awards (SAG awards) as he has refused to bow down to the vaccination protocols at the venue.

WHEN JAMES MORRISON STRUGGLED TO WRITE MUSIC

You Give Me Something singer James Morrison reveals he finds it tough to write music during difficult periods of his life. The 37-year-old singer lost his dad a decade ago, and he admitted it made him reassess his priorities, reports *femalefirst.com*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Your ability to let go things will reflect in your personal as well as your professional life. Today could be a significant day for you, and Ganesh advises you not to forget your special abilities. Make good use of them so that others too can benefit.

TAURUS

This day you will be prone to be stubborn and uncompromising in your business and professional dealings and thereby inviting unnecessary problems. Ganesh urges you to guard against this tendency and conduct yourself cordially and amiably with your colleagues and clients. The day will turn out well for executives and administrators.

GEMINI

You need to break free from the shackles of your daily routine. Trying to finish all your tasks as per your schedule will give rise to unnecessary worry. To manage your time creatively is the best way to beat the stress. Talking to your elders is a good way to calm your shot nerves, says Ganesh.

CANCER

Your social prestige will go up. People will praise your personality traits and try to emulate you. You will be a role model, too. Ganesh feels that this will be highly profitable day for you.

LEO

You will try to take up new projects to the best of your abilities today. You will be able to successfully tackle all your tasks today. You will face a little instability in your personal relationships, but will be able to solve all issues successfully, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

Today you will feel monetarily much stronger than you have ever felt, says Ganesh. You will realise the need to make monetary arrangements for some unforeseen financial instability that may occur in the future. Your leadership qualities will be appreciated by people around you. Ganesh warns that there may be wild fluctuations in monetary transactions.

LIBRA

Ganesh says today you may be able to undertake travel for business or pleasure purposes. It may be a busy day for you work wise and you may not be able to completely focus on your family or family issues. Try your luck in the stock market today, as it may prove beneficial to you. If there are certain issues or problems they will be sorted out today because of your varied skills and past experiences.

SCORPIO

Be vigilant; keep your eyes and ears open for all the events happening around you, says Ganesh. Your intuition is trying to tell you something, trust it. Think and act positively, the rest would fall in place.

SAGITTARIUS

Keeping all the work aside, you may be painting the town red today. Falling in love is exciting, isn't it? However, for all those who are already in a relationship, Ganesh shows a red signal. Avoid arguments with your loved one. He suggests, impress 'the special one' with a bouquet of red roses and make up for all the petty fights during the day.

CAPRICORN

Opportunities don't knock on the door twice. Today, you'll answer the door and utilise the opportunity to the most, predicts Ganesh. Positive results will be visible and you'll stand a chance to overtake your competitors. Even if the competition is fierce and opponents try everything to pull you down, you'll not let them win the battle. Socially, you will be very popular today.

AQUARIUS

It's family time, and your near and dear will be mighty pleased. You will pamper and fuss over them, and will even pull funny faces to make them smile. Your love and affection will undoubtedly pay off, and come back to you in more ways than one. Ganesh says you deserve a pat on the back for being so devoted to family.

PISCES

You have been neglecting your health of late, a fact which is hammered home by your ill-fitting trousers today! So, while you ignored the adage of prevention being better than cure, you could still make a stitch in time to save nine! Head for the gym, and watch those calories, says Ganesh.



Kumar Sanu, Alka Yagnik to reunite on stage in Dubai

Mumbai: Playback singers Kumar Sanu and Alka Yagnik will be coming together after five years to perform at a concert in Dubai as a part of *The Legends of Bollywood* show. Talking about the concert, Sanu said, "Alka and I had sung a lot of amazing songs in Bollywood films, and our duets used to create magic for the audiences. We are performing together on stage after five years and I hope to create new memories with the same magic and cherish the old ones." "I always have had a homely experience performing for the warm crowd of Dubai and I am quite excited to perform there after years", he added. Alka Yagnik shared her thoughts on reuniting on stage with her fellow singer, "It would be amazing to go back on stage with Kumar Sanu after years. Bringing back the 90s for Bollywood lovers in Dubai would be no less than walking down memory lane." She further said, "And I feel we all need a little bit of joy and good memories through music after what we have gone through in these horrendous last two years. I can't wait to go back to what I do best, i.e., entertaining my audiences." The two will perform at the Coca-Cola Arena in Dubai February 26.



Alia's regal look at Berlinale

Mumbai: Actress Alia Bhatt looked every inch regal dressed in an ivory silk chiffon saree by renowned designers Rimple and Harpreet during the screening of *Gangubai Kathiawadi* at the ongoing Berlin Film Festival. The *Sadak 2* actress made an appearance in a pristine white saree by the popular designer duo in Berlin Thursday at the screening of the Sanjay Leela Bhansali's upcoming directorial at the event. Designer duo Rimple and Harpreet said: "It was an absolute pleasure to design for Mr Bhansali and Alia Bhatt for the screening of *Gangubai Kathiawadi* at Berlin film festival. Though we regularly style celebrities on red carpet and movies, this was special because the entire ensemble for Alia has been created exclusively for the screening, keeping her personal style & comfort in consideration." The designers kept the thematic essence of the film in mind as well as creating a look that was a modern classic. It took approximately three thousand and four hundred man hours and a team of twenty five master kargars to complete the saree which features delicate handcrafted embroideries referenced from archival Edwardian and French Lace Shawls. *Gangubai Kathiawadi* is scheduled to release February 25.

Nandita ropes in Kapil for her next

The yet-to-be-titled film, set in Bhubaneswar, will attempt to make visible what's hidden in plain sight, says the 'Fire' actor

Mumbai: Actor-director-writer Nandita Das Thursday announced her next film, featuring popular comedian-actor Kapil Sharma and Shahana Goswami. The untitled film is being produced by Applause Entertainment and Nandita Das Initiatives. Set in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, it will feature Sharma in the role of a food delivery rider and Goswami plays his wife. Das, who has helmed critically-acclaimed films like *Firaaq*, *Manto*, said, "The film attempts to make visible what's hidden in plain sight. And for this, the cast and crew have serendipitously come together." Speaking of casting Sharma and Goswami, the filmmaker said the comedian will surprise the audience while she is looking forward to working with Goswami after "Firaaq". Kapil said he is thrilled to collaborate with Das, who has a distinct style. "I am very excited about this project, not because I am doing a film, but because I am doing Nandita Das' film, whom I have seen both as an actor and a director. She has a very distinct and deep way of looking at things and a keen eye for detailing. So, my job as an actor is to just do what she tells me," he said. Goswami said she is happier to be on an adventure with Das again after *Firaaq* and is also looking forward to working with Sharma. "I'm looking forward to this wonderful creative collaboration with so many extremely talented people," the actor, best known for *Rock On!!*, *Bombay Begums*, said. The team is scheduled to begin filming later this month.

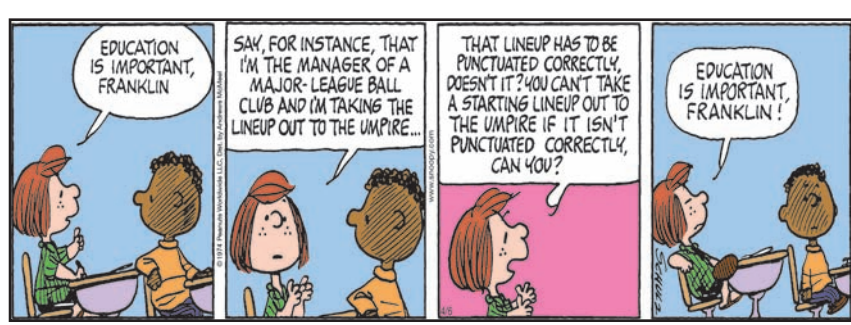


Plight of aged comes alive in play Abasara



BHUABANESWAR: Asim Utsav, a two-day theatre festival in the memory of eminent artist and theatre personality Asim Basu, kicked off Thursday here at Rabindra Mandap. The event is being organised by Asim Basu Foundation, Bhubaneswar in collaboration with the Department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture. City based theatre troupe Pancham Veda presented the play *Abasara* on the inaugural evening of the festival. Written by Hara Barik, the drama was directed by Haren Sahoo. The plot revolved around a father who does everything to put his son's needs before his own. But when he gets older and needs attention, he is deserted by his family as well as the society. He is treated as a liability and abandoned. The play drove home the point that the senior citizens deserve to be treated with dignity and taken care of at their twilight years by the younger generation. The guests who attended the event included theatre personality Banchhanidhi Patnaik, film dialogue writer Rajani Ranjan, culture scholar Asit Mohanty and eminent painter Ramahari Jena.

PEANUTS



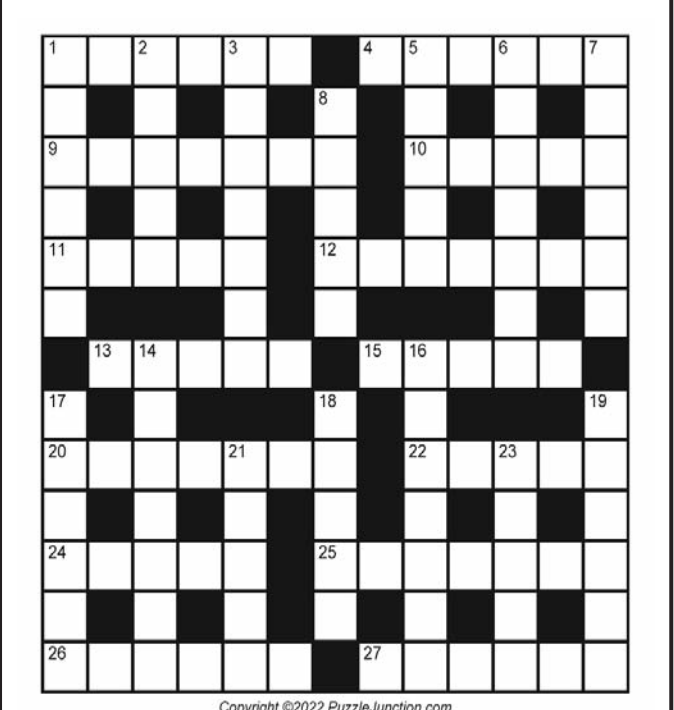
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



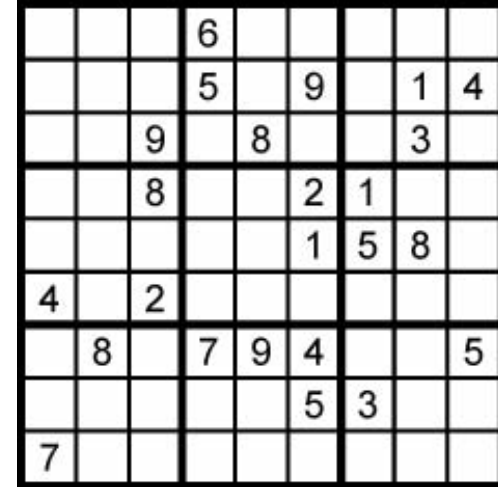
FUN post CROSSWORD



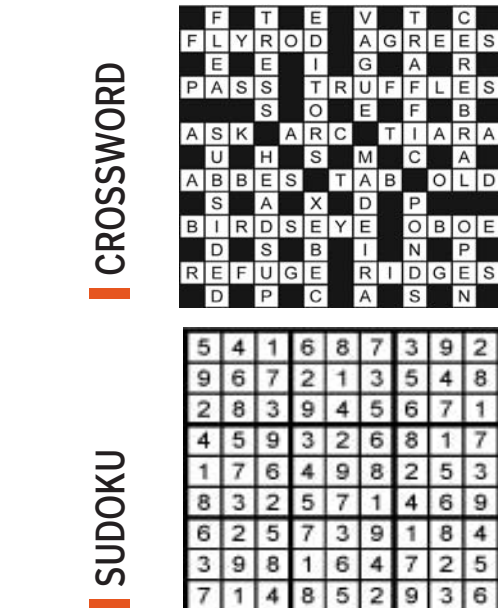
- Copyright ©2022 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Live
 - 4 Partially close the eyes
 - 9 Food market
 - 10 Append
 - 11 Subdued
 - 12 Employ
 - 13 Garish
 - 15 Related maternally
 - 20 Load, as a program
 - 22 Blood carrier
 - 24 Welsh dog
 - 25 Wander aimlessly
 - 26 Ennui
 - 27 Ravine
 - 7 Hacks
 - 8 Pancake topper
 - 14 Guaranteed
 - 16 Falls of New York
 - 17 Cheetah, for one (3,3)
 - 18 Pipe vise, for one
 - 19 Rabbit haven
 - 21 Gallic goodbye
 - 23 Healthy appearance
- Down**
- 1 Time in power
 - 2 Pint-sized
 - 3 Frightening
 - 5 Somewhat
 - 6 Cause pain

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



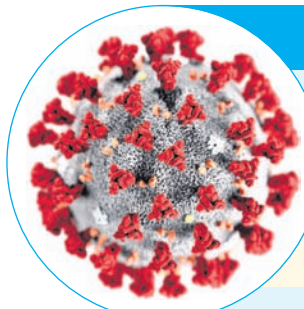
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



CROP PROTECTION

A farmer sprinkles pesticide in his field near Daya river, on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	41,90,37,505	34,24,53,643	58,72,558
India	4,27,54,315	4,19,10,984	5,10,413
Odisha	12,80,784	12,63,106	8,961

Automated Driving Test System at all RTOs soon

THE FACILITY WILL NOT ONLY CHECK THE APPLICANTS' SKILLS BUT WILL ALSO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY WHILE ISSUING LICENSES



In the first phase, ADTS will be set up in driving test tracks of 19 RTOs—Angul, Baripada, Bhadrak, Bolangir, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Nayagarh, Phulbani, Rairangpur, Rourkela, Sundargarh, Talcher, Keonjhar, Malkangiri, Nuapada, Bhanjanagar, Nabarangpur and Sonepur

The system will sport a modern setup, including video analytics technology and a vast array of cameras and sensors. From the entry of the vehicles to its inspection and driving test, everything will be conducted digitally

The skill test of an applicant will be judged on parameters like seat belt, path change, lane-driving, stop line, up-gradient, and forward-8, reverse-5 and traffic junctions

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: In a bid to reduce human interference and ensure transparency while issuing driving licence, the State Transport Authority (STA) will soon put in place an Automated Driving Test System (ADTS) at the driving test tracks of all Regional Transport Offices (RTOs) in Odisha, an official said Thursday.

Sources said the ADTS, for which the tender has already been floated, will not only check the applicant's driving skills but also ensure transparency while issuing licenses. In the first phase, ADTS will be set up in driving test tracks of 19 RTOs—Angul, Baripada, Bhadrak, Bolangir, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Nayagarh, Phulbani, Rairangpur, Rourkela, Sundargarh, Talcher, Keonjhar, Malkangiri, Nuapada, Bhanjanagar, Nabarangpur and Sonepur; it was learnt.

The system will sport a state-of-the-art setup, including video analytics technology and a vast array of cameras and sensors. From the entry of the vehicles to its inspection and driving test, everything will be conducted digitally.

"The digital testing track sensors

official about the new system. The skill test of an applicant will be judged on parameters like seat belt, path change, lane-driving, stop line, up-gradient, and forward-8, reverse-5 and traffic junctions. The waiting area will be equipped with a LED television which will continuously play pass and fail videos for LMVs and two-wheelers. The screen shall display an informative video of driving test procedure along with road safety awareness videos. "Another LED television shall be utilised to display videos—top view camera / video analytics camera live view with track name for all the tracks," said an official. Advanced training methods for efficient and transparent testing of candidates aspiring for a driving licence would help reduce road accidents in the state, added the official. "The modern system will effectively use easily replicable technology for competent and transparent service delivery. Leveraging multiple technologies, the entire process will ensure accuracy and minimize human interaction, leaving no scope for manipulation," said the official, adding the test procedure will also bar inefficient drivers seeking driving licences, allowing safer roads for the citizens.

4 DISTRICTS MAY RECEIVE RAIN

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: The regional office of India Meteorological Department (IMD) here Thursday said rain is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Nuapada, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh and Bargarh in the next 24 hours.

The IMD predicted that rain and thundershowers are expected in Odisha for three days beginning January 19. There will be no change in the minimum (night) temperature during the next four to five days, it said.

"Dry weather is very likely to prevail over the districts of Odisha till February 20. The minimum temperatures recorded an appreciable rise at a few places over north interior Odisha and at one or two places over south interior parts of the state in the past 24 hours," it added.

Depute dist level officers for RUSA projects: Govt

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: The Higher Education (HE) department Thursday directed the Regional Director of Education and Collectors of six districts to depute officials at the district level in order to help central and state officers during the physical review of the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) projects.

In a letter, HE Special Secretary Rajashree Mohanty directed the Regional Director of Education and Collectors of Bolangir, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Kalahandi, Kandhamal and Koraput to depute district level officials to help officers from the Ministry of Education and the state government during the latter's physical review of projects approved under the RUSA.

Odisha has so far received a central share of Rs 35.42 crore under various components of RUSA scheme.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



BJD delegates meet SEC citing poll violence by BJP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: A Biju Janata Dal (BJD) delegation Thursday met the State Election Commission (SEC) and handed over a memorandum on massive electoral violence in the state allegedly committed by the BJP. It said BJP workers unleashed attacks on Biju Janata Dal workers in the three-tier panchayat election.

They requested the SEC to take strong action against such BJP leaders involved in the electoral violence against the Biju Janata Dal workers.

BJD leader Sulata Deo said as the second phase voting will happen Friday, the saffron party has unleashed a series of attacks on BJD

Biju Janata Dal leader Sulata Deo said as the second phase voting will happen Friday, the saffron party has unleashed a series of attacks on BJD workers and journalists across the state

workers and journalists across the state. She said, the election commissioner should extend adequate security during voting.

"BJP Odisha thrives on violence. If appropriate action is not taken

against the perpetrators of violence, the state unit of the BJP will indulge in more violence. Foreseeing defeat, BJP is resorting to violence and intentionally spreading false information intimidating voters," she said.

Immediate action may kindly be taken against Bibhuti Bhusan Jena, BJP's Ganjam district president and other BJP workers for violating the model code of conduct in Golanthara February 16, 2022, she added.

Immediate action should be taken against Sambalpur MLA Jayanarayan Mishra and other BJP leaders and the attackers of BJD's Zilla Parisada candidate from Pipli, Dharanidhar Sahoo, need to be arrested.

37.5L rural households receiving tap water

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 17: As many as 37.5 lakh households in rural Odisha have tap water connections, a Ministry of Jal Shakti official said.

According to the ministry, 34,43,480 households have been provided with tap water connections since the launch of the Jal Jeevan Mission in 2019. Before that, only 3.10 lakh out of the 88.33 lakh rural households in the state had tap water connections, it added.

The ministry said over 6,000 out of 47,000 villages in the state have 100 per cent tap water connections.

"With the active participation of people, especially women, and rural communities working together, Jal Jeevan Mission has become a Jan Andolan. For long term drinking water security, local communities and gram panchayats are coming forward and taking responsibility to manage in village water supply systems, their water resources and grey water," said the ministry. It further said that Jal Jeevan Mission is on track to fulfil the government's resolve to ensure tap water supply to every rural household by 2024.

PREP FOR MAHA SHIVRATRI



Surendra Behera, an artisan, shapes a huge clay lamp at Kumbhar Sahi in Bidanasi area of Cuttack, Thursday, for Maha Shivratri

8 held for attacking jurnos in Kanas

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, Feb 17: Puri police Thursday claimed to have arrested eight persons on charges of attacking journalists while they were covering the first phase of election at Badal gram panchayat in Kanas Wednesday.

The accused were identified as Satyapriya Moharana, 40, Bijay Swain, 30, Subas Majhi, 36, Nikunja Swain, 57, Uma Bhujbal, 21, Ajay Barisal, 38, Bidyadhar Swain, 40, and Brajabandhu Swain, 60, all residents of Badal village in the Pilgrim City.

Sources said the incident took place Wednesday when journalists of two media houses were covering the first phase of election. "A group of miscreants attacked the scribes, leaving them injured," said a source. Following the incident, two cases (50/22 and 51/22) were registered in this regard under Section 341, 323, 325, 294, 506, 307, 395 and 34 of the IPC and a manhunt was launched.

Sources said a special team, led by additional superintendent of police Purnachandra Pradhan and sub-divisional police officer Kishore Mund, has been investigating the issue.

Hockey star Birendra Lakra appointed as DSP in police

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: The state government Thursday appointed Olympic bronze medalist and hockey star from Odisha Birendra Lakra as Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) in Odisha Police.

In a tweet Thursday Odisha Police said "In a Heartiest Congratulations to Birendra Lakra for joining as DSP in Odisha Police. It's a matter of immense pleasure to have the Olympian in @odisha_police who brought glory to Odisha and India."

Lakra, a defender, was part of India's team that won bronze medal in the Tokyo Olympics after a gap of 41 years.

The 31-year-old hockey player from Sundargarh district was also part of the Indian team that won gold medal in the Incheon Asian Games team in 2014. He was part of the side that claimed bronze in 2018 in Jakarta.

Earlier, the Odisha government had handed over a cash reward of Rs 2.5 crore each to Birendra Lakra and Amit Rohidas in August 2021,



Lakra, a defender, was part of India's team that won bronze medal in the Tokyo Olympics after a gap of 41 years

who were part of the bronze medal-winning Indian Hockey team in the Tokyo Olympics.

In September last year, Lakra announced his retirement from the Indian Hockey national team. Another hockey player from Odisha Amit Rohidas earlier had joined the East Coast Railway (ECOR) as senior sports officer.

ICC holds study on inland waterways

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: In a bid to develop a robust and cheaper mode of transportation in Odisha, the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Thursday conducted a study on inland waterways with agencies, it was learnt.

Highlighting the importance of inland waterways for Odisha and for the country as a whole, Additional Principal Secretary of Industry department, Bhupender Singh Poonia said the state government is committed to extend all kinds of support for the studies to explore various possibilities in inland waterways.

"From old age, human being depends heavily on waterways. After innovation in technology now a circle become complete and are focusing more on power of inland waterways. Odisha government has identified different projects, which are very critical to bridge the gap in different modes of transport," he said.

First woman cured of HIV after stem cell transplant

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New York, Feb 17: A US woman has reportedly been cured of HIV disease after a stem cell transplant. The woman dubbed as the New York patient is also the third person in the world to be cured of HIV disease, after receiving a stem cell transplant.

She is in remission after receiving a new combination of specialised stem cell transplants for treatment of acute myeloid leukaemia (AML), according to researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Despite the Cessation of Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), she has had no detectable levels of HIV for 14 months, they said.

"This woman has been in remission of AML for four and a half years and has had no HIV rebound in the 14 months since antiretroviral therapy was stopped," said Yvonne Bryson, Professor and specialist

in paediatric infectious diseases and HIV pathogenesis at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.

"If HIV remission continues and she is determined to be cured, she would be only the third person to achieve cure and the first HIV remission to have been successfully engrafted with umbilical cord blood cells with a mutation that is protective against HIV-1 combined with stem cells from an adult, haploidentical (half-matched) related donor," Bryson said.

The two previous patients with HIV cure received adult donor cells - one from bone marrow and one from blood stem cells - that had the protective mutation, but no umbilical cord blood cells.

The woman is of mixed race who was diagnosed with acute HIV in 2013 and high-risk AML in 2017. She achieved leukaemia remission after chemotherapy. Prior to receiving the stem cell transplant, the participant's HIV was well-

controlled but detectable. In 2017, she received a transplant of cord blood stem cells supplemented with adult donor cells from a relative (called haplo cells).

In 2017, she received a transplant of cord blood stem cells supplemented with adult donor cells from a relative (called haplo cells).

At 37 months post-transplant, the patient stopped taking ART.

According to the study team, no HIV was detected in the participant for 14 months except for a transient detection of trace levels of HIV DNA in her blood cells at 14 weeks after stopping ART. The haplo cells only tran-

siently engrafted and contributed to rapid recovery. HIV remission resulting from a stem cell transplant had been previously observed in two cases. The first, known as the "Berlin pa-

tient" (a Caucasian male), experienced HIV remission for 12 years and was deemed cured of HIV; he died of leukaemia in September 2020. The "London patient" (a Latino male) has been in HIV remission for more than 30 months.

Although stem cell transplantation is not a therapy for HIV, its effects in patients living with HIV and undergoing therapy for blood or lymph cancers provide researchers with insights and potential targets in HIV treatment. "This study provides hope for the use of cord blood cells or a combination of cord blood cells and haploidentical (half-matched) grafts to achieve HIV-1 remission for individuals requiring transplantation for other diseases. It also provides proof that HIV-1 viral 'reservoirs' can be cleared sufficiently to afford remission and possibly cure in the setting of resistant target cells," said Bryson.

If HIV remission continues and she is determined to be cured, she would be only the third person to achieve cure and the first HIV remission to have been successfully engrafted with umbilical cord blood cells with a mutation that is protective against HIV-1 combined with stem cells from an adult, haploidentical (half-matched) related donor

YVONNE BRYSON | PROFESSOR & SPECIALIST, PAEDIATRIC INFECTIOUS DISEASES & HIV PATHOGENESIS, DAVID GEFGEN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, UCLA

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NGT asks Keonjhar DM to file status report on stone mining



The state government had filed an affidavit in the tribunal November 16 stating that out of 57 defaulting laterite stone miners, 21 had been identified who extracted 413 pieces of laterite slab from the site and miscellaneous cases had been filed against them under the provisions of Rule 51 of the Odisha Minor Mineral Concession Rules, 2016 for realisation of penalty

The affidavit also stated that all the defaulting miners were issued notices to appear before the Ghasipura Tehsildar to show cause as to why compensation amount may not be recovered from them for illegal mining

allegations and the next date fixed for hearing was January 16. The hearing could not take place that day since panchayat elections were going on. Thereafter, the Tehsildar fixed February 9 for the next hearing but again hearing could not take place due to the same reason. "The question is that if the Gram Panchayat Elections were already notified even as on January 16 and hearing could not take place, why did the Tahasildar fix February 9 as the next date? This shows that the Tahasildar is extremely lax and incompetent in his duties and is acting mechanically without application of mind," the Tribunal said.

Earlier, an application had been filed before the Tribunal alleging illegal mining of laterite stone in Keonjhar district.

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 17: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed Keonjhar District Magistrate to file a status report with respect to the action taken against illegal stone miners in the district. The bench of Judicial Member B Amit Sthalekar and Expert Member Saibal Dasgupta expressed dissatisfaction with the work of Ghasipura Tehsildar. The Ghasipura Tehsildar had submitted in the tribunal that 21 defaulting laterite stone miners were identified for extraction of 413 pieces of laterite slabs from the plots in question and they were issued show cause notices. The Tehsildar further stated that the defaulters had filed their replies to the notices denying the

KIIT placed in Young University Ranking

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: The Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), Deemed to be University, has been ranked 251-300 among all public and private universities in the country in the Times Higher Education (THE) Young University Rankings 2022. The best universities under the age of 50 years have been announced in the latest rankings. KIIT Deemed to be University has become the first-ever young university in Odisha to achieve the feat. KIIT is among a handful of Indian universities to enter the Young University Rankings 2022. The performance of KIIT, a university of only 18 years, in this prestigious ranking is impressive. The ranking puts the spotlight on the best universities under 50 years old and utilises 5 broad parameters of teaching, research, international outlook, and industrial output. Earlier, it had achieved an impressive position in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. Staff, students, management and well-wishers of both KIIT & KISS profoundly thanked and expressed gratitude to Achyuta Samanta, Founder of KIIT & KISS, for his vision to get such prestigious rankings among top-level Universities in the world.

Car rally planned on Int'l women's Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: This year's International Women's Day aims at the theme "Gender Equality for Sustainable Tomorrow". For achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs, Seva Prayas Foundation will organise the fifth Women's Car Rally along with the ninth Women

Achiever Felicitation "Kalinga Biraangana Samman-2022" in seven different categories March 13. Founder of Seva Prayas Foundation Linkan Subudhi shared the details of the car rally and award function details at a press meet here Thursday. The rally will travel along Aditya Motors, Mahindra, Nakhara to Wonderworld Water Park and will go all the way to Puri. She also said that this year Odisha Road Safety Society will impart driving training to interested 50 ladies this year.



Social activists stage a demonstration in front of BMC office in Bhubaneswar, Thursday, demanding installation of a public toilet at Palasuni market in the city

City cops arrest 2 of looters' gang

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: The Commissionerate Police Thursday arrested two members of a gang involved in looting commuters after giving them lift in the Capital city. The accused persons were identified as Debendra Kumar Parida, 42, of Talia under Jajpur town police limits and Budhiram Swain, 54, of Chandbali in Bhadrak district. The City police arrested the accused while investigating two cases of loot registered at the Sahid Naghar police station here February 3. The duo who allegedly looted around Rs 1 lakh from two persons, Akshaya Kumar Pal of Jarada in Dhenkanal and Biren Kumar Parida of Rajkanika in Kendrapara, by offering them lift from different places of the City February 1.

Puri gynaecologist with ₹1.12cr cash nabbed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: The vigilance sleuths Thursday arrested the gynecology specialist deployed at Charichaka Community Health Centre (CHC) in Nimapara of Puri district on charges of bribery. The doctor was caught demanding and accepting Rs 8,000 from a person for conducting caesarean operation. The vigilance officials later carried out raids at the residence of the accused doctor Sukant Kumar Jena at Nageswar Residency of Nandan Vihar area at Patia here. The sleuths unearthed Rs 1.12 crore in cash during the search. Vigilance sources claimed that the seizure Rs 1.12 crore is the 'highest ever cash recovery in the history of Odisha Vigilance'. The anti corruption officials also found Jena possessing a residential triple sto-



ried building at Kalarahanga in Infocity area, one plot at Jatni on the outskirts of the Capital city, one studio apartment in Puri, huge deposits worth Rs 44,16,864 along with fixed deposits and bank deposits of over Rs 38.63 lakh and two four wheelers - Hyundai Creta and TATA Manza. Notably, the vigilance sleuths set up a trap to catch Jena red-handed upon receipt of a complaint regarding the demand of bribe by the accused. Jena was Wednesday caught while demanding and accepting undue advantage of Rs 3,000 and Rs 5,000 in the name of post operation and pre operation services from the complainant for conducting caesarean operation of his cousin. The vigilance arrested Jena by registering a case (4/22) and forwarded him to the court Tuesday.

AHEAD OF PRESIDENT'S VISIT



Indian Air Force officers hold discussions with Puri administration officials, Thursday, ahead of the President's visit to the Holy City

Prez to stay at private hotel

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: During his two-day visit to the Pilgrim City of Puri, beginning February 19, President Ram Nath Kovind will be staying at a private hotel and not the Governor's House. As per protocol, the President was earlier scheduled to reside at the Governor's House. However, due to insufficient accommodation space, arrangements have been made at a private hotel. The changes were made following instructions from the President's office as per the protocol under the Blue Book and considering the space requirements, and also from security point of view. "We have made elaborate arrangements for the Honourable President's visit. Starting from his arrival at Talabania helipad to his stay, visit to the Jagannath temple to attending Gaudiya mission's programme the next day, all arrangements are currently un-

derway. We are in regular touch with the President's office," said Samarth Verma, district Collector of Puri. Verma further added, "Accommodation arrangements have been made at a hotel with sufficient space so that everyone can be accommodated comfortably. The alternative arrangements were made owing to insufficient space for accommodation as well as in view of safety and security." President Kovind will be on a two-day visit to the Pilgrim City. He is scheduled to visit Srimandir from 5 pm to 5.45 pm February 19 and the temple will remain closed for the general public from 4 pm till 6 pm on the same day. While tight security arrangements are in place, a helicopter of the Indian Air Force conducted checks Thursday. A 6-member team came in the chopper and conducted radio frequency testing. Moreover, the team also carried out landing trials technically.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Bhanjanagar, Ganjam, Odisha, I have rectified the name of my nephew as Bikash Rauto, S/o. Babindra Rauto vide Army number 7242730X, Rank - L/DFR, from Bikash Rauto in Birth Certificate and other documents to avoid future complications. Henceforth he shall be known as Bikash Rauto, S/o. Babindra Rauto in all respect. Sd./- Dilip Kumar Rauto, Lalsingh, P.S.-Bhanjanagar, Ganjam, Odisha.

Google Doodle honours world's 1st chickenpox vax maker

THE LIFESAVING VACCINE DEVELOPED BY TAKAHASHI IN 1970S LATER BECAME THE FIRST VARICELLA VACCINE APPROVED BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 17: With a Doodle, Google Thursday celebrated the 94th birth anniversary of Japanese virologist Michiaki Takahashi,

who developed the world's first vaccine against chickenpox. The lifesaving vaccine developed by Takahashi in 1970s later became the first varicella vaccine approved by the World Health Organization. "It has since been utilised in over 80 countries and administered to millions of children around the world as an effective measure to prevent severe cases of the contagious viral disease and its transmission," Google said in a statement. Takahashi was born February 17, 1928 in Osaka, Japan. He earned his medical degree from Osaka University and joined the Research Institute for Microbial Disease, Osaka University in 1959.



After studying measles and polio viruses, Takahashi accepted a research fellowship in 1963 at Baylor College in the United States. It was during this time that his son de-

veloped a serious bout of chickenpox, leading him to turn his expertise toward combating the highly transmissible illness. Takahashi returned to Japan in

TAKAHASHI, BORN FEBRUARY 17, 1928 IN JAPAN'S OSAKA, EARNED HIS MEDICAL DEGREE FROM OSAKA UNIVERSITY AND JOINED THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR MICROBIAL DISEASE, OSAKA UNIVERSITY IN 1959

1965 and began culturing live but weakened chickenpox viruses in an-

imal and human tissue. In just five years, the vaccine was ready for clinical trials. In 1974, Takahashi had developed the first vaccine targeting the varicella virus that causes chickenpox. It was subsequently subjected to rigorous research with immunosuppressed patients and was proven to be extremely effective. In 1986, the Research Foundation for Microbial Diseases, Osaka University began the rollout in Japan as the only varicella vaccine approved by the WHO. The Doodle was illustrated by Tokyo, Japan-based guest artist Tatsuro Kiuchi, Google said. "Vaccines might help overcome a disease and change the world," Kiuchi said, in the statement.

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GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

No. FE-DIV-FLD-0086-2021- 2559 /FE&CC, Bhubaneswar, dated 02.02.2022 10F (Cons) 88/2018

Subj: Diversion of 4.680 ha of forest land falling outside the Mining leases within total land requirement of 37.330 ha (including 33.525 ha of forest land comprising 4.68 ha outside mining leases and 28.845 ha inside three mining leases of M/s Tata Steel Ltd.) under Keonjhar Forest Division in Keonjhar District, Odisha for construction of Closed Type Pipe Conveyor by M/S Tata Steel Ltd. for transportation of extracted Iron Ore from their Khandhandh Iron & Manganese Ore Mine to their Railway Siding of Joda East Iron Ore Mines.

WHEREAS, M/S Tata Steel Limited, Mines Division, Keonjhar, Odisha had applied for diversion of 4.680 ha of forest land falling outside the Mining leases within total land requirement of 37.330 ha (including 33.525 ha of forest land comprising 4.68 ha outside mining leases and 28.845 ha inside three mining leases of M/S Tata Steel Ltd.) under Keonjhar Forest Division in Keonjhar District, Odisha for construction of Closed Type Pipe Conveyor for transportation of extracted Iron Ore from their Khandhandh Iron & Manganese Ore Mine to their Railway Siding of Joda East Iron Ore Mines.

And whereas, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India, Eastern Regional Office, Bhubaneswar had accorded 'Stage-I/in-principle' approval for diversion of 4.680 ha of forest land falling outside the Mining leases within total land requirement of 37.330 ha (including 33.525 ha of forest land comprising 4.68 ha outside mining leases and 28.845 ha inside three mining leases of M/S Tata Steel Ltd.) under Keonjhar Forest Division in Keonjhar District, Odisha for construction of Closed Type Pipe Conveyor by M/S

Tata Steel Ltd. for transportation of extracted Iron Ore from their Khandhandh Iron & Manganese Ore Mine to their Railway Siding of Joda East Iron Ore Mines vide its letter No.5-ORB351/2018-BHU dtd.17.09.2018 (Annexure-I).

And whereas, the MoEF&CC, Government of India, Integrated Regional Office, Bhubaneswar in consideration of the compliance of the conditions of the 'in-principle' approval, has accorded Stage-II/ final approval under Section 2 of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of 4.680 ha of forest land falling outside the Mining leases within total land requirement of 37.330 ha (including 33.525 ha of forest land comprising 4.68 ha outside mining leases and 28.845 ha inside three mining leases of M/s Tata Steel Ltd.) under Keonjhar Forest Division in Keonjhar District, Odisha for construction of Closed Type Pipe Conveyor by M/S Tata Steel Ltd. for transportation of extracted Iron Ore from their Khandhandh Iron & Manganese Ore Mine to their Railway Siding of Joda East Iron Ore Mines vide its letter No.5-ORB351/2018-BHU dtd.13.01.2022 (Annexure-II) subject to fulfillment of certain conditions as stipulated therein.

Now therefore, the Government of Odisha, do hereby allow diversion of above mentioned 4.680 ha of forest land in favour of user agency as per approved land use pattern subject to fulfillment of the conditions of final forest clearance order as stipulated by the MoEF&CC, Government of India, Integrated Regional Office, Bhubaneswar. The details land schedule of forest land as received from PCCF, Odisha along with diversion proposal vide his letter No.8379 dtd.17.04.2018 are appended herewith as Annexure-III.

The Collector, Keonjhar and Divisional Forest Officer, Keonjhar Forest Division, as the case may be are hereby authorized to handover the diverted forest land coming within their

jurisdiction, after necessary compliance following due procedure of law. Before handing over the diverted forest land to the user agency, it shall be ensured that Net Present Value of the forest land for this project for which approval has been obtained shall be deposited in full, at applicable rates.

The Divisional Forest Officer, Keonjhar Forest Division is also directed to monitor compliance to the conditions stipulated for such diversion in the respective forest/wildlife clearance order and to report violations, if any, to the Nodal Officer, O/o PCCF, Odisha and to the Forest, Environment & Climate Change Department.

Execution of project activities will be subject to availability of all other statutory clearances required under relevant Acts/Rules for this project, deposit of requisite funds and compliance of Court's order, if any.

By order of Governor S/d- (Lingara)Otta) OSD-cum-Special Secretary to Government

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE EASTERN REGIONAL OFFICE A/3, CHANDRASEKHARPUR

BHUBANESWAR-751023 No. 5-ORB351/2018-BHU Dated: 17th September 2018

To The Addl.Chief Secretary, Forest & Environment Deptt. Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar-751001

Subj: Diversion of 4.680 ha of forest land falling outside the Mining leases within total land requirement of 37.330 ha (including 33.525 ha of forest land comprising 4.68 ha outside mining leases and 28.845 ha inside three mining leases of M/s Tata Steel Ltd.) under Keonjhar Forest Division in Keonjhar District, Odisha for construction of Closed Type Pipe Conveyor by M/S Tata Steel Ltd. for transportation of extracted Iron Ore from their Khandhandh Iron & Manganese Ore Mine to their Railway Siding of Joda East Iron Ore Mines.

I am directed to refer to State Govt. letter No.10F(Cons)88/2018-11095/F&E dated 14.05.2018 and No.14870/F&E dated 07.07.2018 on the above mentioned subject seeking prior approval of the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change under section 2 of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

2. After due consideration of the proposal of the State Government, the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change hereby conveys 'Stage-I/in-principle' approval for diversion of 4.680 ha of forest-land falling, outside the Mining

leases within total land requirement of 37.330 ha (including 33.525 ha of forest land comprising 4.68 ha outside mining leases and 28.845 ha inside three mining leases of M/S Tata Steel Ltd.) under Keonjhar Forest Division in Keonjhar district, Odisha for construction of Closed Type Pipe Conveyor by M/S Tata Steel Ltd. for transportation of extracted iron ore from their-Khandbandh Iron & Manganese Ore Mine to their Railway Siding of Joda East Iron Ore Mines, subject to the fulfillment of the following conditions.

- i) Legal status of forest land proposed for diversion shall remain unchanged. ii) The State Govt. shall charge the Net Present Value (NPV) of forest area proposed to be diverted under this proposal from the user agency as per the Orders of Hon'ble Supreme court of India dated 28.03.2008, 24.04.2008 and 09.05.2008 in writ Petition (Civil) No.202/1995 and the guidelines issued by this Ministry vide its letter No.5-3/2007-FC dated 05.0.2009 in this regard... iii) At the time of payment of the Net Present Value (NPV) at the present rate, the user agency shall furnish an undertaking to pay the additional amount of NPV, if so determined, as per the final decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. iv) Compensatory afforestation shall be raised over 4.68 ha of non-forest land identified in Plot No.30(P), Khata No.23 of Village Rangamatia under Telko Tehsil of Keonjhar district against the area of forest land proposed to be diverted at the cost of the user agency. v) The non-forest land identified for raising compensatory afforestation shall be transferred and mutated in favour of the State Forest Department before issue of Stage-II approval.

- vi) The non-forest land over which compensatory afforestation will be taken up shall be notified as, PF/RF remain under the administrative control of the State Forest Department. vii) State Govt. Will formulate compensatory afforestation scheme with focused soil&moisture along with regeneration cleaning, silvicultural activities and shall ensure maintenance of these plantations for a period of seven to ten years, as per requirement. viii) The user agency shall transfer the cost of raising and maintaining the compensatory afforestation at the current wage rate in consultation with State Forest Department in the account of Ad-hoc CAMPA of the concerned State through online portal. The scheme may include appropriate provision for anticipated cost for works scheduled for subsequent years. ix) The State Govt. shall raise penal compensatory afforestation from funds to be realized from the user agency over 4.680ha degraded forest land for violation of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. x) The user agency should ensure that the compensatory levies (C.A. cost, NPV etc.) are deposited through challan generated online on web portal and deposited in appropriate bank online only. Amount deposited through other mode will not be accepted as compliance of the Stage-I clearance. xi) The user agency shall obtain the Environmental Clearance as per the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, if required. xii) The user agency shall take adequate safety measures for accidental leakage of closed type pipe conveyor. xiii) The user agency shall abide by the applicable recommendations of the State government. xiv) The boundary of the forest land proposed to be diverted shall be demarcated on the ground at the project cost, by

- erecting four feet high reinforced cement concrete pillars, each inscribed with its serial number, DGPS coordinates, distance from adjoining pillars etc. The cost of expenditure like RCC/stone pillars, demarcation charges, charges for felling trees and their transportation to depots shall be deposited with DFO's concerned and the work should be undertaken departmentally as per directions of Ministry's letter No. 13-20/2015-CAMPA dated 09.06.2016. xv) The State Forest Department/UA shall submit the surveyed sketch of non-forest land identified for CA, giving the forward and backward bearing of each demarcation pillar and distance between them. The State Forest Department/User Agency shall submit the DGPS reading of each demarcated pillar giving the latitude and the longitude. xvi) No additional or new path will be constructed inside the forest area for any activity related to the project work. xvii) No labour camp shall be allowed in the forest area. xviii) The user agency shall provide LPG or alternate fuel to labourers working at the site to avoid damage/tree felling and ensure no fuel wood use. xix) The user agency while executing works, shall not fell any tree or damage forest growth in the surrounding forest area in any manner. xx) The forest land shall not be used for any purpose other than that specified in the proposal and under no circumstances be transferred to any other user agency, department or person without prior approval of Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change. xxi) The layout plan of the proposed forest land shall not be changed without the prior approval of Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change. xxii) The State Government shall complete settlement of rights, in term of the Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, if any, on

- the forest land to be diverted and submit the documentary evidence as prescribed by this Ministry in its letter No. 11-9/1998-FC (pt.) dated 03.08.2009 read with letter No. 121-9/1998-FC (pt.) dated 05.02.2013 and 05.07.2013, in support thereof. The user agency shall submit original FRA certificates in prescribed Form-I before issue of Stage-II approval. xxiii) Any other conditions that the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change may impose from time to time in the interest of afforestation, conservation and management of flora and fauna in the area, shall be complied by the user agency. xxiv) The State Govt. and user agency shall ensure compliance to provisions of the all Acts, Rules, Regulations, Guidelines, NGT Order (s) & Hon'ble Court Order (s) pertaining to this project, if any, for the time being in force, as applicable to the project. 3. After receipt of the report on compliance to the conditions stipulated above, from the State Government of Odisha, final/Stage-II approval for diversion of the said forest land under Section 2 of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 will be issued by this Ministry. Transfer of forest land to user agency should not be effected by the State Government of Odisha till final/Stage-II approval for its diversion is issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change. 4. However, the Operationalization of Closed Type Pipe Conveyor corridor shall be carried out only after approval for diversion of 17.836 ha of forest land located inside Joda West Mining lease of M/s Steel Ltd and permission for change of land use pertaining to 11.009 ha (8.060 ha in Khandbandh Mining Lease, 1.413 ha in Joda West Mining Lease and 1.536 ha in Joda East & Manmora Mining lease of M/s Tata Steel Ltd.) of already diverted forest land of three leases of user agency from MoEF&CC, Govt. of India with an intimation to this office and respective controlling offices.

Yours faithfully, S/d- (S. Mohapatra) Conservator of Forest (Central)

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE EASTERN REGIONAL OFFICE A/3, CHANDRASEKHARPUR

BHUBANESWAR-751023 No. 5-ORB351/2018-BHU Dated: 13th January 2022

To The Addl.Chief Secretary, Forest & Environment Deptt. Government of Odisha Bhubaneswar-751001

Subj: Diversion of 4.680 ha of forest land falling outside the Mining leases within total land requirement of 37.330 ha (including 33.525 ha of forest land comprising 4.68 ha outside mining leases and 28.845 ha inside three mining leases of M/s Tata Steel Ltd.) under Keonjhar Forest Division in Keonjhar District, Odisha for construction of Closed Type Pipe Conveyor by M/S Tata Steel Ltd. for transportation of extracted Iron Ore from their Khandhandh Iron & Manganese Ore Mine to their Railway Siding of Joda East Iron Ore Mines.

Madam, I am directed to refer to State Govt. letter No.10F(Cons)88/2018-11095/F&E dated 14.05.2018 and No. 14870/F&E dated 07.07.2018, wherein prior approval of the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change for diversion of 4.680 ha of forest land falling outside the Mining leases within total land requirement of 37.330 ha (including 33.525 ha of forest land comprising 4.68 ha outside mining leases and 28.845 ha inside

three mining leases of M/s Tata Steel Ltd.) under Keonjhar Forest Division in Keonjhar district, Odisha for construction of Closed Type Pipe Conveyor by M/S Tata Steel Ltd. for transportation of extracted iron ore from their Khandbandh Iron & Manganese Ore Mine to their Railway Siding of Joda East Iron Ore Mines, was sought in accordance with Section-2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. After due consideration of the proposal by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, the in-principle approval for diversion of the said forest land was accorded by Ministry vide this office letter of even number dated 17.09.2018, subject to fulfillment of certain conditions. The Nodal Officer (FCA) of the State Government has furnished the compliance report in respect of the conditions stipulated in the in-principle approval and has requested to grant final approval of the proposal. 2. In this connection, I am directed to say that on the basis of the compliance report furnished by the PCCF & Nodal Officer (FCA), Odisha vide their letter No.21474/9F (JMG)-3/2017 dated 14.12.2021, Stage-II/final approval of the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change is hereby granted under Section 2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of 4.680 ha of forest land falling outside the Mining leases within total land requirement of 37.330 ha (including 33.525 ha of forest land comprising 4.68 ha outside mining leases and 28.845 ha inside three mining leases of M/S Tata Steel Ltd.) under Keonjhar Forest Division in Keonjhar district, Odisha for construction of Closed Type Pipe Conveyor by M/S Tata Steel Ltd. for transportation of extracted iron ore from their Khandbandh Iron & Manganese Ore Mine to their Railway Siding of Joda East Iron Ore Mines, subject to the fulfillment of the following conditions:- A: Conditions which need to be complied prior to handing over of forest land. i) The State Govt. shall ensure the complete compliance on FRA, 2006.

- ii) The State Govt. shall ensure that forest land will be handed over only after required non-forest land for project is handed over by the user agency. iii) The State Govt. shall ensure that the agency shall obtain the Environmental Clearance as per the provisions of the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, if required. iii) The State Govt. shall ensure that the KML files of the area to be diverted and the CA & Addl. CA areas shall be uploaded on the e-Green watch portal with all requisite details before handing over of the diverted forest land to the user agency. iv) The State Govt. and user agency shall ensure that the operationalization of Closed Type Pipe Conveyor corridor shall be carried out only after obtaining approval for diversion of 17.836 ha of forest land located inside Joda West Mining lease of M/S Tata Steel Ltd. and permission for change of land use pertaining to 11.009 ha (8.060 ha in Khandbandh Mining Lease, 1.413 ha in Joda West Mining Lease and 1.536 ha in Joda East & Manmora Mining lease of M/s Tata Steel Ltd.) of already diverted forest land of three leases of user agency from MoEF&CC, Govt. of India intimation to this office and respective controlling offices. v) The State Govt. shall ensure that the boundary of the diverted forest land shall be demarcated on ground at the project cost, by erecting four feet high reinforced cement concrete pillars, each inscribed with its serial number, distance from pillar to pillar and GPS coordinates. B: Conditions which need to be complied after handing over of forest land to the user agency. i) Legal status of the diverted forest land shall remain unchanged.

- iii) The State Govt. shall ensure that the State Forest Department will raise the Compensatory afforestation over 4.68 ha non-forest land identified in village identified in Plot No.30(P), Khata No.23 of village Rangamatia under Telko Tehsil of Keonjhar district within three years from the date of Stage-II Clearance and maintained thereafter by the State Forest Department from the funds deposited by the user agency in CAMPA account. iii) The State Govt. shall ensure that the State Forest Department will raise the Addl. Compensatory afforestation over 10.00 of degraded forest land identified in Baitarani East-B PRF under Champua Range of Keonjhar Forest Division within three years from the date of Stage-II Clearance and maintained thereafter by the State Forest Department from the funds deposited by the user agency in CAMPA account. iv) The State Govt. shall ensure that the species to be planted under the CA & Addl. CA schemes shall be of native species of the area avoiding Teak and exotic species. At least 18-month-old seedlings should be planted. Intensive monitoring of the plantation needs to be done and documented using Geo tagging so that the increase of canopy density and survival and growth of plantation can be evaluated at regular intervals. v) The State Govt. shall ensure that the user agency shall pay the additional amount of NPV, if so determined, as per the final decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. vi) The State Govt. shall ensure that the user agency shall take adequate safety measure for accidental leakage of closed type pipe conveyor.

- vii) The State Govt. shall ensure that the period of diversion under approval shall be co terminus with the period of lease to be granted in favour of the user agency or the project life, whichever is less. viii) The State Govt. shall ensure that no labour camp shall be established on the forest land and the user agency shall provide fuels preferably alternate fuels to the labourers and staff working at the site so as to avoid any damage and pressure on the nearby forest areas. ix) The State Govt. and user agency shall ensure that no additional or new path will be constructed inside the forest area for any activity related to the project work. x) The State Govt. and user agency shall ensure that while executing works, the user agency shall not fell any tree or damage forest growth in the surrounding forest area in any manner. xi) The State Govt. and user agency shall ensure that the layout plan of the proposal shall not be changed without prior approval of the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change. xii) The State Govt. and user agency shall ensure that earth or any material shall neither be brought from nor the debris resulting during construction be disposed of in the adjoining forest area by the user agency. xiii) The State Govt. and user agency shall ensure that no damage to the flora and fauna of the adjoining area shall be caused. xiv) The State Govt. shall ensure that the user agency shall explore the possibility of successful transplantation of maximum number of trees identified to be felled and shall ensure that any tree felling shall be done only when it is

- unavoidable and that too under strict supervision of the State Forest Department. xv) The State Govt. shall ensure that the forest land shall not be used for any purpose other than that specified in the proposal and under no circumstances be transferred to any other user agency, department or person without prior approval of the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change. xvi) The State Govt. shall ensure that the DFO concerned will monitor and take necessary mitigative measures to ensure that there is no adverse impact on the forests in surrounding area. xvii) The State Govt. shall ensure that the user agency shall submit annual self-monitoring report on compliance of stipulated conditions to the Nodal Officer (FCA) of the State and Integrated Regional Office of this Ministry by the end of March every year regularly. xviii) The State Govt. shall ensure that any other conditions that the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change may impose from time to time in the interest of afforestation, conservation and management of flora and fauna in the area, which shall be complied by the user agency. xix) The State and user agency shall ensure compliance to provisions of the all Acts, Rules, Regulations, Guidelines, NGT Order (s) & Hon'ble Court Order (s) pertaining to this project, if any, for the time being in force, as applicable to the project. xx) Non Compliance of any of these conditions will amount to violation of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and action

would be taken as per Para 1.21 of Chapter-I of Handbook of Guidelines issued under F.C. Act, 1980 vide Ministry's letter No.5-2/2017-FC dated 28.03.2019. Yours faithfully, S/d- (Padma Mahanti) Dy. Inspector General of Forests (C) Copy to: 1. The PCCF & Nodal Officer, Forest Department, Govt. of Odisha, Aranya Bhawan, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar. 2. M/S Tata Steel Ltd., Mines Division, Joda, Keonjhar-751 34, Odisha. Yours faithfully, S/d- (Padma Mahanti) Dy. Inspector General of Forests (C)



The practice of Yoga brings us face to face with the extraordinary complexity of our own being.

SRI AUROBINDO



Wrong Enemy

Much of the democratic world would like the United States to remain the preeminent global power. But with the US apparently committed to strategic overreach, that outcome risks becoming unlikely. The problem with America's global leadership begins at home. Hyper-partisan politics and profound polarisation are eroding American democracy and impeding the pursuit of long-term objectives. In foreign policy, the partisan divide can be seen in perceptions of potential challengers to the US: according to a March 2021 poll, Republicans are most concerned about China, while Democrats worry about Russia above all.

This may explain why US President Joe Biden is treating a 'rogue' Russia as a peer competitor, when he should be focused on the challenge from America's actual peer, China. In comparison to Russia, China's population is about ten times bigger, its economy is almost ten times larger, and its military expenditure is around four times greater. Not only is China more powerful, it genuinely seeks to supplant the US as the preeminent global power. By contrast, with its military buildup on Ukraine's borders, Russia is seeking to mitigate a perceived security threat in its neighbourhood.

Hastening the decline of US global leadership is hardly the preserve of Democrats. A bipartisan parade of US leaders has failed to recognise that the post-Cold War unipolar world order, characterised by unchallenged US economic and military predominance, is long gone. The US squandered its 'unipolar moment,' especially by waging an expensive and amorphous 'Global War on Terrorism,' including several military interventions, and through its treatment of Russia.

After its Cold War victory, the US essentially took an extended victory lap, pursuing strategic maneuvers that flaunted its dominance. Notably, it sought to expand NATO to Russia's backyard, but made little effort to bring Russia into the Western fold, as it had done with Germany and Japan after World War II. The souring of relations with the Kremlin contributed to Russia's eventual remilitarisation.

So, while the US remains the world's foremost military power, it has been stretched thin by the decisions and commitments it has made, in Europe and elsewhere, since 1991. This goes a long way toward explaining why the US has ruled out deploying its own troops to defend Ukraine today. What the US is offering Ukraine – weapons and ammunition – cannot protect the country from Russia, which has an overwhelming military advantage.

But US leaders made another fatal mistake since the Cold War: by aiding China's rise, they helped to create the greatest rival their country has ever faced. Unfortunately, they have yet to learn from this. Instead, the US continues to dedicate insufficient attention and resources to an excessively wide array of global issues, from Russian revanchism and Chinese aggression to lesser threats in the Middle East and Africa and on the Korean Peninsula. And it continues inadvertently to bolster China's global influence, not least through its overuse of sanctions.

For example, by barring friends and allies from importing Iranian oil, two successive US administrations enabled China not only to secure oil at a hefty discount, but also to become a top investor in – and security partner of – the Islamic Republic. US sanctions have similarly pushed resource-rich Myanmar into China's arms. As Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, whose country has faced a US arms embargo over its ties to China, asked last year, "If I don't rely on China, who will I rely on?"

Russia has been asking itself the same question. Though Russia and China kept each other at arm's length for decades, US-led sanctions introduced after Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea drove President Vladimir Putin to pursue a closer strategic partnership with China. The bilateral relationship is likely to deepen, regardless of what happens in Ukraine. But the raft of harsh new sanctions the US has promised to implement in the event of a Russian invasion will accelerate this shift significantly, with China as the big winner.

The heavy financial penalties the US has planned – including the 'nuclear option' of disconnecting Russian banks from the international SWIFT payments system – would turn China into Russia's banker, enabling it to reap vast profits and expand the international use of its currency, the renminbi. If Biden fulfilled his pledge to block the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which is set to deliver Russian supplies directly to Germany via the Baltic Sea, China would gain greater access to Russian energy.

In fact, by securing a commitment from Putin this month to a nearly tenfold increase in Russian natural gas exports, China is building a safety net that could – in the event of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan – withstand Western energy sanctions and even a blockade. China could also benefit militarily by demanding greater access to Russian military technology in exchange for its support.

For the US, a strengthened Russia-China axis is the worst possible outcome of the Ukraine crisis. The best outcome would be a compromise with Russia to ensure that it does not invade and possibly annex Ukraine. By enabling the US to avoid further entanglement in Europe, this would permit a more realistic balancing of key objectives – especially checking Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific – with available resources and capabilities.

The future of the US-led international order will be decided in Asia, and China is currently doing everything in its power to ensure that order's demise. Already, China is powerful enough that it can host the Winter Olympics even as it carries out a genocide against Muslims in the Xinjiang region, with limited pushback. If the Biden administration does not recognise the true scale of the threat China poses, and adopt an appropriately targeted strategy soon, whatever window of opportunity for preserving US preeminence remains may well close.

The writer is Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

SEARCH FOR INDIAN CINEMA

FOCUS SATYAJIT RAY BIRTH CENTENARY



Anwesh Satpathy

RAY'S 'PATHER PANCHALI' MARKS A REMARKABLE AND CONSCIOUS DEPARTURE FROM THE CONVENTIONS OF INDIAN COMMERCIAL CINEMA

In a review of Satyajit Ray's 'Apu Sansar' (The World of Apu), the critic Dwight MacDonal castigated Ray for being "self-conscious." MacDonal, along with many western critics of that time, didn't consider Ray capable of handling the complexities of city life. This was because his movies were seen as being autobiographical and reflective of Ray's own lived experience in India. This attitude stemmed from a stereotypical view of India, the lack of familiarity with its popular culture as well as its city life.

To a contemporary film critic or even someone with a cursory familiarity with Ray, this suggestion is laughable. Not only because his later work, in particular the Calcutta trilogy, dealt explicitly and brilliantly with alienation that came with capitalism but also because his lived experience was as far away from rural life as possible. Born in a family of scholars, Ray grew up in the cosmopolitan city of Calcutta. He was reluctant to study at Shantiniketan due to its "intellectual second rate-ness." He sought to become a filmmaker after watching Vittorio de Sica's Italian neo-realist movie 'The Bicycle Thieves.' It was the French director Jean Renoir who encouraged him to make 'Pather Panchali.'

In other words, Ray was as cosmopolitan as it gets. It is no wonder that his portrayal of city life was accurate. It is, however, worth asking as to why his portrayal of Indian rural life strikes a chord even today.

To answer this, we need to grapple with Ray's critique of commercial Indian cinema. In an interview with Pierre-Andre Boutang, Ray claimed that the Indian audience who are mostly exposed to Hindi commercial cinema were "backward and unsophisticated." At first glance, this might appear a bit snobbish but Ray's essays on filmmaking provide a more nuanced view.

Cinema started out as an international medium. Through the technique of mime, the likes of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton created an art-form that was uni-



Ray's legacy, apart from his technical achievements and fierce originality, was the fact that he showed Indian filmmakers and artistes what cinema can be

versally accessible. With the development of technology and the introduction of talkies, mime no longer retained the centrality that it did in silent films. Dialogue and visual forms became more essential. This led to the development of distinct national styles in different countries. The Americans developed a Jazz-like tempo along with the nostalgia and sentimentality present in the blues. The French were more experimental, with musicians like Darius Milhaud making extensive use of polytonality popularised by Stravinsky in soundtracks and filmmakers like Jean-Luc Godard and Francois Truffaut exploring existentialism and Marxism, often questioning the importance of cinema itself.

Indian cinema, on the other hand, has been devoid of such development as a rule. Indian movies have largely been formulaic. They fail to convey or display the rich heritage of literature, music, culture, painting or even geography that we have. In Ray's words, Indian cinema has "remained as incongruous and clashing elements, refusing to coalesce into the stuff that is cinema."

Ray's 'Pather Panchali' marks a remarkable and conscious departure from the conventions of Indian commercial cinema. While

acutely aware of Western art forms, Ray consciously decided to make movies that were, in his own words, "distinct and indigenous." Ray's realism is derived from the works of Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay. He remains true to the spirit of humanism and lyricism that characterises Bibhutibhusan's novel. Ray even credits Bibhutibhusan for the pictorial aspect which plays an essential role in turning the movie into a truly indigenous one. As Darius Cooper has argued, Ray's narratives strongly reflect the principles of Rasa elaborated by Bharata Muni and Abhinavagupta. A sense of epiphany of wonder and constancy of character is ever-present in The Apu Trilogy. For instance, Apu's character retains constancy though aspects of him change subtly with life's experiences. This constancy is made obvious to the viewer through contrast with his sister Durga in 'Pather Panchali' and his mother in 'Aparajito.'

Ray's quest to develop a form of cinema true to Indian experience can also be seen from his use of music. Though manifest most explicitly in 'The Music Room' (Jalsaghar), glimpses of it are present even in 'Pather Panchali.' Composed by Pandit Ravi Shankar, the soundtrack of the movie al-

most exclusively uses Indian instruments and classical music. However, it was on Ray's request that Chumbala Devi (the 80-year-old playing Indir Thakrun) sang the iconic plaintive traditional song. The song wasn't chosen but was one that Devi had remembered. The song haunts the viewer, especially as it plays in the background when the character of Indir Thakrun dies (made more haunting perhaps with the apt lyrics "Hari, the day is gone and night has fallen. Help me to pass over").

Dissatisfied with the "spasmodic injection of song numbers" that continues to characterise many Bollywood movies, Ray decided to make the musical 'Jalsaghar.' This can be considered at once a critique of the use of music in commercial movies as well as a complete expression of what cinema can achieve. Ray documents the breakdown of the feudal system and the loss of prestige of the hedonistic landlord by making extensive use of Ustad Vilayat Khan's compositions. It was one of the only films of its time which not only used music thematically but also incorporated extensive classical music.

Ray's legacy, apart from his technical achievements and fierce originality, was the fact that he showed Indian filmmakers and artistes what cinema can be. Indian filmmakers weren't suffering from lack of resources, rather from a lack of imagination. Ray's diagnosis was vindicated as it provided directors like Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak, Tapan Sinha, Adoor Gopal Krishnan and Shyam Benegal an entirely new and unique space to explore. Indian cinema is yet to take a coherent form in the way that French, Japanese and Italian cinema have. However, Ray provided us with a glimpse of the potentialities of Indian cinema and left open possibilities that will no doubt, sooner or later, result in its crystallisation.

The writer is an author, blogger and a student at Jindal School of International Affairs.

SPECTRUM MOBILITY

Is the shift to EVs imminent?

Electric vehicles are causing a buzz. Not only are these being promoted to tackle the looming environmental crisis, but the consumer's choice is slowly changing. The demand, be it four or two wheelers, is steadily picking up. From environmental perspective, EVs are the future of the auto industry in India as in many other countries.

The thrust has been clearly noted in the recent Union Budget with the government policy of battery swapping expected to give a boost to the domestic EV industry, especially for public transport, as it will provide an affordable solution to the charging issue. Industry stakeholders said the policy will help develop the infrastructure needed to make EVs improve their use in public transport as also for general users.

In fact, the government's EV policy 'Scheme for Faster Adoption & Manufacturing of Hybrid & Electric Vehicle in India' has seen a big boost from ₹800 crore to ₹2908.23 crore in the budget for 2022-23. E-mobility is all set to get a major impetus with the announcement of a battery swapping policy with the provision of land for establishing charging stations at scale. The target obviously, would be to have more EVs on the road in the coming years.

That India is destined to be a

manufacturing hub for electric vehicles within the next five years was forecast by Union Road and Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, stating that several countries no longer want to deal with China following the COVID-19 crisis. Gadkari asked Indian automotive companies to boost their EV technology and also to focus on finding alternatives to lithium-ion battery tech to help make India the next global manufacturing hub for electric vehicles.

So far China has been on top in terms of EV production globally by producing over 80% of all EVs. It has the fourth largest reserves of lithium in the world, hence giving it a monopoly in the lithium-ion cell market. The government had launched the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan 2020 in 2013 to enhance fuel security as also to address vehicular pollution through the promotion of hybrid and EVs. The government launched the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid & Electric Vehicle scheme under NEMMP, 2020 in 2015-16. The scheme was to make hybrid and EVs as the first choice for buyers instead of internal combustion engines and reduce liquid fossil fuel consumption in the country.

Since April, 2019, the outlay of the scheme (FAME-II) has been enhanced to ₹100 billion for a period of

three years, mainly to offer upfront incentive on the purchase of EVs and also to establish the necessary infrastructure for EVs. Though higher EV sales had not picked up initially, from early 2021 the trend is changing as a lot of manufacturers of four wheelers and two wheelers have entered the market.

Recently, the governments of Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Telangana, Maharashtra, and West Bengal invited the auto company Tesla to set up shop in their respective States. This open invitation was a response to company founder Elon Musk's tweet that Tesla was "facing a lot of challenges" launching their EVs in the country. However, the government remains unmoved and maintains the 100 per cent import duty on CBUs manufactured abroad. Instead, it has been pushing for greater localisation of EV manufacturing through multiple policy measures FAME-II.

For EVs production the most important raw materials such as lithium, cobalt and nickel, which are used to make lithium-ion battery cells, are not available in the country. Consequently, Indian manufacturers must rely heavily on imports of battery cells from China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan and assemble them into battery packs. Though there is optimism and en-

couraging response from investors under the PLI scheme to manufacture ACC batteries domestically, most bidders are expected to start manufacturing only from 2025. It is thus quite natural that India's import-driven strategy, for domestic assembly of critical battery packs, will continue for a few more years.

Technical experts have suggested that electro-chemical energy in the form of metal air batteries could be the choice of the future, at least for India. Metal air batteries can match the driving range of conventional internal combustion engine vehicles and reload full energy to full energy capacity in less than five minutes. Significantly, much research has taken place on such batteries during the period 2014 to 2020. Unlike conventional batteries, metal air batteries utilise oxygen from the atmosphere at the cathode. These have higher energy density (energy per unit weight) compared with lithium batteries. Aluminum can be used as the anode of metal air batteries as the country has abundant bauxite deposits in the country.

The road to progress is certain only if the government does not put any brakes and aids EV manufacturers to achieve their target.

INFA

WISDOM CORNER

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.
ALBERT EINSTEIN

Your success and happiness lies in you. Resolve to keep happy, and your joy and you shall form an invincible host against difficulties.
HELEN KELLER

Too often we... enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.
JOHN F. KENNEDY

LOL

SHOPLIFTER CAUGHT

A shoplifter was caught red-handed trying to steal a watch from an exclusive jewellery store. "Listen," said the shoplifter, "I know you don't want any trouble either. What do you say I just buy the watch and we forget about this?" The manager agreed and



wrote up the sales slip. The crook looked at the slip and said, "This is a little more than I intended to spend. Can you show me something less expensive?"

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Relocation of cheetahs

Sir, The relocation of cheetahs to India is a much discussed issue because the project has been in the pipeline for quite some time. Asiatic cheetahs vanished from India as far back as 1950; the cheetah was declared extinct from the country in 1952. Worldwide, its population is almost few and far between except for a few regions in Africa. Low genetic variability and prolonged inbreeding were once cited as reasons for the decline of cheetahs though many wildlife experts claimed that the genetic variability was lost ten thousand years ago. The only explanation could be poaching and hunting. Minister of Environment Ashwini Kumar Choubey told the Lok Sabha recently that India's cheetah relocation project was on course. A sum of ₹40 crore has been earmarked, from the Project Tiger to introduce cheetah in the country between 2021-22 and 2025-26. The Kuno Palpur National Park in Madhya Pradesh is all set to receive its special guests. Based on the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) report, and its direct guidance, the reintroduction project is being carried out. As many as 12 to 14 'greyhounds', male and female, are to be inducted in Kuno Palpur. It was after all failed attempts to relocate the greyhounds that Kuno national park, spread over an area of 750 sq km, was identified. Though initially the Supreme Court had stayed the 'cheetah conservation plan' by upholding the plea of conservationists quoting the National Board for Wildlife's policies, it later gave the green signal to the introduction of cheetah to India. Since cheetah is seen as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the reintroduction has to be done with care and caution. Cheetahs of the reproductive age group, that are disease free and genetically diverse, should be relocated in the national park.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Super Serb's bombshell

Sir, Novak Djokovic has dropped a bombshell by disclosing that he is ready to skip the French Open and Wimbledon if vaccination against the coronavirus is required for him to play. The numero uno tennis player is still smarting from the deportation drama that unfolded in Australia last month, an event that polarised opinion worldwide. Djokovic's absence at the Australian Open meant that his famed adversary Rafael Nadal, claimed a record 21st Grand Slam crown. However, fans may not see the 'Super Serb' in action soon, given the authorities' adamantness in not relaxing vaccination rules.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

SHORT TAKES

Poll duty evaders to face the music

Chhatrapur: Collector and district electoral officer Vijay Amruta Kulange has ordered action against the officials who have failed to turn up for election duty in Ganjam. Show cause notices have been issued to 15 officials while copies of the orders have been sent to police stations of their respective areas for further action. If the officials fail to reply satisfactorily, arrest warrants will be issued against them. Earlier, the Collector had stated that action will be taken against officials of some departments who have not relieved their staffers for election duty. Moreover, a directive had also been issued saying the officials and employees who have deliberately shirked their constitutional duty will be removed from their official positions.

Garage torched in post-poll violence



POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 17: The voting for the first phase of three-tier panchayat elections might have come to an end Wednesday but the simmering tension between various political groups flared up again amid reports of post-poll violence in the region. Miscreants allegedly torched a two-wheeler repair garage of

one Rabintra Jena at Rohigaon under Sadar police limits in Ganjam district, late Wednesday night. Several vehicles and bicycles were reduced to ashes in the fire. Tension was palpable in the area as a posse of police force was deployed in the village. Properties worth lakhs of rupees were gutted in the incident, said Santosh Panigrahi, assistant fire officer. The garage owner, who said that the incident was the fallout of past enmity, lodged a complaint with Sadar police. He said he was supporting the sarpanch candidate of a particular group for which some youths had threatened him in the morning. Based on the complaint lodged by the shop owner, Sadar Police launched a probe after booking 10 persons in this connection.

DEMO FOR ONLINE EXAM



Plus III final year students of Dharanidhar (Autonomous) College in Keonjhar stage a demonstration at the college main gate, Thursday, demanding conduct of their fifth semester examination online. OP PHOTO

CCRAS gets 1st Odia director general

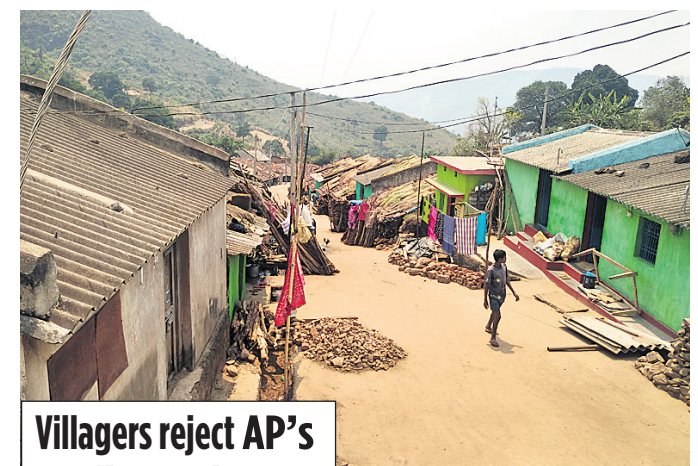
Raghu Nathpur: Professor Rabi Narayan Acharya has been appointed as the new director general of Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), a report said Thursday. He is the first Odia to be appointed to this prestigious post of CCRAS functioning under the Union Ayush Ministry. Acharya, a native of Nalibar village under Sanra panchayat of Jagatsinghpur district, is the youngest son of late Pandit Parikshita Acharya, a famous Sanskrit teacher in the area. He is currently working as the Professor and head of the quality control department of Ayurveda University at Jamnagar in Gujarat.

Kotia goes to polls today

5,790 VOTERS TO EXERCISE THEIR FRANCHISE IN 13 BOOTHS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Feb 17: Amidst incursion threat from Andhra Pradesh officials to Kotia panchayat under Pottangi block, the Koraput district administration is all set to hold the rural polls in the panchayat Friday. As per the poll schedule, voting for zilla parishad zone-I of Pottangi block will be held February 18 and Kotia panchayat is a part of this zone. Now, all eyes are set on Kotia where the elections will be held at 13 booths. These booths have been put up at Madkar, Fagunsineri, Ranasing, Tadibalsa, Talasambi, Uparsembi, Barabandh, Thuria, Karanjuda, Taupadar, Matalamba, Kotia and Ganjeipadar of the panchayat. Altogether 5,790 voters will exercise their franchise, said sources.



Villagers reject AP's medical assistance

POTTANGI: Andhra Pradesh's reported bid to foil the rural polls and woo the residents of Kotia panchayat into its fold failed after the locals rejected the medical facilities offered by the neighbouring state, Thursday. As per reports, two persons - Linga Himrika and Kamli Himrika - of Harmandangi in the panchayat were down with diarrhoea after attending a marriage feast. A medical team from Kotia PHC reached the village and provided them medicines under the supervision of Dr Pabitra Panda. While the Odisha medical team was busy treating the ailing people, an ambulance with some staffers from Tonam health centre under Salur CHC in Andhra reached the spot. The AP health team tried to convince the locals to take medical aid from them but the villagers rejected their offer, reports said.

people and searching vehicles. Meanwhile, Collector Akhtar and BDO Sarthak Mishra visited all the booths set up on the hilltop and foothills and reviewed the poll preparations. The Collector said there is nothing to worry about as extensive preparations have been made to ensure free and fair polls in Kotia panchayat. Notably, both Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have been at loggerheads for five decades over the ownership of 21 of the 28 villages under Kotia panchayat and the case has been sub judice in Supreme Court since 1968. Peeved at frequent intrusions by AP and execution of various welfare programmes in Kotia panchayat, the state government had announced a special package of ₹150 crore for development of the disputed panchayat in April 2018.

2 more held in ₹10-cr Auroxa Deal fraud case

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Odisha Crime Branch has arrested two more accused in the ₹10-crore chit fund fraud case, officials said here Thursday. Sarat Kumar Nayak and Prabhat Ranjan Das, upper line members of the chit fund firm Auroxa Deal Multitrade (OPC) Pvt Ltd, were arrested from their residences in Balasore district, the officials said. On February 13, Babu Singh Kushwaha, the chit fund company director and promoter, was arrested by the EOW from Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh. During investigation, the EOW found that the company - Auroxa Deal Multitrade (OPC) Private Limited - was functioning in a rented building in Balasore town of Odisha during the year 2019-2020. At that time, Kushwaha along with his associates Sarat Kumar Nayak and Prabhat Ranjan Das had collected more than ₹10 crore from around 500 investors by mak-

The accused had collected more than ₹10cr from around 500 investors by making false promises of high returns and later duped them

ing false promises of 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, the EOW officials informed. Thus, the deceit and fraud is camouflaged under the name of direct selling marketing and business, they added.

Transgender found murdered in Burla

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 17: Police Thursday recovered the body of a transgender alongside National Highway-55 near Godabhaga College Chhak under Burla police limits in Sambalpur: The deceased was identified as Firoz Chhatra, 21. Police said circumstantial evidences suggest that Chhatra has been murdered. Police seized a scooter, a cellphone and a wallet from the crime scene. The investigation began with the help of a scientific team. Deceased's father Jatindra, in his complaint to the police, alleged that Firoz had left home on a scooter Wednesday evening but did not return home. Sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) S Das said this is a murder case as per preliminary investigation and past enmity with someone or some people could be the reason. He denied 'murder for loot' angle to the crime. Police are investigating the case from multiple angles. A delegation of the third gender people held talks with police officials at Burla police station and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

NAC tax collector in Vigilance net

Bargarh: Vigilance sleuths Thursday arrested a tax collector of Padampur notified area council (NAC) in this district on charge of accepting bribe of ₹25,000 from a person on the promise of reducing his holding tax. The accused was identified as Dinabandhu Panda. The Vigilance team caught him red-handed while accepting a bribe of ₹25,000 from complainant Santosh Prusty. The anti-corruption agency laid a trap against Dinabandhu based on Prusty's complaint. Dinabandhu had assured Prusty of reducing the annual holding tax in respect of the building purchased by the latter. Simultaneous house searches are underway at Dinabandhu's properties.

RAYAGADA VILLAGE BOYCOTTS RURAL POLL

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chandrapur, Feb 17: Residents of Kutama village under Chandrapur Sadar panchayat of Chandrapur block in Rayagada district boycotted the panchayat polls held in the first phase en masse protesting exclusion of names of 268 villagers from the voter list. The village has a total of 372 voters. Saraswati Mala Bisoi, a former zilla parishad member of Chandrapur block, said she had drawn the attention of Chandrapur BDO George Ddung to the exclusion of names of many villagers from the voter list three months back. However, no step was taken to include the names.

The villagers staged a sit-in outside the Kutama booth Wednesday demanding the voting right of the residents, whose names are missing from the list. On being informed, Ddung and tehsildar Chinnmaya Das reached the spot and urged the villagers who have their names in the voter list to withdraw the protest and participate in voting. The villagers withdrew their protest but refused to cast their votes. They alleged that the names of their co-villagers have been excluded from the voter list due to the whimsical work of the panchayat extension officer.

MLA's son forces tribals to take pledge for votes

VIRAL VIDEO



POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, Feb 17: In a shocking incident, an MLA's son and some BJD candidates were seen in a video forcing tribals to swear in the name of God to vote for certain candidates. The incident has reportedly taken place in a forest of Khairiput block in Malkangiri district. The video has gone viral hours before the second phase of panchayat elections. In the video, a group of tribals were seen gathered in a forest while the MLA's son and some BJD candidates took a vow in the name of God to cast their votes in favour of some candidates. It was alleged that such an

incident is blatant violation of Model Code of Conduct. The opposition parties have taken exception to this illegal way of influencing voters. BDO Hrudananda Sahu said action would be taken against the people involved in the case. Congress alleged that the BJD has been using money and muscle power to win elections.

FESTIVE FERVOUR



Tribal priests and people taking out a procession on the occasion of traditional 'Magha Mande' festival at Dabugaon in Nabarangpur district, Thursday. OP PHOTO

RIFT IN GANJAM CONGRESS WIDE OPEN

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 17: The rift in Ganjam district Congress is out in the open with the leaders speaking in different voices when the party is busy for the three-tier panchayat polls, a report said. This came to the fore when district observer and OPCC vice-president Sibananda Ray visited the Silk city a few days ago. Hurt over the development, Ray decided to stop campaigning for the party candidates and return to Bhubaneswar. This has triggered a buzz in the political circles with the party drawing sharp criticisms from people and party sympathizers alike. On the other hand, elections to various municipalities, notified area councils and municipal corporations will be held after the announcement of the results for the panchayat polls.

OPCC VP SNUBBED



POST NEWS NETWORK

The rift was apparent as Sujay Acharya, the president of the city Congress, and his supporters were prevented from entering Bapujee Ashram, the district Congress office here recently. As Ray reached the party office in Berhampur, there was nobody to welcome him. Later, a district vice-president and some workers reached the office. Ashram, the district Congress office here. As Ray reached the party office in Berhampur, there was nobody to welcome him. Later, a district vice-president and some workers reached the office. Acharya had invited Ray for campaigning. However, some

district office bearers prevented Acharya from entering the party office. Deeply hurt over the development, Ray left the place and went to the Baulajholi farmhouse of Ramesh Jena, the district Congress president at Kukudakhandi. Maheswar Patra, district vice-president, said the decision to deny Acharya to enter the party office has been taken on the order of the district president due to leakage of party's internal matter. Efforts to contact Jena to get his response on the issue proved unsuccessful. Reports said the Congress party has fielded candidates in 67 zones out of 69 zilla parishad zones in the district. While the ruling BJD and opposition BJP have intensified their campaign and making every effort to grab maximum number of seats, the grand old party is lagging behind

in every aspect of campaigning. Former district Congress president Trinath Behera, district president of INTUC Pitabas Panda, trade union leader Bhokali Sethy and other leaders have stayed away from the campaigning as they have not been invited. There are several issues to corner the Centre and state government but the party leaders have failed to capitalise on them. The party had fielded candidates in all the 69 zones in the 2017 panchayat polls but won only one zone under Kukudakhandi block. Elected ZP member Brundaban Khatei is also not campaigning. As a result, the Congress votes will go to BJD and BJP in this election, political observers said. The party is likely meet the same fate in the municipal polls if there is no change in the situation.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. C/SBP/NIT/MPS/AUR/22, Dt.15.02.2022
NAME OF WORK: CONTRACT FOR MULTI PURPOSE STALL AT SAMBALPUR STATION AT PLATFORM NO.01 FOR THE PERIOD OF 05(FIVE) YEARS.
Reserve Price per Annum (₹): 2,80,000/-, EMD (₹): 28,000/-, Cost of Tender Document : ₹ 2,500/- + @18% GST = 2,950/- (Non-refundable), Completion Period of the work: 5 Years.
Date and time of Submission of tender : Up to 1100 hrs of 09.03.2022, Date and time of Opening of tender : Up to 1130 hrs of 09.03.2022
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.
Complete details including e-tender documents are available at <http://www.irps.gov.in>.
Divisional Commercial Manager, Sambalpur
PR-825/M/21-22

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL RAMBHA
Rambha N.A.C., Ganjam, Odisha, 761028
Tel:06810-278336, Email:rambhanac123@gmail.com
Letter No.562/NAC Date:17.02.2022
This brings notice to all public of notified area council Rambha, Rambha NAC has been declared as open defecation free (ODF++) city.
1. If any one visualizes openly defecated inside Rambha NAC area Rs.500 penalized collected from that person by Rambha NAC.
2. If any one visualizes openly urinating inside Rambha NAC area Rs.200 fine collected from that person by Rambha NAC.
3. If any Person breaches FSSM regulation and out late of latrine waste (Black Water) directly put into drain or any open spaces then they should be penalized Rs.1000 by Rambha NAC.
Sd./-Executive Officer N.A.C.Rambha

POLL PITCH



Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav and party founder Mulayam Singh during a public meeting for Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, in Mainpuri



Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath during an election rally in Jhansi



AAP candidate Bhagwant Mann addresses people at an election rally for upcoming Punjab Assembly polls, in Patiala

PM HITS OUT AT CONGRESS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Abohar, Feb 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday hit out at Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi for his UP, Bihar and Delhi de bhaiye' remark, saying people with such "divisive thought" do not have the right to rule the state.

Addressing a rally here ahead of the February 20 Punjab Assembly polls, he also urged voters to bring the BJP-led alliance to power in Punjab for the all-round development of the state.

Attacking the Congress government in Punjab, Modi said every trade has been captured by the mafia in Punjab

Channi during a Congress roadshow Tuesday courted controversy by asking people not to let "bhaiyas" of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi enter Punjab, a remark apparently aimed at leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which is emerging as a strong contender for the polls to 117-member state assembly.

In a video circulating on social media, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is seen beside Channi and clapping when he made the remarks during the roadshow in Rupnagar.

The word "bhaiyas" in reference to people from Uttar Pradesh and



Bihar is generally considered offensive. During his address, Prime Minister Modi attacked the Congress, saying it "always makes people of one region fight against another region for its own gains". Referring to Channi's remark, he

said the entire country saw this. "The statement, which the Punjab Chief Minister has made, and his leader, who was standing beside him, was clapping. The entire country has seen this," Modi said. "By such statements, who are

they trying to insult. There would hardly be any village here (in Punjab) where our brethren from Uttar Pradesh or Bihar would not be doing hard work," he said.

Noting that Guru Ravidas Jayanti was observed Wednesday, he said, "I want to ask these leaders where was Sant Ravidas born. Was he born in Punjab? He was born in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi and you will not let 'bhaiya' of Uttar Pradesh

even for a moment". Referring to the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission report, he said it was his government which implemented them. "History is witness that the Congress has always betrayed farmers," Modi said.

"There was a demand for implementing the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission report for several years but they continued to sit on the file. Congress

I want to ask these leaders where was Sant Ravidas born. Was he born in Punjab? He was born in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi and you will not let 'bhaiya' of Uttar Pradesh to enter here, will you throw out Ravidasiyas (followers of Guru Ravidas), will you erase Sant Ravidas' name too. What kind of language are you speaking?

NARENDRA MODI

to enter here, will you throw out Ravidasiyas (followers of Guru Ravidas), will you erase Sant Ravidas' name too. What kind of language are you speaking?"

Modi further asked where Guru Gobind Singh was born. "He was born in Patna Sahib in Bihar, and you say you will not let people of Bihar enter. Will you then insult Guru Gobind Singh ji?... Will you insult the land where Guru Gobind Singh was born, will you use such language that you will not let people of that state enter here," he said.

They are saying they will not let people of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar enter, Modi said, adding, people with "such divisive thought do not have the right to rule Punjab

governments only spoke lies," he said.

He said when his government was formed at the Centre, it implemented the recommendations of the commission, and that it was in his government's time, there was a record purchase of foodgrains.

Attacking the Congress government in Punjab, Modi said every trade has been captured by the mafia in Punjab. He also said that because of the Congress government's policies, nobody was ready to make investments in Punjab.

In entire Punjab, one voice is coming out and that is to make the BJP-led alliance victorious and form a "double engine" government, the Prime Minister said.

'Fearful Rahul' distances from campaign in UP

Rahul Gandhi last visited Amethi in December 2021 and participated in a march of Pratigya Yatra along with his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 17: Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi has not stepped in UP so far after two phases of voting in politically crucial Uttar Pradesh. The fire-fighting in UP has been left to Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra who is in-charge in the state.

Though Rahul Gandhi has been named star campaigner in UP elections by the party, but he is keeping safe distance as sources say that party's prospects are not good and the Congress may not win seats as it expects. The party is contesting all the seats in the state for the first time in two decades as it is not in alliance with any political party.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has now emerged as the main campaigner for the party in the state. However, the Congress sources say that Rahul Gandhi will step in the state after Punjab elections and that the party has high stakes in the state where the Congress is expecting to return to power.

The Congress in 2017 fought elections in alliance with the Samajwadi Party but failed miserably and could only win 7 seats and in 2019 even Rahul Gandhi



lost election in the state from the home turf of Amethi.

Rahul Gandhi last visited Amethi in December 2021 and participated in a march of Pratigya Yatra along with his sister Priyanka Gandhi. Rahul Gandhi said, this is his home, and no one can force him to go out of here.

He first fought elections in 2004 from Amethi and won till 2014 but lost in 2019 to Smriti Irani but won from Wayanad in Kerala. Rahul Gandhi had said: "The streets of Amethi are the same, but there is anger in the eyes of people against the government. There is still a place for me in my heart. We are still one, against injustice!"

SAD-BSP alliance to sweep polls: Sukhbir

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Feb 17: The SAD-BSP alliance will sweep the polls in Punjab and there is no question of rejoining the BJP-led NDA government. The party is determined to break Congress leader Navjot Sidhu's arrogance. And Parkash Singh Badal is a people's man and he's contesting at the age of 94 is a natural corollary.



If you want to witness the strength of SAD please come and attend our public rallies or go the villages and towns of Punjab and take direct feedback from the people. Please don't rely on any pollster. The SAD-BSP alliance will sweep the polls

SUKHBIR BADAL | SHIROMANI AKALI DAL PRESIDENT

These were the views shared by Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Badal in an interview in the run-up to the elections to 117-member legislative Assembly that his party ruled with its previous alliance partner the BJP for a decade from 2007.

"We will sweep the polls and are forming the next government in Punjab," Badal, 59, who started his poll campaign nearly six months in advance in Punjab, a largely agricultural economy, to understand what is on the minds of the voting public, said.

With most pollsters predicting the election a direct contest between the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) with the Akali Dal predicted second or third position, he replied, "I wish all the best to these so called pollsters who are nothing but marketing agents who have been won over by the Aam Aadmi Party's Rs 850 crore advertising campaign."

them, said Punjab and Punjabis are in a crisis.

"The Congress government did nothing for five years. It reneged on each and every promise made to the people be it complete farm loan waiver, Rs 2,500 per month unemployment allowance, jobs for each household and increase in social welfare benefits." It also stalled all development works but simultaneously presided over a sand and liquor mafia and looted the state exchequer. It was due to this that the state's debt has increased by Rs 1 lakh crore in the last five years alone."

Having led the party to an unprecedented second consecutive term in Punjab in 2012, Sukhbir Badal, whose father Parkash Singh Badal, 94, the country's oldest candidate in the fray for the sixth consecutive term, is trying hard to save the 'sinking ship' after party's humiliating defeat in the 2017 Assembly polls.

'Tiger spotting' to be promoted in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bijnor, Feb 17: "Tiger spotting" will now be promoted in a big way with a new safari gate opening in Barhapur region of Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor district.

The big cats will be kept in natural condition, but within a safe enclosure of around 32 hectares. The enclosure, erected as per standard guidelines, is currently under construction.

According to forest officials, tiger spotting has become rare even in the Corbett Reserve but now a new tiger safari is coming up in Kalagarh region across a 106-hectare area.

The forest department is awaiting orders from the Central Zoo



Authority to start the safari, the officials added.

In 2020, the work on the tiger safari began in the forest of the Kalagarh Reserve. Two enclosures were prepared.

The safari can be reached through the Pakhro gate from Barhapur side and from Kotdwar side in Uttarakhand.

According to former ranger of

Pakhro area, Braj Bihari Sharma, a pair of big cats will be kept in each enclosure.

"Tourists will be able to reach Pakhro from Delhi in five hours by bus. Cab business will also benefit. The road from Barhapur to Pakhro will have to be repaired by the Public Works Department (PWD). The road from Nagina to Barhapur is yet to be reconstructed," he said.

A forest officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: "A large number of trees were felled by forest authorities allegedly without permission. The matter is being probed by higher officials of the forest department. The work of repairing the road from Kalagarh to Pakhro is affected, its vigilance investigation is also going on."

Amethi has a mix of candidates, emotions

The elections in Amethi have an interesting mix of candidates -- a wife who is banking on sympathy for a jailed husband, an erstwhile Raja who is caught in a family feud that refuses to end and a turncoat who has entered the fray with another party

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amethi (Uttar Pradesh), Feb 17: Amethi, somehow, makes sure that it retains a strong element of emotions whenever elections are held. This time is no different.

The elections in Amethi have an interesting mix of candidates - a wife who is banking on sympathy for a jailed husband, an erstwhile Raja who is caught in a family

feud that refuses to end, and a turncoat who has entered the fray with another party.

The BJP candidate from Amethi is the erstwhile Raja of Amethi and former MP Sanjaya Singh. He is returning to state politics after over three decades and his entry has triggered another battle between his two wives.

Garima Singh objected to the omission of her name in Sanjaya Singh's affidavit, claiming that her 'alleged divorce' had been struck down by court because her signatures were forged. She said that she remained his legal wife. The objection was dismissed.

In 2017, Amethi had witnessed a face-off between the wives -- Garima Singh, who was the BJP candidate, and Ameeta Singh, who contested on a Congress ticket. Garima won the election. Sanjaya Singh, who has returned to Amethi, ostensibly, to reclaim his legacy but sympathy for Garima, his first wife, still is palpable in Amethi that considers her the 'Rani'.



Sanjaya Singh claims it was his father Rananjay Singh who offered the Amethi seat to the Gandhis. Rananjay Singh had won the first election after Independence from the Amethi seat as an independent candidate. He later won elections on the Jana Sangh ticket in 1969 and Congress ticket in 1974. Sanjaya Singh started his political career from Amethi in 1980 and people welcomed him with open arms. In 1985, Singh won again by getting a record 98 per cent of the votes polled. In 1989, he lost as a

Janata Dal candidate.

Sanjaya Singh later joined the BJP. In the 1998 Lok Sabha election, he defeated Satish Sharma of the Congress. He lost to Sonia Gandhi in the 1999 general elections. Wife Ameeta, won the Amethi Assembly seat in 2002 on a BJP ticket.

In 2004, the couple returned to the Congress. Ameeta won the 2004 Assembly bypoll and later the 2007 poll from Amethi. In 2012, Ameeta lost to Gayatri Prasad Prajapati of the Samajwadi Party by a close margin

and then to Garima Singh in 2017.

The couple then joined the BJP again. Sanjaya Singh's main challenger is Maharaji Prajapati, wife of former minister Gayatri Prajapati, who is in jail since 2017 on charges of rape and corruption. Maharaji has been fielded by the Samajwadi Party and is essentially a homemaker.

Accompanied by her two daughters, she goes from village to village, weeping uncontrollably, and asking for justice for her husband. "He used to distribute blankets to you but today, he is sleeping on the floor in the cold. I am here to get justice for my husband," she says.

Her tears are moving mountains and the women, in particular, embrace her and her daughters, promising to vote for her. The Congress candidate is Ashish Shukla, who switched from Congress to BSP, then to BJP and is again back to Congress while the BSP has fielded Ragini Tiwari and hopes to get the Brahmin support along with Dalits.

of the day quote

The fear of defeat is clearly visible among the BJP leaders. It is clear that the Yogi government shall be given a farewell

SACHIN PILOT | CONGRESS LEADER

Does Charanjit Singh Channi have any idea about contributions that Bihari people are making in Punjab. He is not realising the derogatory statement he made for Bihari people

NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER

More over, the way leaders of ruling parties gave the statement against Lalu Prasad Yadav, it looked like he is the only culprit in the world and they are saints

SHIVANAND TIWARI | RJD VICE PRESIDENT



This time people of Bundelkhand will destroy those who betrayed them

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

DHANKHAR INVITES MAMATA FOR TALKS

mid the ongoing tussle between the West Bengal secretariat and the Raj Bhavan, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar -- in an apparent effort to end the constitutional stalemate -- has invited Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for talks at the Raj Bhavan any time next week. However, no reaction has come from the Chief Minister's side so far



MANMOHAN BLASTS MODI

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 17: The BJP had been in power for more than seven years and was still blaming first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for the problems of the people, former Prime Minister and Congress leader Manmohan Singh said Thursday in a scathing attack against the Modi-led government.

Targeting the central government on a host of issues, including the farmers' agitation, foreign policy, price rise and unemployment, Singh said ahead of the Punjab elections February 20 that the BJP's nationalism was "fake" and was based on the British policy of "divide and rule".

The Congress played the message delivered in Punjab at a press conference here. According to Singh, the government had proved to be a "complete failure" on the issue of foreign policy. The Chinese army, he alleged, was occupying "our pious land for the last one year but efforts are being made to bury this issue". "Our relations



FILE PHOTO

with neighbouring nations are also deteriorating," Singh said. Further targeting the Centre on foreign policy matters, Singh said, "Old friends are constantly alienating from us, while our relations with neighbouring countries are also deteriorating."

"I hope that now the ruling dispensation has come to understand that the relations of the countries do not improve by forcefully embracing the leaders, playing on a swing with them or going for uninvited biryani," he said, in a swipe

at Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

With the Congress targeting the Centre saying its governance was visible only in advertisements, Singh said, "The truth somehow always comes to the fore. It is very easy to talk of big things but it is very difficult to put those things into action." He said the government does not have trust in the country's constitution and "institutions are continuously being weakened".

"Today the situation is very worrisome. In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, the short-sighted

India objects to S'pore PM's remark

New Delhi: India Thursday took exception to the remarks by Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong referring to criminal charges on Indian lawmakers, people familiar with the development said. It is learnt that the issue was raised with the Singaporean High Commissioner at the Ministry of External Affairs. "The remarks by the prime minister of Singapore were uncalled for. We are taking up the matter with the Singaporean side," said one of the people cited above. The Singapore PM had invoked Jawaharlal Nehru while highlighting how democracy should work in the city-state during a debate in Parliament. "Many political systems today would be quite unrecognisable to their founding leaders. Ben-Gurion's Israel has morphed into one which can barely form a government, despite four general elections in two years. Meanwhile, a stream of senior politicians and officials in Israel face a litany of criminal charges, some have gone to jail.

policies of the central government, on the one hand, have caused people to suffer from falling economy, rising inflation and unemployment." Hitting out at the central government, Singh, who is a noted economist, said they have no understanding of the economy, which was not in a healthy shape. The former prime minister also alluded to the security lapse of Modi's convoy being stuck on a flyover in Ferozepur last month.

"A few days ago, in the name of the prime minister's security, an attempt was made to defame Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and the people of the state..." he said. "During the farmers' agitation too, an attempt was made to defame Punjab and Punjabiyat," he said. The world salutes the bravery, patriotism and sacrifice of Punjabis, but the NDA government did not talk about any of these, Singh said.

Delhi: Bag containing IED found in building

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: A bag containing an improvised explosive device (IED) was found by the police in a house in the Old Seemapuri area in the northeastern part of Delhi Thursday, a senior officer said.

According to the official, the NSG has confirmed the item in the bag to be IED.

A call about a suspicious item detected in a building in Seemapuri was received around and special cell teams were rushed to the spot. A fire tender, NSG officials and the Forensic Science Laboratory team also reached the spot.

The bag containing IED was picked up by the NSG bomb disposal squad from the second floor of the building. It will be defused at a safe location, official sources said. The area has been cordoned off and senior police officials have reached the spot.

A local said, "Those living in the area where the explosive has been found have been vacated. Police told us that they have come to know about tenants living in that house who are now absconding."

In January, an IED stuffed with RDX and ammonium nitrate was found inside an unattended bag at the Ghazipur flower market here but it was later defused.

The incident had happened ahead of Republic Day celebrations on January 26 for which the security apparatus in the National Capital was already on high alert.

Govt removes caps on India-Ukraine flights

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: Amid tense situation in Ukraine, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has removed the curbs on the number of flights that can be operated between India and the Eastern European nation under the bilateral air bubble arrangement to facilitate travel of Indians from that country.

Besides, the cap on the number of seats that can be offered on flights has been removed and Indian carriers have also been asked by the ministry to look at the possibility of operating flights to Ukraine due to the increase in demand, a senior official at the ministry said Thursday.

Sources at various Indian airlines said they are watching the situation and have not decided on whether to operate flights to Ukraine or not.

Earlier in the day, a senior official at Go First said the airline will evaluate the option of operating chartered passenger flights to Ukraine if there is a proposal from the government.

In the wake of rising tensions between Ukraine and Russia, India has advised its citizens to temporarily leave Ukraine.

The ministry has removed the restrictions on the number of flights and seats between India and Ukraine under the air bubble arrangement.

Any number of flights including chartered flights can be operated between the two countries, the ministry official said.

Earlier, among others, there was a restriction that only around 450 passengers could be flown in daily from Ukraine under the air bubble arrangement. Those have been removed, the official added.

CBI QUESTIONS FORMER CMD RISHI AGARWAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: The CBI has questioned former chairman and managing director of ABG Shipyard Ltd Rishi Agarwal in connection with its probe into the Rs 22,848 crore alleged banking fraud, the biggest such case registered by the central agency, officials said Thursday.

Agarwal was examined recently, the officials said without giving details of exact date of his examination.

The CBI swung into action after registering the FIR February 7 a complaint filed by SBI August 25, 2020.

The central probe agency has issued look out circulars against the

ABG SHIPYARD CASE

accused in the case to prevent them from leaving the country, the officials said.

The agency has also named the then executive director Santhanam Muthaswamy, directors Ashwini Kumar, Sushil Kumar Agarwal and Ravi Vimal Netveta 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.

Immediately after filing the FIR, the CBI had conducted searches at 13 locations February 12.



Artistes during a practice session of Folk Safar, a three-day event promoting artistes from Bengal in Kolkata PFI PHOTO

WEDDING CELEBRATION TURNS TRAGIC

13 killed after falling into well

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kushinagar (UP), Feb 17: Loud wails echoed in nondescript Nebua Naurangia village of Kushinagar district Thursday after 13 women and young girls fell into a well during a wedding ritual and died.

The incident, in which at least 10 people were also injured, occurred Wednesday night when an iron grille they were sitting on broke, officials and family members said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed sorrow over the incident.

The grief-stricken family announced that they won't take out the 'baraat' (groom's wedding procession) after the tragedy. Only the groom, Amit Kushwaha, travelled in a car for the wedding.

Narrating the incident, Kushwaha said, "Actually the well is old and it was covered with a slab. During the ritual, girls were standing on the slab when it broke and they all fell inside the well."

On getting information about the tragic incident, Inspector Girish Upadhaya reached the spot. Police



Some women and children were sitting on the iron grille and it suddenly broke and they fell into the well

personnel and villagers pulled out all 23 people who had fallen into the well and rushed them to a hospital. Thirteen of them were declared dead by doctors, the officials said.

Senior administrative and police officials also reached the spot. No one from Kushwaha's family died in the incident. His granddaughter Payal fell into the well but was rescued. A posse of police personnel were seen guarding the well where the tragedy struck. The old well is about 100 metres away from Kushwaha's home.

According to the villagers, the well is more than 70 years old and the locals often perform rituals near it, especially during weddings.

Centre dismisses reports on undercounting of Cov deaths



AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 17: The Union health ministry Thursday dismissed media reports based on a published research paper alleging that India's Covid-19 mortality count is much higher than the official figure, which is "fallacious and completely inaccurate".

The ministry said the country has a robust system of reporting deaths, including those caused by Covid-19, and the data is compiled regularly at different levels of governance, starting from the gram panchayat level to the district level and the state level. "The reporting of deaths is regularly done in a transparent manner. All deaths are compiled by the Centre after being independently reported by states and UTs." "To project that

The study estimates that the Covid death count in the country till early November 2021 was between 32 lakh and 37 lakh, as compared to the official figure of 4.6 lakh

Covid deaths have been under-reported is without basis and devoid of justification," the ministry said in a statement. There have been some media reports based on a published research paper alleging that the Covid mortality count in India is much higher than the official figure and the actual numbers have been undercounted, it said. The study estimates that the Covid death toll in the country till early November 2021 was between 32 lakh and 37 lakh, as compared to the official figure of 4.6 lakh.

"As has been stated earlier for similar media reports, it is again clarified that these reports are fallacious and completely inaccurate. They are not based on facts and are speculative in nature," the statement issued by the ministry said.

Allow Muslim pupils to wear hijab on Fridays, K'taka HC urged

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, Feb 17: Counsel appearing for students seeking to attend schools with hijab, Thursday urged the Karnataka High Court that these students be allowed to wear hijab and attend classes Fridays at least.

Senior advocate Vinod Kulakarni, appearing for the students, submitted that the hijab issue has created mass hysteria and mental disturbances throughout the country, and that sending poor Muslim girls out of class is against the preamble of the Constitution.

At least Fridays, and ensuing holy month of Ramzan, beginning in March, let the students be allowed to come wearing hijab, he

said, quoting a Lata Mangeshkar song, "... Kuch paake khona hai, kuch khoke paana hai" (to get something you lose, you lose something to get something) and sought court directions in this regard.

"I beg with my folded hands to allow hijab on Fridays and it will avoid unnecessary controversy," he said, adding that the Quran can't be ignored and hijab is not against public order. Outside authorities have no standing and have no authority to pass orders in religious matters and beliefs, he said.

Advocate General Prabhuling Navadagi, appearing for the state government, opposed the demand, saying that if the request is considered, it is as good as considering the petitioner's application.



Senior advocates Devdatt Kamat, Ravivarma Kumar and Yusuf Muchchala, appearing for the petitioners, have completed their ar-

guments Wednesday. The three judge bench, which heard the matter for the fifth consecutive day, subsequently adjourned

The six girls from Udupi who started the hijab protest have chosen to remain absent from the college until the final order

the matter to Friday, when Navadagi will present his arguments.

Counsel for petitioner have so far vehemently argued for lifting of interim order prohibiting wearing of hijab and saffron shawls to classes, contending that the government is misusing the interim order issued by the court to target Muslim students. However,

the bench headed by Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi and comprising Justice Krishna S. Dixit and Justice Khaji Jaibunnesa Mohiyuddin has not acceded to this.

Meanwhile, the six girls from Udupi who started the hijab protest have chosen to remain absent from the college until the final order.

Meanwhile, police had a tough time as about 340 students resorted to block the road holding placards in support of wearing hijab in Hassan. A police officer warned them of action and dispersed them.

A tense situation is prevailing at Saraladevi College in Bellary as hijab wearing students joined by parents refusing to go back even after several requests from college and police authorities.

international



It's clear that at the centre of this architecture, the world needs a strong and sustainably financed WHO ... with its unique mandate, unique technical expertise and unique global legitimacy

TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS |
DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WHO

NZ SCIENTISTS' RARE FIND

While typically heard in an omnipresent children's song, the phrase baby shark has delighted New Zealand scientists after the rare discovery of a juvenile ghost shark, also known as chimaeras, during a survey off the east coast of the country's South Island



of the day quote

India is more than just a partner. We work more closely with India on daily basis than any country in the region



DONALD LU | ASST SECY, BUREAU OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS, US

We hope India can take concrete measures to maintain the sound development momentum of bilateral economic and trade cooperation



GAO FENG | SPOKESMAN, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, CHINA

We know that our Indian partners are committed to that rules-based international order. There are any number of tenets in that order. One of them is that borders cannot be redrawn by force



NED PRICE | SPOKESPERSON, STATE DEPT, US

It's still Bangkok! Thailand quells talk of name change

The Thai name for Bangkok, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon, is actually a short form of the capital's full name, which is also the world's longest place name, according to the Guinness World Records



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bangkok, Feb 17: No, English speakers and others using the Roman alphabet aren't going to have to start calling the Thai capital by its local name, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon, and drop the more familiar "Bangkok."

That's the message from Thailand's Royal Society, which is responsible for academic and linguistic standards, after a seem-

ingly innocuous change in punctuation in official guidance sparked a flurry of speculation that the city's name was being changed.

It started when the Cabinet Tuesday approved a Royal Society proposal changing the way the capital would be referred to internationally from "Krung Thep Maha Nakhon; Bangkok" to "Krung Thep Maha Nakhon (Bangkok)."

As people sought to derive the meaning behind changing the semi-

colon to parentheses, many put great weight to the accompanying explanation that it would "revise" the name of the capital city and keep the "former" name in brackets.

The capital is already officially known in the Thai language as Krung Thep Maha Nakhon, which literally means "great city of angels," and most Thais shorten it to just Krung Thep in conversation.

As speculation grew, the Royal Society Wednesday clarified in a Facebook post that their new guidance was simply a stylistic change.

"Writing the capital city's official name with the Roman alphabet can be done both as Krung Thep Maha Nakhon and Bangkok," the government agency said, allaying the fears of any non-Thai speakers about adopting the more compli-

cated name. Even if the Royal Society had meant to change the name to the one used by Thais, however, there is another option that would have been an even greater challenge for foreign tongues.

The Thai name for Bangkok, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon, is actually a short form of the capital's full name, which is rooted in Pali and Sanskrit and is more of a phrase to describe the city than a name Krung Thep Mahanakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthara Ayuthaya Mahadilok Phop Nopparat Ratchathani Burirom Udomratchaniwet Mahasathan Amon Piman Awatan Sathit Sakkathattiya Witsanukam Prasit.

That is the world's longest place name, according to the Guinness World Records.

'Every indication' Russia mulling an attack: Biden



An interior view shows a kindergarten, which according to Ukraine's military officials was damaged by shelling

REUTERS

Moscow/Kyiv, Feb 17: US President Joe Biden said Thursday there was now every indication Russia was planning to invade Ukraine in the next few days and was preparing a pretext to justify it, after Ukrainian forces and pro-Moscow rebels traded fire in eastern Ukraine.

The Kremlin accused Biden of stoking tension and released a strongly worded letter which said Washington was ignoring its security demands and threatened unspecified military-technical measures. Moscow also ejected the number two official from the US embassy.

Early morning exchanges of fire between Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists stoked alarm, with Western officials who have long warned that Moscow could try to create a scenario to justify an invasion saying they believed that was now unfolding. "We have reason to believe they are engaged in a false flag operation to have an excuse to go in. Every indication we have is they're prepared to go into Ukraine and attack Ukraine," Biden told reporters as he departed the White House. "My sense is this will happen in the next several days."

Biden ordered Secretary of State Antony Blinken to change his travel plans at the last minute to speak at a United Nations Security Council meeting on Ukraine.

Blinken outlined to the Council

I was a soldier myself not that long ago. I know firsthand that you don't do these sorts of things for no reason. And you certainly don't do them if you're getting ready to pack up and go home. We see them fly in more combat and support aircraft. We see them sharpen their readiness in the Black Sea. We even see them stocking up their blood supplies

LOYD AUSTIN | US DEFENCE SECRETARY

It's clear the grouping for the military exercises was built up over many weeks, and it is of course impossible to withdraw it in a single day. They can't just take off and fly away... it takes time. As always unfounded accusations

DMITRY PESKOV | KREMLIN SPOKESPERSON

- Russia expels the No 2 diplomat at the US Embassy in Moscow
- Zelenskiy calls shelling 'big provocation'
- Kremlin says it is seriously concerned
- West disputes Russian announcement of pullback

what he said were possible scenarios Russia could create to justify an invasion. This could be a violent event that Russia will bring on Ukraine, or an outrageous accusation that Russia will level against the Ukrainian government, Blinken said. It could be a fabricated so-called terrorist bombing inside Russia, the invented discovery of a mass grave, a staged drone strike against civilians, or a fake - even a real - attack using chemical weapons. Russia may describe this event as ethnic cleansing, or a genocide.

Russia denies planning to invade its neighbour and has accused Western leaders of hysteria. This week it said it was pulling back some of the more than 100,000 troops it has massed near the frontier and Thursday it said some had returned to base.

Washington says Russia is not withdrawing, but in fact sending more forces. White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said Thursday Washington had confirmed that Russia had added 7,000 troops to its presence at the Ukrainian border over the past 24 hours, a cause of serious concern.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Moscow was seriously concerned about the reports of an escalation. Russia has long accused Kyiv of planning to provoke escalation as an excuse to seize rebel territory by force, which Ukraine denies.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the pro-Russian forces had shelled a kindergarten, in what he called a big provocation.

MASSIVE MUDSLIDE



People look for victims at a mudslide at Morro da Oficina after pouring rains in the Brazilian city of Petrópolis, February 16. More than 100 people have died in landslides and flash flooding, officials said

REUTERS

INDIA AT G20 MEET

Ensure multi-lateral funding to tackle future pandemics

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 17: India Thursday urged the world's biggest 20 economies (G20) to make joint efforts to ensure increased multi-lateral funding by global institutions including the International Monetary Fund to prepare for future pandemics.

Low middle-income and middle income countries do not have enough resources and need global support to face these challenges, Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told her G20 counterparts hosted at a virtual meeting by Indonesia.

"It's apparent now for more that has been discussed from the morning and even in this panel that investment should happen now for a safer future is agreed upon," she said while sharing her views on mobilising finance for global public goods.

For example, she said, India alone had allocated \$29 billion for health infrastructure mission in which health insurance was as-



sured for the poor and the low income groups. G20 members should work together to address the gaps in global pandemic preparedness, which were raising "serious concern", Sitharaman said.

She said the World Health Organisation (WHO) needed to augment its capacity and mobilise global resources, and structural bottlenecks would have to be addressed to lessen the impact a pandemic might have.

Earlier Thursday, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen urged G20

members to back a proposed fund to invest in pandemic prevention and preparedness, warning that failure to close gaps in global health systems could result in "devastating" costs.

Yellen told finance ministers and central bankers from the world's 20 top economies that the new financial intermediary fund - to be hosted at the World Bank - would help channel the estimated \$75 billion in investments needed to reduce global vulnerabilities to future pandemics.

SHORT TAKES

Tesla faces US probe again

Detroit: US auto safety regulators have launched another investigation of Tesla, this time tied to complaints that its cars can stop on roads for no apparent reason. The government says it has 354 complaints from owners during the past nine months about "phantom braking" in Tesla Models 3 and Y. The probe covers an estimated 416,000 vehicles from the 2021 and 2022 model years. No crashes or injuries were reported. The vehicles are equipped with partially automated driver-assist features such as adaptive cruise control and "Autopilot," which allows them to automatically brake and steer within their lanes.

French military set to quit Mali

Paris/Bamako: France and military allies said Thursday they would leave Mali after almost a decade based there fighting Islamist insurgents around West Africa, moving instead to Niger despite public disenchantment with Paris' role in the region. Coups in Mali, Chad and Burkina Faso have weakened France's alliances in its former colonies, emboldened jihadists who control large swathes of desert and scrubland, and opened the door to greater Russian influence.

Japan eases its border controls

Tokyo: Japan will ease border controls imposed to counter the pandemic, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said on Thursday, softening measures that have been among the strictest imposed by wealthy nations and have been slammed by business and educators. About 150,000 foreign students have been kept out of Japan, along with workers desperately needed by an ageing nation with a shrinking population, prompting warnings of labour shortages and damage to its international reputation.

Venezuela, Russia hold discussions

Caracas: Venezuelan and Russian officials met for high-level discussions in the South American country Wednesday, a day after diplomats from the US and several other nations gathered to discuss steps toward a negotiated solution to the country's protracted crisis. The meeting between Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov and Venezuela's Petroleum Minister Tarek El Aissami was meant to "strengthen strategic cooperation relations", according to a statement from the Venezuelan government.

SPACEWALKING & MORE

US billionaire announces 3 more SpaceX flights

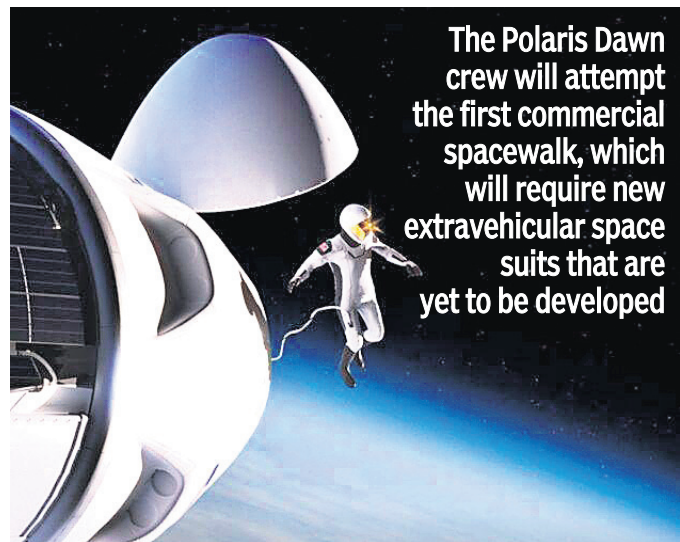
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington, Feb 17: US billionaire Jared Isaacman, who chartered the first all-civilian orbital spaceflight, announced Monday three more private missions with SpaceX - which will include space-walking and culminate in the first crewed flight of the next-generation Starship rocket.

The first, named Polaris Dawn, will take place no sooner than the fourth quarter of this year, and will be commanded by Isaacman, the founder of payment processing company Shift4.

The program represents a new step for the commercial space sector, as Elon Musk's SpaceX seeks to carry out more ambitious missions that were until now the domain of national space agencies.

In a press call, Isaacman revealed that the Polaris Program, named after the North Star, will be co-funded by himself and SpaceX.



The Polaris Dawn crew will attempt the first commercial spacewalk, which will require new extravehicular space suits that are yet to be developed

He declined to give further details such as total cost, or the percentage each side would contribute.

It is however widely expected to run into the hundreds of millions

of dollars. This program has been purposefully designed to advance long duration spaceflight capabilities... guiding us towards the ultimate goal of facilitating Mars

exploration, Isaacman told reporters. For Polaris Dawn, the crew will journey deeper into space than any Dragon has previously flown - with Isaacman indicating the altitude would be similar to NASA's Project Gemini, the agency's second crewed spaceflight program in the 1960s.

Gemini 11 flew around 1,370 kilometers high, which is far deeper into space than more recent missions to the International Space Station, 250 miles high.

But it is still well short of the journey to the Moon during the Apollo era, which is roughly 239,000 miles - or 30 Earths back-to-back - away.

The Polaris Dawn crew will also attempt the first commercial spacewalk, which will require new extravehicular space suits that are yet to be developed.

Since Dragon has no airlock, the whole spacecraft will be exposed to the vacuum of space when the hatch is opened.

The crew will make sure that everything is secured very well before we open that hatch, mission specialist and medical officer Anna Menon said.

Launching from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida on a Falcon 9 rocket, the spacecraft will spend up to five days in orbit.

The crew's intended altitude will see them enter the inner Van Allen belt, a region of dangerous radiation that protects the Earth from solar wind.

The last of the three missions will involve a SpaceX Starship rocket, which when complete will be the biggest and most powerful spacecraft ever built.

Musk sees the vessel as key to fulfilling his vision of colonising Mars, while a version has been contracted by NASA as a lunar lander for the Artemis program, which is set to return humans to the Moon around the middle of this decade.

Israeli strawberry clocks in as world's heaviest on record

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kadima-Zoran (Israel), Feb 17: After a year-long jam, a mammoth Israeli strawberry is entering the record books.

Weighing a whopping 289 grams, the titanic berry this week was declared the world's largest by Guinness World Records.

The strawberry was picked on Chahi Ariel's family farm near the city of Netanya in central Israel in February 2021. But only this week, Guinness confirmed it as the heaviest on record.

"We waited for a year for the results," Ariel said. "We kept it in the freezer for a year. It's no longer as pretty as it was."





of the day quote

Real estate developers are afflicted with very low return on capital as compared to bluechip stocks

RAKESH JHUNJUNWALA | ACE INVESTOR

Relations with the United Arab Emirates have really seen a deepening and a transformation over the last few years

ARINDAM BAGCHI | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON

We have been constantly upgrading our Subscribe program services with learnings and feedback from our customers. This has encouraged us to expand Maruti Suzuki Subscribe to newer markets like Kolkata and partner with Quiklyz by Mahindra Finance

SHASHANK SRIVASTAVA | SENIOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA LTD

SHORT TAKES

NYSE hints at NFT trading

Washington: The New York Stock Exchange has filed an application to register the term "NYSE" for a marketplace for non-fungible tokens (NFTs), taking a step closer to setting up an online trading place for cryptocurrencies and NFTs. The hype around cryptocurrencies last year spilled over to NFTs, a form of speculative investment that has attracted fans including former US first lady Melania Trump and Jamaican sprint great Usain Bolt.

Sugar output up 6% till Feb 15

New Delhi: India's sugar production increased by 6 per cent between October 1 and February 15 period of the 2021-22 marketing year at 220.91 lakh tonne on higher sugarcane production while exports jumped over three-fold till January at 31.5 lakh tonne, according to industry body ISMA. Sugar marketing year runs from October to September. The production stood at 209.11 lakh tonne in the year-ago period, Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) said in a statement Thursday.

Nestle India Q4 profit dips 20%

New Delhi: FMCG major Nestle India Ltd Thursday reported a 20 per cent decline in its net profit at ₹386.66 crore for the fourth quarter ended December 31, 2021. The company, which follows a January-December financial year, had posted a profit of ₹483.31 crore in the same period a year ago, Nestle India said in a regulatory filing. However, its revenue from operations was up 8.93 per cent to Rs 3,739.32 crore during the period under review, as against ₹3,432.58 crore last year.

Tablet mkt sees 4% YoY growth

New Delhi: In Q4 2021, the overall India tablet market grew 31 per cent year-on-year, while for the entire year it grew 4 per cent YoY, a new report revealed Thursday. According to Gurugram-based market research firm CMR, among the market players only Lenovo posted a double-digit growth in Q4 2021 that further cemented its place at the top of the leaderboard. Lenovo topped the tablet market in India, mainly driven by its enterprise tablet business, followed by Apple with 20% and Samsung with 18% market share.



I just regard it (cryptocurrency) as beneath contempt. Some people think it's modernity, and they welcome a currency that's so useful in extortions and kidnappings [and] tax evasion

CHARLIE MUNGER | VC, BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY

'THE NEW INDIA INC'

India Global Forum will begin its 2022 series of international events with 'The New India Inc' that will be hosted in Bangalore March 7 and 8. The forum will mark the growth trajectory of India powered by new-age businesses as the country celebrates 75 years of independence. It will open doors to global audience for incisive global discussion and lively debate over two days at Bangalore

LIC's looming IPO weighs on insurer shares: Investors

The flotation, potentially raising \$8 billion, likely will continue to drag on LIC's competitors for about a year and could spread to other sectors, investors noted



REUTERS

Mumbai, Feb 17: Next month's mammoth stock market debut for India's Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) has battered shares in other insurers as investors trim their holdings to make room for the state-owned giant, fund managers and analysts said.

The flotation, potentially raising \$8 billion, likely will continue to drag on LIC's competitors for about a year and could spread to other sectors, they said.

The government filed draft papers Sunday with India's market regulator to sell 5% of the company's shares in what could be the world's third-biggest insurance IPO ever and one of this year's biggest Asian share sales, according to Refinitiv data.

"This is the biggest one and you have to make space for this," said a fund manager who asked not to be named. "Historically, market leaders are the first ones that list. This is a rare moment when a large player is being listed very late."

The 66-year-old company, dominating India's insurance industry with more than 280 million policies, is the fifth-biggest global insurer in terms of insurance premium collection in 2020, the latest year for which statistics are available. It had ₹39.56 trillion (\$527 billion) of assets under management as of September.

"For any fund manager, having a player that owns over 60% of the market share instead of individually owning those that have 10%

Fund managers have already started reducing their exposure to the three listed private life insurers

Shares in ICICI Pru have dropped 10.4% this year, while HDFC Life is down 9.7% and SBI Life 6.2%, compared with a marginal 0.2% decline in the blue-chip Nifty 50 index

LIC's listing could dump the equivalent of nearly 60% of the three insurers' free-float capitalisation on the market

When IPOs of this big size come, they suck out the liquidity from the system. If there's room full of people at a party and a big guy comes in, you have to create space for him

VIDYA BALA | CO-FOUNDER, PRIMEINVESTOR

11% market share is a very natural aspiration," said Vidya Bala, co-founder of PrimeInvestor, a stocks and mutual funds research firm.

LIC's listing could dump the equivalent of nearly 60% of the three insurers' free-float capitalisation on the market, Macquarie said in a report this week, adding that the outlook for them remains challenging.

If LIC's valuation is attractive, the pressure could spread beyond insurers, weighing on consumer goods firms and some non-banking financial companies, two fund managers said.

IMPORTS AT 29-MONTH HIGH
Iraq tightens grip on India oil market

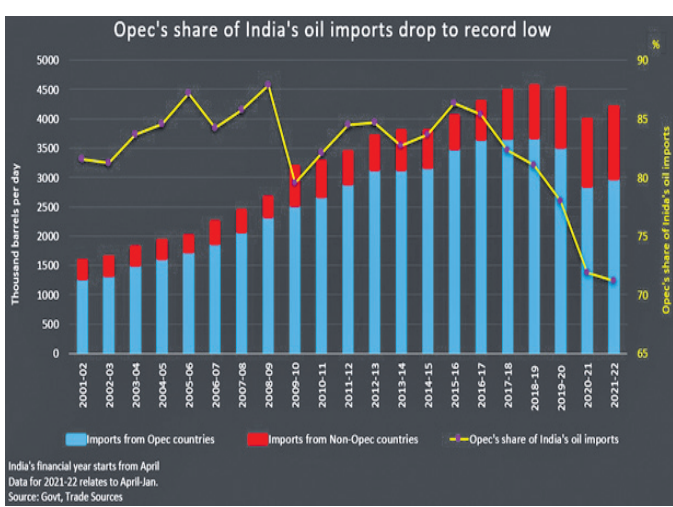
REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 17: India's imports of oil from Iraq surged in January to a 29-month high of about 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd), making up nearly a third of the supplies to Asia's third largest economy, data from shipping and industry sources show.

Iraq's importance as a key supplier is set to grow this year as at least two Indian refiners have increased their annual oil import deals with the second biggest OPEC producer.

India imported 4.6 million bpd of oil in January, a decline of about 1% from the previous month and about 3% from the year earlier, data compiled by Reuters showed.

From April 2021 through January 2022, the first 10 months of this fiscal year, India, the world's third biggest oil importer and consumer, shipped in 4.2 million bpd of oil, up 6.5% from a year ago, as refiners raised runs to meet rising fuel demand.



Indian refiners buy medium to heavy grades from the Middle East under annual deals at official selling prices (OSPs) and rely on the spot market for most of their requirement for sweet light oil, mainly from West Africa.

Brent crude's premium to Dubai swaps, or the spread between low- and high-sulphur crude, averaged \$4.58 a barrel in November, said Refinitiv analyst Ehsan Ul Haq.

"That forced Indians to buy Middle Eastern grades, and OSPs for Iraqi grades for Asia were better than for rival similar oil from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait," Haq said.

India's oil imports in Feb and March could rise as state refiners, which make up 60% of its total capacity of 5 million bpd, traditionally raise runs in the final fiscal quarter to meet production targets set by the government

India's imports of Nigerian oil declined to about 187,000 bpd, their lowest since July 2020, the data showed. The higher Iraq imports pulled up OPEC's share of Indian oil imports to 74% in January from 72.5% in December and 68.6% a year earlier, the data showed.

During January, Iraq continued to be the top oil supplier to India, followed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and Nigeria.

NATIONAL HYDROGEN POLICY

Govt notifies step to boost green H2, ammonia making

Unveiling the first part of the much-awaited National Hydrogen Policy, Power and New and Renewable Energy Minister Raj Kumar Singh said the government is targeting production of 5 million tonne of green hydrogen by 2030



renewable sources anywhere in the country by themselves or through a developer. They could also buy such power from the exchange. This electricity will be allowed to be wheeled, free of cost through open access of the transmission grid, to the plant where hydrogen is to be produced.

The government will also allow the green hydrogen/ammonia manufacturer to bank unconsumed renewable power, for up to 30 days, with the distribution company and take it back when required.

The policy provides for a "waiver

of inter-state transmission charges for a period of 25 years for manufacturers of green hydrogen and green ammonia for the projects commissioned before June 30, 2025."

The manufacturers of green hydrogen/ammonia and the renewable energy plant shall be given connectivity to the grid on a priority basis to avoid any procedural delays, Singh said, adding that to ensure ease of doing business, a single portal for carrying out all the activities, including statutory clearances in a time-bound manner, will be set.

Manufacturers of green hydrogen/green ammonia would also be allowed to set up bunkers near ports for storage of green ammonia for export or use by shipping.

The fuels can be a game-changer for the energy security of India, which imports 85 per cent of its oil and 53 per cent of gas requirements. The policy will aid in India's energy transition and achieving the target of becoming carbon neutral by 2070.

RIL LISTS OVER \$7BN FOREIGN CURRENCY BONDS ON INX

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) has listed its existing foreign currency bonds aggregating over \$7 billion on India INX, making it the largest such listing by a private entity in India INX and GIFT IFSC.

The securities include the \$4 billion worth jumbo bonds raised in January 2022, which was termed as the largest ever foreign currency bond issuance by an Indian entity.

The latest listing will give confidence to various other corporates to follow, V Balasubramaniam, MD and CEO of India INX, said in a statement Thursday. Currently, the total bond listings on the exchange are at over \$41 billion, he added.

"We are delighted to list our existing foreign currency bonds, including the recent landmark \$4 billion jumbo bond issuance, at the India INX. The listing framework and the seamless process is comparable with what is offered at any global financial centre. We look forward to a long-term association with India INX," Srikanth Venkatachari, joint chief financial officer of RIL, said.

Banking sector in pink of health: Ind-Ra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 17: India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) has revised its outlook on the banking sector to 'improving' from 'stable' for 2022-23, helped by better credit demand and strong balance sheet of lenders.

"We have revised the outlook on the overall banking sector to improving for FY23 from stable, as the banking system's health is at its best in decades. The improving health trend that began in FY20 is likely to continue into FY23," the agency said.

Key financial metrics are likely to continue to show improvement in FY23, backed by strengthened balance sheets and an improving credit demand outlook with an expected



commencement of the corporate capex cycle.

The agency's stable outlook on public sector banks (PSBs) for FY23 reflects reasonable capital buffers, low overhang of corporate stress in terms of expected shippages and manageable impact of COVID-19.

It expects PSBs to look for growth across sectors and benefit from loan recoveries, considering their high

For next fiscal year, the agency expects credit growth to pick up to 10 per cent and sees gross non-performing asset (GNPA) ratio at 6.1 per cent

profitability in the past six years.

The stable outlook on large private banks for 2022-23 indicates their continued market share gains in both assets and liabilities. Most have strengthened their capital buffers and proactively managed their portfolio, it said.

As growth revives, large private lenders are likely to witness continuing market share gains due to

their superior product and service proposition. The agency has marginally revised its credit growth estimates to 8.4 per cent for 2021-22 and 10 per cent for next fiscal year.

"The growth will be supported by a pick-up in economic activity post the first quarter of FY22, higher government spending on infrastructure and a revival in retail demand," Ind-Ra Director Karan Gupta said.

The agency expects leverage to start building up in 2022-23 on account of a revival in capex, increased working capital demand due to a higher output, higher exports and commodity inflation.

Gupta said the GNPA ratio is estimated at 6.3 per cent and stressed assets at 8.7 per cent in 2021-22.

Amazon, Visa to end global dispute

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

San Francisco, Feb 17: Tech giant Amazon has reportedly reached a global agreement with Visa to settle a dispute over the credit card giant's fees.

The deal means Amazon customers in the UK can continue using Visa credit cards, as previously announced by the two companies, CNBC reported.

Amazon will also drop a 0.5 per cent surcharge on Visa credit card transactions in Singapore and Australia, which it introduced last year.

Last month, Amazon said it had dropped plans to stop accepting Visa credit cards in Britain, two days before the change was expected to take place. The companies said at the time that they would con-



tinued talks on a broader resolution to their spat.

"We have recently reached a global agreement with Visa that allows all customers to continue using their Visa credit cards in our stores," said an Amazon spokesperson. "Amazon remains committed to offering customers a payment experience that is convenient and offers choice," the spokesperson added.

FIRST OUTSIDE INDIA

NPCI to deploy UPI payments platform in Nepal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 17: Nepal will be the first country to adopt India's UPI system, which will play a pivotal role in transforming the digital economy of the neighbouring country, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) said Thursday.

NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL), the international arm of NPCI, has joined hands with Gateway Payments Service (GPS) and Manam Infotech to provide the services in Nepal.

GPS is the authorised payment system operator in Nepal and Manam Infotech will deploy Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in that country.

The collaboration will serve the larger digital public good in Nepal



and bolster interoperable real-time person-to-person (P2P) and person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions in the neighbouring country, NPCI said in a statement.

"Nepal shall be the first country outside of India to adopt UPI as the

We expect UPI in Nepal would play a pivotal role in transforming the digital economy of the country and dreams of building a less-cash society

RAJESH PRASAD MANANDHAR | CEO, GPS

financial transactions valuing USD 940 billion, which is equivalent to approximately 31 per cent of India's GDP.

"At NIPL, we are committed to transforming payments by taking our robust payments solutions to global markets and collaborating with local payment system operators. We are confident that this initiative will stand as a testimony to NIPL's technological capabilities

and vision of scaling our unique offerings globally," Ritesh Shukla, CEO of NIPL said in the statement.

UPI's real-time payment infrastructure will help catalyze the process of financial inclusion in Nepal and will also create more opportunities for businesses, NPCI said.

It will help modernize Nepal's digital payment infrastructure and bring the convenience of digital payments to citizens of Nepal.

Nepal has a population of about 30 million (3 crore) with around 45 per cent banked. Mobile penetration of over 135 per cent with 65 per cent of the population using smartphones provides a bedrock for seamless replication of the digital revolution in India to be replicated in Nepal, NPCI said.

India eye series triumph

Shreyas told about India's preference of all-rounder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 17: Clinical in most aspects of the game so far, India will now hope that star batter Virat Kohli also regains his form when they take on a struggling West Indies in the potentially series-deciding second T20I here Friday.

The touring West Indies side has been far from being at its best and has failed to trouble the hosts in any of the matches so far.

After being outclassed 0-3 in the ODI leg in Ahmedabad, the Kieron Pollard-led team was expected to give India some challenge in its favourite T20 format, especially after a 3-2 win over England in its last series at home.

But they hardly managed to trouble the hosts in the first T20I here Wednesday, going down by six wickets. Another win and it will be a third successive series win for Rohit Sharma after being appointed the full time captain for Team India.

The only concern for India has been Kohli's form and he would definitely want a bigger knock than the scores of 8, 18, 0, and 17 so far in the assignment. Rohit is confident that he would come good and has asked both critics and media to spare him the constant scrutiny.

On his part, Rohit knows the importance of going hard in the powerplay, something that was in full display in his 19-ball 40 when he took Odean Smith to the cleaners in an over that conceded 22 runs.

With Ishan Kishan looking ordinary and struggling to get going at the other end, Rohit made the bulk of the 58 runs that India scored in the powerplay, something that meant they never fell behind the 158-run chase despite losing three quick wickets in the middle.

After Rohit got out in the eighth over, Kohli had the perfect opportunity to return among runs and seal the chase. But that was not



the case even though Kohli looked fluent in his short stay of 13-ball 17. On any other day his inside-out shot would have been a clear boundary but this time he hit straight to the fielder.

As for Ishan, the most expensive (Rs 15.25 crore) buy in the IPL 2022 auction, he was not able to score freely and failed to rotate strike when Rohit looked in sublime touch.

But thanks to Rohit's innings at the top, things did not go much out of India's reach as Suryakumar Yadav and Venkatesh Iyer applied themselves beautifully to seal the chase.

With India opting for a six-bowler

combination featuring pace bowling all-rounder Venkatesh, in-form batter Shreyas Iyer had to sit out with the bat. It remains to be seen what will be Rohit's ploy in the second T20I which can seal the fate of the series for India.

India will also be fretting over injury to pacer Deepak Chahar who sustained a blow to his right hand while fielding and could not complete his quota.

Looking for their first win of the tour, it would be a make or break match for the Windies. They would look forward to the return of their pace bowling all-rounder Jason Holder who had to sit out of

the first T20I following a niggles.

For them, the lone bright spot on Wednesday was their vice captain Nicholas Pooran's return to form with the bat. Fresh from his Rs 10.75 crore deal with Sunrisers Hyderabad, the left-handed wicketkeeper batter revived the Windies innings with a 38-ball fifty, that came after opener Kyle Mayers failed to convert his start.

Pooran and a fit-again skipper Kieron Pollard stepped up the accelerator in the last five overs scoring 61 runs to lift their total to 157/7. But in the end it proved to be 15-20 runs less, bringing the focus back on their middle over struggles

where debutant Indian leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi made it difficult for the visitors.

With Holder back in business and Pooran and Pollard beginning to look at their ominous best, the West Indies would fancy their chances to keep the series alive.

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, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Deepak Hooda, Kuldeep Yadav and Harpreet Brar.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 17: Shreyas Iyer might have been the third biggest buy at the IPL auction but to fit into India's T20 combination, he would need to showcase all-round skills as that's what the team is looking for in the middle-order slot, skipper Rohit Sharma has said. Wednesday was a mixed bag for Shreyas.

Around evening, Kolkata Knight Riders unveiled the worst kept secret in the IPL universe by announcing their Rs 12.25 crore recruit as franchise captain for 2022.

By 6:30 pm, however, it was clear that the former Delhi Capitals and new KKR captain isn't fitting into the specialist batter category in Team India for the T20 game against West Indies.

"Someone like Shreyas Iyer is sitting out, very hard on him to be out and not making it to the XI, but it's what the team requires. We need that option in the middle, someone who can bowl," Rohit said Wednesday. "It's always nice when you have those kind of competitions going on," he added.

Skipper Rohit gave a glimpse of what kind of team combination he is looking at in the shortest format and he made the hard but prudent call in picking a '360 degree' player like Suryakumar Yadav along with the less fancied Iyer - Venkatesh, who brings in all-round skills to the table.

"We were very clear with Shreyas, we told him the team wants that option (of an all-rounder) going into the World Cup. They are all smart guys, professionals and

they understand the team comes first," the Indian captain said.

"A lot of things go into deciding the playing XI, the opposition, the conditions, the dimensions of the ground. Yes, sometimes it can be tough for the guys missing out but we are making sure we are giving out a very clear message. Unfortunately but we want to put the team first," the skipper displayed no ambiguity in his statements.

It is also understood that Shreyas' technique against the short ball has been a bit susceptible and a lot of work is going into making him correct his body position to deal with express quicks in future.

All those who witnessed a couple of days' training at Eden Gardens saw how Rohit, himself a fine exponent of pull-shot, was seen explaining to Shreyas a thing or two about balance.

On the eve of the match after regular nets session, Shreyas wore the helmet and didn't have his pads on but team's throwdown specialist Raghavendra was seen standing at 10 yards and feeding him with fast but loopy balls, aimed at his helmet visor as he continuously played the pull-shot.

It was an exercise to perfect a particular shot as Rahul Dravid kept a hawk's eye on the proceedings. As Rohit had mentioned before the match, IPL dynamics won't dictate how he builds a team, he walked the talk.

"When the guys who are missing come back it's going to be very challenging to make the playing XI. But I'm happy with that challenge rather than not having players," Rohit said.



ODISHA REACH 23/3 AFTER BOWLING OUT GOA FOR 181

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: Odisha's campaign in the Ranji Trophy season began with contrasting fortunes as bowlers' impressive performance was overshadowed by the failure of their top-order batters in their campaign-opener against Goa in Ahmedabad, Thursday.

Odisha bowlers provided their side a splendid start to their campaign

after skipper Subhanshu Senapati won toss and opted to field first.

Goa were reduced to 63/6 by the end of the 32nd over. However, Goa's lower order batters fought back and allowed their bowlers to something to bowl for. And the credit goes to their wicketkeeper-batter Eknath Kerkar (76, 113b, 12x4, 1x6) who held his nerve and guided the lower order to take the team's total to 181. The last three

wickets added crucial 65 runs.

With the scoreboard reading 63/6, Shrikant Wagh (19) joined Kerkar in the middle and the pair took Goa past 100 adding 53 runs for the seventh wicket. Once Wagh was dismissed, Kerkar tried to up the ante and dominated the 24-run eighth wicket stand before Goa lost two quick wickets to be reduced to 140/9.

However, Kerkar found an able

ally in Amulya Pandrekar (27, 53b, 4x4) as the duo added 41 runs for the final wicket before Kerkar got out. Seasoned pacer Basant Mohanty (3/27) was the standout among the Odisha bowlers. Abhishek Raut (2/20) also bowled brilliantly.

In response, Odisha batters found it tough on a wicket which is still quite friendly to the bowlers. Lakshay Garg (2/9) struck twice dis-

missing opener Anurag Sarangi (1) and Sandeep Pattnaik, who couldn't even open his account. Shubham Ranjane (1/2) got rid of the other opener Shantanu Mishra (6), which turned out to be the final ball of the day.

Skipper Subhanshu (14 batting) got off to a positive start and he would look to get Odisha out of trouble and get themselves some chance of a favourable result.

Advantage Liverpool against Inter

Coman saves Bavarians the blushes at Salzburg

Former India int'l footballer Surajit Sengupta no more



TWO SIDES OF EMOTION: Liverpool players celebrate a goal, while Inter players look disappointed, Wednesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Milan, Feb 17: When a breakthrough is proving elusive, Liverpool can still prosper from a set piece. After 75 minutes of caution - even tedium - in the Champions League at Inter Milan, Andy Robertson swung in a corner that was met at the near post by Roberto Firmino glancing in a

header, with his back to goal.

It was Liverpool's fifth goal from a set piece in the Champions League this season, ranking first in Europe just like in the Premier League.

Once Mohamed Salah found the net in the 83rd minute it ensured the six-time European champions secured a 2-0 win in the round of 16 first leg Wednesday. It was a free-kick from Robertson that created

the opening for the second at San Siro as Liverpool scored from the game's only two shots on target.

The hosts only partially cleared before the ball found its way back to Trent Alexander-Arnold, whose cross into the penalty area was nodded down by Virgil van Dijk. Salah was primed unmarked centrally to produce a shot that deflected past goalkeeper Samir

Handanovic for his 10th goal in his last 12 Champions League appearances.

By securing a fourth successive away win in Europe for the first time since 2006, the 2019 Champions League winners gained a crucial cushion to take back to Anfield for the second leg next month.

Inter Milan didn't manage a single shot on target in the 90 minutes and now faces missing out on a first quarterfinal appearance since 2011 in European football's elite competition.

How differently it might have turned out for the Italian champions had Hakan Calhanoglu's first-half shot from a tight angle not hit the crossbar.

It was a night when Alexander-Arnold lost his place in the Liverpool record books as the team's youngest-ever Champions League player as Harvey Elliott was handed his first appearance in the competition at 18 years, 318 days.

Elliott played for the first 59 minutes, during which Liverpool were largely underwhelming and came closest to scoring when Sadio Mane headed over in the first half. The only blot on the trip was Diogo Jota being forced off at halftime with an ankle injury, although that paved the way for the arrival of eventual scorer Firmino.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Salzburg, Feb 17: Kingsley Coman scored late to salvage a 1-1 draw for Bayern Munich at Salzburg in the first leg of their Champions League round of 16 meeting.

Coman, who scored Bayern's winner in the 2020 final, equalized in the last minute to prevent the Bavarian powerhouse from slumping to its second consecutive defeat after their 2-4 loss to promoted Bochum in the Bundesliga Saturday.

Bayern, who had come from behind to win 6-2 on their previous trip to Salzburg in the group stage last season, was forced to do it again after Junior Chukwubike Adamu's 21st-minute opener for the Austrian champions.

Salzburg were playing in the

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 17: Former India midfielder and East Bengal legend Surajit Sengupta, who mesmerised Kolkata Maidan with his dribbling skills in the 1970s, died at a city hospital Thursday following his prolonged battle with COVID-19. He was 71.

After being tested positive for COVID-19, Sengupta was admitted to the hospital January 23 and was put on ventilator since Monday. He breathed his last in the afternoon.

"Lost veteran star footballer Surajit Sengupta today Heart throb of football fans and an outstanding national sportsman as well as a perfect gentleman, he will ever be in our hearts. Deepest condolences," West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee said in a tweet.

"His condition was stable but since Friday he started developing breathing complications and his oxygen level started dropping. He was put on life support since Monday," said hospital sources.

Sengupta stole the hearts of football fans at Kolkata Maidan in the 1970s with his magical dribbling skills and was a perfectionist when it came to scoring goals from an acute angle.

The artistic right winger made his international debut July 24, 1974 against Thailand in the Merdeka Cup in Kuala Lumpur and went on to represent India in 14 matches.

He represented India in the Asian Games in 1974 and 1978, the Merdeka Cup in 1974, the President's Cup in 1977 and in international friendlies against UAE and Bahrain (1979). He scored his lone international goal against Kuwait in the 1978 Asian Games.

"It's sad to hear that Surajit-da, one of the most skillful wingers in the history of Indian football is no more. His invaluable contribution to Indian football will always remain with us, and never be forgotten. Indian Football has only got poorer," AIFF president Praful Patel said in his condolence message.

India women grouped with China, England, NZ, in hockey World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 17: The Indian team has been grouped along with England, New Zealand and China in pool B in the upcoming FIH Women's Hockey World Cup, the country's governing body for the sport said Thursday. The tournament will be held in Spain and Netherlands from July 1.

The Indian team recently secured its qualification for the World Cup after finishing third in the Asia Cup in Muscat. Speaking

about competition in their pool, India goalkeeper Savita said, "It is a tough pool with England (World No.3) and New Zealand (World No.8) who are ranked above us and China can always spring a surprise. Now that we know who we play in the pool stage, we can plan our preparations accordingly and we look forward to the challenge."

India eyes achieved a best-ever fourth place finish at the Tokyo Olympics last year. The team also made it to the top eight for the first time in the previous edition of the WC.



GROWING POPULARITY

2022 U-19 World Cup winner all-rounder Raj Bawa signs autographs for the fans, who were present during the Ranji Trophy match between Chandigarh and Hyderabad at the Vikash Cricket Ground in Bhubaneswar, at the end of the opening day's play, Thursday. Bawa is a member of the Chandigarh team in the ongoing domestic multi-day tournament.

PIC: MAUSAM NANDA