



### SUPER OPTIMISTIC

Actor Vaani Kapoor says year 2022 is going to be her best year in Hindi cinema

LEISURE P2



### BOOSTING TIES

China will deliver 25 J-10C fighter jets to Pakistan within weeks in a major boost to its military capabilities to defend its airspace

INTERNATIONAL P10



### STUNNING PERFORMANCE

Indian GM R Praggnanandhaa stuns World No.1 Magnus Carlsen in Airthings Masters online rapid chess tournament

SPORTS P12

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### CP to seek extension of conman's remand

**Bhubaneswar:** Baffled by the rising number of cheating cases against him, the Commissionerate Police would approach court to extend the remand of conman Ramesh Swain. Speaking to media, DCP Umashankar Dash said, "The accused has committed a variety of frauds that require detailed financial investigation, matching huge number of transactions carried out in different bank accounts. We would request the court to extend the remand period of Swain, if it is needed." "Similarly, we will seek court's permission to take him in remand in other cases. We will take appropriate steps in this regard following discussions with our legal team," DCP Dash added. Krishna, who reportedly worked as his driver, lodged a complaint against Swain. He alleged that the accused had taken ₹60,000 from him and returned only ₹30,000. When Krishna repeatedly asked him to return the rest amount, Swain gave him fake medicines.



### Additional SP Trinath Mishra axed

**Bhubaneswar:** The state government Monday issued a compulsory retirement order to a senior police officer who was recently arrested and sent to jail on the charge of amassing properties way beyond his known sources of income, officials said. The axed officer, Additional Superintendent of Police (Communication) Trinath Mishra, was recently arrested by the Vigilance for allegedly amassing assets worth over ₹9 crore. His assets included a fleet of luxury cars and bikes worth over ₹1 crore, the officials said. Mishra, who was in prison, could not be contacted for his comment.

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## Go-ahead to Corbevax for 12-18 yrs age group

■ Corbevax, India's first indigenously developed RBD protein sub-unit vaccine, is administered through the intramuscular route with two doses scheduled 28 days apart

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** The Drugs Controller General of India has granted restricted emergency use authorisation (EUA) to Biological E's COVID-19 vaccine Corbevax for the 12 to 18 years age group, subject to certain conditions, official sources said Monday.

However, the government has not taken a decision yet on vaccinating those aged below 15 years. The health ministry recently had said additional need for vaccination and inclusion of population for vaccination is examined constantly.

The DCGI's approval comes after the Subject Expert Committee on COVID-19 of the CDSCO February 14 recommended granting restricted EUA to Corbevax for the 12 to 18 years age group after deliberating on Biological E's application.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) had approved Corbevax, which is India's first indigenously developed RBD protein sub-unit vaccine against COVID-19, for restricted use in emergency situations in adults December 28. It has not been included in the country's vaccination drive.

"The DCGI Monday granted restricted EUA to Corbevax for the 12



to less than 18 years age group subject to certain conditions," an official source said.

In an application sent to the DCGI February 9, Srinivas Kosaraju, the head of quality and regulatory affairs at Biological E Limited, had said the firm had received approval for conducting phase 2/3 clinical study of Corbevax among children and adolescents aged 5-18 years in September.

"Based on the no-objection certificate, Biological E has initiated the clinical study in October 2021 and has evaluated the available safety and immunogenicity results of the ongoing phase 2/3 study, which indicated that the vaccine is safe and immunogenic.

"The proposed application is for obtaining permission for restricted use in an emergency situation in adolescents aged 12 to less than 18 years based on interim results of the ongoing phase 2/3 clinical

### STATE LOGS 388 FRESH CASES, 15 FATALITIES

**Bhubaneswar:** The state's Covid-19 tally rose to 12,82,869 Monday as 388 more people tested positive for the infection. Fifteen fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 9,026, it said. The daily positivity rate was 0.72 per cent as 53,690 samples were tested in the last 24 hours. A total of 86 children were among the new patients. The state had logged 492 Covid-19 cases and 17 deaths Sunday. Six patients in Sundargarh were among the fresh fatalities. Fifty-three other patients have died due to comorbidities so far, it said. The state now has 5,632 active cases, while 12,68,158 people have recovered from the disease thus far, including 1,049 in the last 24 hours.

study) considering the current pandemic and widespread of COVID-19 vaccine in India," Kosaraju had said in the application. The Corbevax vaccine is administered through the intramuscular route with two doses scheduled 28 days apart and is stored at two to eight degrees Celsius temperatures and presented as 0.5 ml (single dose) and 5 ml (10 doses) vial pack.

According to the health ministry, the company has conducted phase 1/2 and 2/3 clinical trials of its COVID-19 vaccine in the country. Further, it has conducted a phase 3 active comparator clinical trial to evaluate superiority against Covishield vaccine, it said.

## BURNING FERRY



Smoke rises from the Italian-flagged Euroferry Olympia, which is on fire for the fourth day in a row, in the Ionian sea near the Greek island of Corfu, Monday. Fire service rescuers expanded a search Monday inside the burning ferry anchored off the Greek island of Corfu where 10 people remain missing. PTI PHOTO

## 4th phase rural polls today

Voting will be held at 17,089 booths in 1,254 GPs in 64 blocks of 27 districts



A FILE PHOTO

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 21:** The fourth phase of the three-tier panchayat elections in the state will be held for 163 Zilla Parishad (ZP) seats in 27 districts Tuesday. The State Election Commission (SEC) has made necessary arrangements for smooth conduct of the election at 17,089 booths in 1,254 gram panchayats (GPs) in 64 blocks, said Commission Secretary, RN Sahu here Monday.

The SEC has identified 2,563 sensitive booths and tight security measures have been put in place in these booths. Over 51.31 lakh voters are eligible to cast their votes in this phase, he said. At least 667 candidates are in the fray for the

163 ZP seats and their fate will be decided by the voters Tuesday.

Following violent incidents in the first three phases, police have tightened the security for the fourth phase.

The police have deployed 257 platoons of force and 1,473 mobile patrolling parties along with district police officials for the four phase of poll while 240 platoons of force, 1,625 mobile patrolling parties had been deployed for the third phase February 20.

The police have arrested 82 persons in connection with poll disturbance incidents. While 43 persons were arrested in Jajpur district, nine were arrested in Dhenkanal district, six in Jagatsinghpur and 24 in Puri district, the police said.

## Lalu sentenced to 5 years in prison in fodder scam case



AGENCIES

**Ranchi, Feb 21:** A special CBI court Monday sentenced RJD Supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav to five years in prison and slapped a fine of ₹60 lakh on him in connection with the ₹139 crore fodder scam where the Doranda treasury was allegedly embezzled.

The court pronounced the sentence on the quantum of sentence after virtually hearing arguments. "Lalu Prasad has been sentenced to five years imprisonment while a penalty of ₹60 lakh has also been imposed on him. Apart from Prasad, five years imprisonment each was given to five convicts, four years each for 32 convicts and three years each for three convicts," CBI counsel BMP Singh said.

"Fine imposed on convicts ranges from ₹1 lakh to ₹2 crore," Singh said adding that the highest amount of ₹2 crore penalty was imposed on supplier Tripurari Mohan Prasad.

After his conviction in ₹139.35 crore Doranda treasury embezzlement case, the fifth and final one against him in the multi-crore fodder scam February 15, the ailing 73-year old former Bihar chief minister was lodged in the Birs Munda Central Jail and then shifted to state-run Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Ranchi on health grounds.

The ebullient leader suffers from multiple ailments, including renal problems. In jail since December 2017, Prasad served most of his sentence period at the RIMS. He was taken to All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi in January last year after his health condition deteriorated.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Do you have NOTA brand salt?

## Kin of deceased farmers move SC against Mishra's bail

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging grant of bail by the Allahabad High Court to Ashish Mishra, son of Union minister Ajay Mishra, who was arrested in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence that killed eight people including four farmers October 3 last year.

The family members of the deceased farmers have sought a stay on the February 10 bail order of the Lucknow bench of the High Court saying the verdict was "unsustainable in eyes of law as there

has been no meaningful and effective assistance by the state to the court in the matter".

"The lack of any discussion in the HC's order as regards the settled principles for grant of bail is on account of lack of substantive submissions to this effect by the state as the accused wields substantial influence over the state government as his father is a Union minister. "The impugned order is unsustainable in eyes of law as there has been no assistance by the state to the court in the matter contrary to object of first proviso to section 439 of Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973," he said.

### LAKHIMPUR VIOLENCE

## SC lists plea against offline exams for Classes X, XII

■ The petition includes examinations to be conducted by all state boards, CBSE, ICSE and NIOS

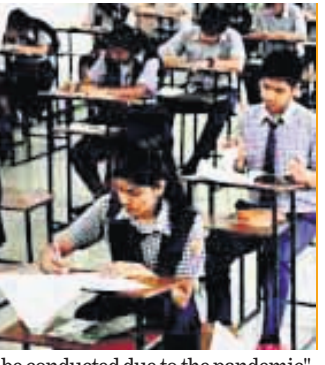
AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** The Supreme Court Monday agreed to hear a plea seeking urgent listing of a petition seeking cancellation of physical exams for Class 10 and 12 scheduled to be conducted by all state boards, CBSE, ICSE, and NIOS.

Advocate Prashant Padmanabhan mentioned the petition for urgent listing before a



bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana. He submitted that the matter is regarding Class 10 and 12 exams. "Physical classes couldn't



be conducted due to the pandemic', added Padmanabhan. After hearing brief submissions, the Chief Justice said: "Let the matter go be

fore the bench of Justice AM Khanwilkar". Justice Khanwilkar had earlier dealt with petitions in connection with board exams last year.

The plea said many students studying in CBSE, ICSE, NIOS and state board approached the petitioner, Anubha Shrivastava Sahai, for issues they are facing regarding the board exams and are directly affected by the outcome of this PIL.

"The other petitioners are students as well as the parents from different states, who were aggrieved by the boards' decision. That, the mental pressure that is created for performance in this exam is so much that every year a number of

students commit suicide for fear of under-performance, or of failure", said the plea. The second petitioner is the Student Union of Odisha. The plea has also included a list of students from various parts of the country who approached Sahai regarding issues with the board exams.

The plea added, "To make the students appear and face examination with the additional fear of getting infected by the Covid-19 virus will not only be unfair but the same will be absolutely inhuman". The petitioners contended that their claim is genuine and it is essential to protect their fundamental rights of education under Article 14.

**MARKET WATCH**

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	57683.59	↓ 149.38
NIFTY	17206.70	↓ 69.60
DOLLAR	75.19	↓ ₹0.12
EURO	84.56	↑ ₹0.03
GOLD	₹50,019	↓ ₹93
SILVER	₹63,642	↓ ₹260

**WEATHER**

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	31.6°C	31.8°C
TEMP MIN	18.8°C	18.4°C
Humidity	91%	86%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Clear sky mainly	



# leisure



## ISLA BELIEVES SHE DESERVES MORE CREDIT FOR HER ACTING

Australian actress and author Isla Fisher believes that she should be given more credit for her acting compared to attention on her marriage to Sacha Baron Cohen and her celebrity lifestyle.

## PATRICIA STRUGGLED WITH HER WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Severance star Patricia Arquette says she has struggled to balance her personal and professional lives. She shared: "As a mom growing up as an actor, I always felt guilty that I wasn't at home. But when I was at home, I felt like: am I gonna know my lines for tomorrow?"



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

You spend happy times with your loved ones today. Ganesh suggests you learn to play some musical instrument as it is a good way to express emotions. Besides, it gives you a novel method to attract new people. Do it promptly before the mood changes.

#### TAURUS

This day you are likely to be prone to daydreaming and fantasizing. Ganesh sees you losing touch with reality and making errors in judgment, in your assessment of facts. You will, by sheer force of your tenacity and determination ensure that things work out in the end. In spite of an initial lack of focus, you will be able to sort out your affairs and find that everything turns out in your favour.

#### GEMINI

Today, your enthusiasm for sports and outdoor activities is palpable. According to you, variety is the spice of life. You will keep on jumping from one venture to another. You will establish a good rapport with your bosses and colleagues. It's time to taste success in your immediate and interim objectives.

#### CANCER

At work, your ability to forge great partnerships will see to the success of one of your ambitious projects. However, you need to be careful before signing the contract. It's always important to go through the finer details of a deal before closing it.

#### LEO

Forget the weather. Today, the only thing shining bright are your chances of spending some quality time with your near and dear ones. Going along these lines, Ganesh wonders how long has it been since you last did the same. So, make the most of this lucky day. Chances are that you shall make new friends, who might turn out to be very supportive in the future. Ganesh wishes you the very best on this eventful day.

#### VIRGO

Business acumen is natural to you. Your management skills are immaculate. Move with imagination, innovation and motivation to further your enterprise, advises Ganesh. Feel free to express and exercise your sense of judgement, says Ganesh.

#### LIBRA

You will be very active today, especially when it comes to finishing tasks in office. Your thoughts will reach new heights and you will be able to motivate and stimulate others to perform. Your motto for the day is 'Arise, awake and sleep not till the goal is reached'.

#### SCORPIO

Your close friends and loved ones seem to be on the menu today, predicts Ganesh. Romantic brilliance will usher in happiness and favourable business prospects will be the icing on the cake. Your charm will peak and you will enjoy the attention you get out of it. Try your hands at creative things as there is a good chance that you may come home bragging about the results.

#### SAGITTARIUS

A nice, easy and pleasant day is on the cards. Your professional approach will bring you much appreciation, especially in the way you handle complicated problems. The way you balance people's opinions will help you make many friends.

#### CAPRICORN

Recognition and rewards are awaiting you at work, and unlike in most cases, colleagues won't be envious of your success. They will, in fact, provide the much-needed motivation for taking up new and challenging projects, says Ganesh. For those of you looking to switch jobs, wait awhile, this may not be the right time. You will be showered with better job opportunities, but it will be wise of you to wait till you strike the right deal.

#### AQUARIUS

Fortune favours the brave, and who knows it better than you? Your performance may come under scrutiny, but your bosses will come away pleased as punch. Want to make some money? Ganesh points to real estate and the construction business.

#### PISCES

The focus today is on touching base with your near and dear ones, says Ganesh. It is likely that you will renew some old associations in a social function, or in matters related to business. You are likely to surge ahead of your competitors when it comes to work related matters.

## Vaani looks forward to her best year in cinema



MUMBAI: Actress Vaani Kapoor, who is all set to be seen again in the big ticket action spectacle *Shamsher*, is hoping that 2022 is her best year in Hindi cinema.

She says: "I'm hoping that it's my best year in cinema. I'm still getting love from *Chandigarh Kare Ashiqui*, a film that will always be supremely special for me. It is hugely gratifying for any artist to be validated with a lot of positivity for the work that you do and it happened to me and I couldn't be happier. I wish to get the same love from people for what I have done in *Shamsher*."

About her performance in the Karan Malhotra directorial, Vaani says: "I have put myself out there in a big way and you will know what I mean when you see the film. It's been a fulfilling experience to push myself so much for a movie."

*Shamsher* is all set to release July 22.

AGENCIES

## DADASAHEB PHALKE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL AWARDS 2022

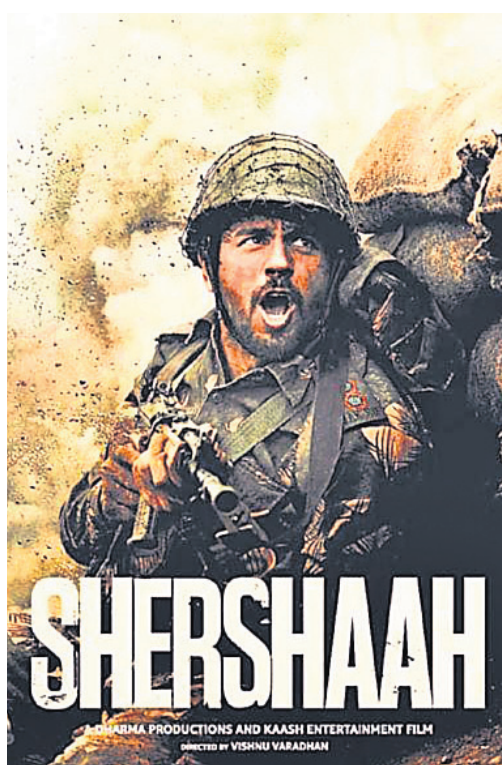
# Pushpa, Shershaah big winners

RANVEER SINGH WON THE BEST ACTOR AWARD FOR HIS PERFORMANCE IN THE FILM 83 WHILE KRITI SANON WAS ADJUDGED BEST ACTRESS FOR HER ROLE IN MIMI

MUMBAI: Allu Arjun's *Pushpa: The Rise* bagged Film of the Year accolade at Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Awards (DPIFFA) 2022 ceremony Sunday while Sidharth Malhotra starrer *Shershaah* was adjudged the Best Film. Similarly, Ranveer Singh and Kriti Sanon won the Best Actor and Actress awards for their exceptional performances in the film *83* and *Mimi* respectively.

Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival took to its official Instagram handle and shared the news with the public.

The other notable winners were - Asha Parekh (Outstanding Contribution To Film Industry), Ken Ghosh (Best Director), Satish Kaushik (Best Actor in Supporting



Role), Lara Dutta (Best Actress in Supporting Role), Sardar Udham (Critics Best Film), Sidharth Malhotra (Critics Best Actor) Kiara Advani (Critics Best Actress), Ahan Shetty (Best Debut), Manoj



Bajpayee (Best Actor in Web Series) Raveena Tandon (Best Actress in Web Series), Anupama (Television Series of the Year)

Ranveer Singh, who received the Best Actor awards for *83* took

to Twitter and wrote, "Honoured to receive the Best Actor award for *83* at the Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Awards 2022. Thank you for the love @Dpiiff\_official."

AGENCIES

## Sanjay reveals secret involving Madhuri

MUMBAI: Actor Sanjay Kapoor, who will be seen sharing screen space with actress Madhuri Dixit in the upcoming Netflix web show *The Fame Game* after over two decades, has shared an interesting anecdote from their film *Raja* and the iconic number *Ankhiyan Milaon* from the 1995 movie.

The film *Raja* is hugely popular for its music and chart-busters like *Ankhiyaan Milaon* and *Nazrein Mili Dil Dhadka*, and during the promotions of *The Fame Game*, even Madhuri got to know about a huge secret

The two will be seen sharing screen space in the upcoming web show *The Fame Game* after two decades



A scene from movie *Raja*

from 27 years ago about the song from *Raja*. Sanjay said: "Our shooting was

happening in Filmistan Studios and before the shoot of the song every day, I used to go to Satyam Hall early morning at 6:30 am. Ahmed Khan, who was an assistant choreographer to Saroj Khan ji at that time, used to work and rehearse with me for the steps. I had made a deal with Saroj ji that whatever portions I would practice in the morning, they will shoot it the same day so that I could match with Madhuri," he reveals.

But what makes the story more interesting is how Madhuri reacted to it during the promotions of *The Fame Game* only.

IANS

During promotion of the web show *The Fame Game*

### EVIL PERSONIFIED

## Govind Namdev plays Hitler in Alien Frank

MUMBAI: Popular actor Govind Namdev opens up on the challenges of playing Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler in his next film *Alien Frank*.

He will be seen essaying Adolf Hitler in the Hindi film *Alien Frank* which is a completely fresh take on the book *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, the most discussed victim of the Jewish holocaust, that documented her life in hiding from 1942-1944, during World War II.

Sharing about what prompted him to take up the role, he says: "I have always been fond of such intense characters because it's very challenging for any actor to play. Because Hitler is a very complex character with

many contrasting characteristics as he was a painter, writer as well as romantic in nature."

About the challenges and preparation for the role he says: "I watched a lot of documentaries and photographs to understand his body language and learn it. He has his own distinctive way of walking, talking etc. which I practiced.

Produced by Nitesh Kumar and written by Rajesh Prasad, the film is directed by Amar Singh.

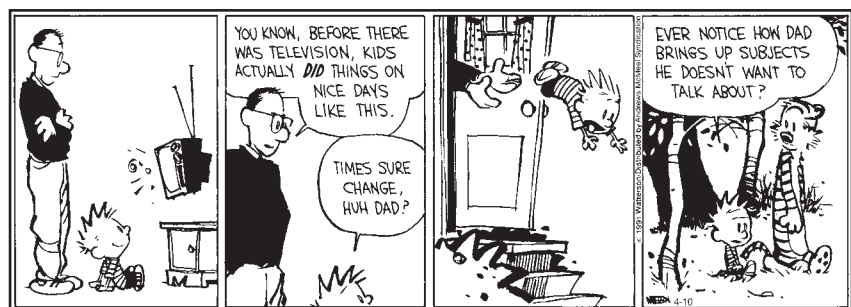
IANS



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

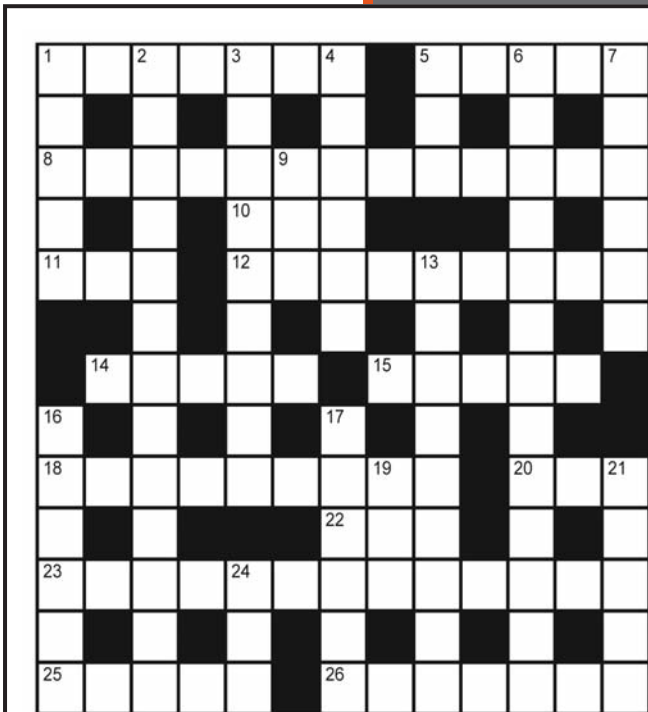


### BREVITY



### FUN post

### CROSSWORD



#### Across

- 1 Denial
- 5 Pay out
- 8 Type of neurosis
- 10 Compass point
- 11 Hankering
- 12 Soldier of fortune
- 14 Sharp as a tack
- 15 Fend off
- 18 Links items (4-5)
- 20 Printing fluid
- 22 Ruddy

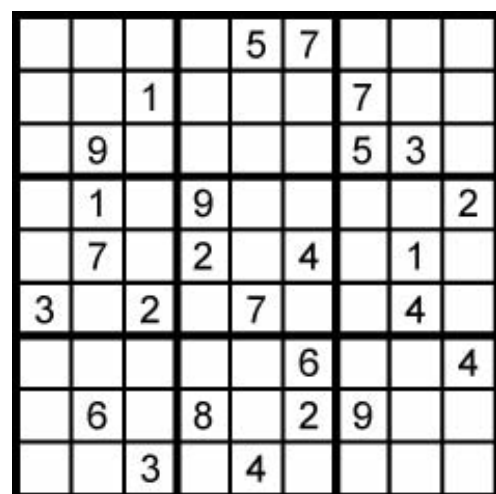
#### Down

- 23 Crude but effective (5-3-5)
- 25 Impertinent
- 26 Overly surprised
- 1 Settle a loan
- 2 Complete success (6,7)
- 3 Wiring diagram
- 4 Optical devices
- 5 Bottom line
- 6 Over-the-top
- 7 Duck hunter's gear
- 9 Singleton
- 13 Listen in
- 16 Greek public squares
- 17 Root vegetable
- 19 Hospital unit
- 21 Excited, with "up"
- 24 Stable diet

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



# downtown

## Naveen reviews progress of indoor athletic stadium project



CM Naveen Patnaik reviews the progress of the project as 5T Secretary VK Pandian looks on at Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Monday. OP PHOTO

The indoor athletic stadium and the tennis centre are part of the state sports infrastructure development project that aims at transformative changes in the sports sector in Odisha under the 5T initiative of the state government

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 21:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday reviewed the construction work of India's first indoor athletic stadium at Kalinga Stadium complex here and expressed satisfaction over the progress of the project.

The indoor athletic stadium, claimed to be the first of its kind in India, is being built at Kalinga Stadium complex at a cost of Rs 120 crore. The stadium which will help the athletes to practice throughout the year will be ready by end of 2022. The facility can host na-

tional and international indoor athletic events. There will be a residential facility for more than 100 athletes for full-time coaching, it was learnt.

"This indoor athletic facility will be a major boost for the development of athletics in India and will become the hub to create champions in coming years," Patnaik said.

The Chief Minister later visited the tennis centre project. "The court of the facility is being constructed for hosting the national and international events. The centre will have all facilities to conduct the ITF tournaments, Davis Cup etc," said an official.

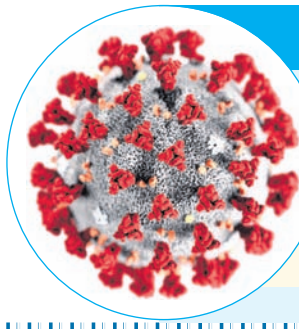
The indoor athletic stadium and the tennis centre are part of the state sports infrastructure development project that aims at transformative changes in the sports sector in Odisha under the 5T initiative of the state government, said an official.

Projects worth over Rs 300 crore are under execution in the Kalinga Stadium including the indoor athletics stadium, indoor aquatics stadium, tennis centre, staff accommodation and hockey HPC building.



### MEMO TO DGP

A delegation of journalists under the aegis of Utkal Sambadika Sangha hands over a memorandum to DGP Sunil Bansal at the latter's camp office in Bhubaneswar, Monday, demanding action against those involved in the recent attack on scribes



### COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	42,55,71,831	35,13,77,953	59,08,887
India	4,28,38,524	4,21,24,284	5,12,109
Odisha	12,82,869	12,69,253	9,026

### AT LORD'S ABODE



ASI DG V Vidyavathi returns after having a darshan of deities at Srimandir in Puri, Monday. SJTA chief administrator and Puri Collector are seen. OP PHOTO

### Justice S Muralidhar flags off SCC Online

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 21:** Chief Justice of Orissa High Court S Muralidhar launched the SCC Online facility for Judicial Officers across the state in the presence of the Judges of the High Court, Monday.

SCC Online is a digital resource tool which provides law information databases, making judgments and statutes easily accessible in virtual mode. It enables quick retrieval of case-law, statute law, notifications and other legal materials.

Justice Arindam Sinha, Chairman of the Library Committee, said that for prompt and effective adjudication, a Judge must be adept in handling legal issues with rich source of legal knowledge gathered from constant reading of law journals and legal magazines. SCC Online will serve as a tool to access such legal resources.

### Srimandir entry allowed sans RTPCR, double vax

*SJTA chief administrator Krishan Kumar said the rules will be reviewed periodically and revised instructions will be issued from time to time, keeping in view the evolving situation*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Puri, Feb 21:** Devotees will now be allowed to enter the famed Jagannath temple in Puri without double vaccination certificates or RTPCR-negative reports, the administration announced Monday. The decision was taken in view of the declining Covid-19 cases, officials said. Earlier, devotees required double vaccination certi-

icates or RTPCR-negative reports obtained within 72 hours before entering the temple.

Devotees will be allowed to enter the temple from 6am to 9pm on all days, except Sunday when it will be closed for sanitisation, said a new order issued by the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA).

Wearing masks and maintaining social distance are mandatory. A separate queue has been made operational for senior citizens, the SJTA order added.

Drinking water arrangements will be made for the devotees when they wait in the queue, the order said. SJTA chief administrator Krishan Kumar said that the rules will be reviewed periodically and revised instructions will be issued from time to time, keeping in view the evolving situation.

### Snatchers' gang busted in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 21:** The special squad of the Commissionerate Police Monday claimed to have busted a gang of snatchers involved in many loot incidents in the City during the Covid-induced lockdown with arrest of five of its members.

The accused were identified as Arun Sahu, 19, of Rasulgarh, Jaydeb Behera, 24, of Laxmisagar, P Kesu Reddy, 27, of Unit-III, G Jagdish Achari, 25, of Kanan Vihar area and Prasanta Maharana, 28, of Bomikhal area.

The gang's involvement was found in 18 snatching incidents in Laxmisagar, Infocity, Khandagiri, Sahid Nagar, Badagada, Nayapalli, Kharvel Nagar and Bharatpur areas, said a police official.

The police crackdown came while probing a snatching case of Nayapalli in January wherein the accused attacked the victim and snatched away his gold ornaments and mobile phone.

### Return unused funds of girls' self-defence training: HE to colleges

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 21:** The Higher Education (HE) department directed several nodal colleges of the state to refund the unspent grants received on account of self-defence training for girl students.

HE deputy secretary Ramesh Chandra Behera, in a letter to principals of the nodal colleges, said the department had sanctioned funds for the self-defence training programme for girl students. But after getting reports on the unutilized funds, the department decided that such accounts need to be closed by March 10, 2022. The principal and interest amount accrued up to February 28, 2022 are to be deposited separately. The department directed the nodal colleges to get back the unutilized self-defence training funds from other colleges of the respective districts and deposit by March 15, 2022.

The department directed the nodal colleges to get back the unutilized self-defence training funds from other colleges of the respective districts and deposit by March 15, 2022

In 2019, the state government had asked all universities and colleges in the state to prepare an annual action plan to impart self-defence training to girl students on their campuses. The training, to be imparted to both under-graduate and post-graduate students as part of Odisha State Youth Policy-2013, will be supervised by the self-defence cell of the Higher Education department at state level.

Earlier, the state government had asked several universities of the state to return the unutilized fund that was released for several infrastructure works including setting up of Civil Service Coaching Centre on their premises.

### BOOK LAUNCH



Orissa HC Chief Justice S Muralidhar, along with other dignitaries, unveils a book authored by novelist Sashikant Mishra at Sarala Bhawan in Cuttack, Monday. OP PHOTO

## Can genetic testing help gauge heart disease risk?

**US** researchers have launched a clinical trial in which genetic testing is used to identify men and women at risk of developing heart disease based on the makeup of their DNA.

If proven effective in clinical trials, this form of genetic testing may be adopted globally to prevent heart disease—the number one killer in the world.

"This should be the last century of heart disease," said Robert Roberts, Medical Director of Cardiovascular Genomics for Dignity Health hospital in Arizona.

Throughout the duration of the study, the researchers will collect DNA samples from approximately 2,000 men and women aged between 40 and 60 with no known history of heart disease.

The DNA samples will then be analysed to determine if the par-

Research has shown that high cholesterol levels from birth can be caused by a common genetic condition called familial hypercholesterolemia (FH)

It can lead to a high risk of coronary heart disease from an early age, and some estimates suggest that by the age of 70, one in every two patients with FH would have had a coronary heart disease event

ticipants have genetic markers known to cause heart disease.

Once the DNA genotyping is completed, the team at Dignity will evaluate each participant's genetic markers to determine if they have a low, medium or high chance of developing heart disease.



Other health and lifestyle factors will also be considered when determining the participants' risk of heart disease. These include hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol and whether the participant smokes or is physically active, among others.

**"I am hopeful that through the results of this study we will be able to save even more lives in the future by implementing genetic testing for early prevention of coronary artery disease as routine clinical application. This approach would represent a paradigm shift in the prevention of this disease"**

**ROBERT ROBERTS | MEDICAL DIRECTOR, CARDIOVASCULAR GENOMICS FOR DIGNITY HEALTH HOSPITAL, ARIZONA**

"I am hopeful that through the results of this study we will be able to save even more lives in the future by implementing genetic testing for early prevention of coronary artery disease as routine clinical application. This approach would represent a paradigm shift

in the prevention of this disease," Roberts said.

Previously, studies have found strong DNA links to heart attack.

Research has shown that high cholesterol levels from birth can be caused by a common genetic condition called familial hypercholesterolemia (FH).

It can lead to a high risk of coronary heart disease from an early age, and some estimates suggest that by the age of 70, one in every two patients with FH would have had a coronary heart disease event.

In a paper published in the European Heart Journal, research from Monash University in Australia, stated that DNA testing for FH in early adulthood via the public healthcare system could identify thousands more people with FH early, who could then be provided access to prevention that would save lives.

### Saumya's kin protest before DCP's office

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 21:** The family members of Saumya Ranjan Panigrahi who ended his life recently over a failed relationship Monday staged a sit-in before the office of Deputy Commissioner of Police at Vani Vihar square here demanding actions against his alleged girlfriend. The family members alleged that police are yet to interrogate the girl over the issue despite the deceased clearly mentioning his girlfriend's name in his suicide note.

Panigrahi has mentioned the girl's rejection as the reason behind him taking the extreme step January 30. Panigrahi's mother alleged that police has been shielding the girl at the behest of some influential persons. Meanwhile, the additional DCP Monday met the protesting family members and assured them of appropriate action as per the rules.



# State edu institutes observe Int'l Mother Language Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 21:** The Central University of Odisha (CUO), Koraput and Buxi Jagabandhu English Medium (BJEM) School here were among the institutions in the state that observed the International Mother Language Day, Monday.

Attending a symposium on 'Language & Expression' organised by the CUO, eminent poet and litterateur Haraprasad Das said non-availability of knowledge books in Odia language is one of the challenges for the survival of Odia language. "Hence, initiative should be taken to ensure availability of reading materials in Odia Language. It will help our mother tongue survive and flourish as well," added Das.

Highlighting the significance of the day, CUO Vice-Chancellor (in-

charge) SK Palita said many countries and states have been separated and established for the sake of mother tongue.

"The state of Odisha is one of them. It is the first state in India created on the basis of language," Palita said, adding, "In order to ensure survival of our mother language, we need to love and care it apart from making its widespread use."

Keeping in view of the importance of mother tongue, the NEP 2020 emphasized imparting education through the local language in primary level, Palita said, adding, "No one can grow without his/her mother tongue or local language."

Odia Language and Literature department visiting professor Krushna Chandra Pradhan, head of the department (in-charge) Alok Baral and lecturer Rudrani

Mohanty were among the dignitaries who attended the event.

BJEM School also organised an event on its premises to mark the day. Lata Mangeskar Activity Hall was inaugurated on the institution campus. Among other dignitaries, school chairman Raghunath Mishra was present.

Meanwhile, Utkal Sammilani too observed the day and expressed the necessity of connecting young generation to the mother tongue through education. And role of parents is paramount in this regard, said Utkal Sammilani president Dillip Das Sharma.

International Mother Language Day is being observed globally February 21 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. This year's theme is 'Using technology for multilingual learning: Challenges and opportunities'.

## LINK FOR LIFE



Students at the BJEM School in Bhubaneswar observing the International Mother Language Day, Monday

OP PHOTO

# Brown sugar worth ₹1.22cr seized; wanted peddler held

Since 2020, the STF in its special drive against narcotic drugs, has seized more than 49kg of brown sugar and 89 quintals of ganja, and has arrested 123 drug peddlers

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 21:** In its special drive against narcotic drugs, the special task force (STF) of state Crime Branch arrested a wanted drug peddler and seized 1.227kg of brown sugar worth ₹1.22 crore during a raid in Khurda district, officials said Monday.

STF sources said on the basis



of intelligence input, a raid was conducted by a team near Pahal crossing under Khurda district against illegal transportation and possession of Narcotic Drugs Sunday.

The STF team seized the narcotic drugs from the most wanted drug peddler Sibu alias Siba Prasad

Das of Mundiasahi Police Station under Jatani block in Khurda district, officials said.

During search operation, the STF sleuths also recovered and seized one Pulsar MC, five mobile phones and other incriminating materials from his possession, apart from the contraband.

**T**HE STF TEAM SEIZED THE NARCOTIC DRUGS FROM A MOST WANTED DRUG PEDDLER SIBU ALIAS SIBA PRASAD DAS

**SIBU** WAS ABDONDING SINCE JANUARY 25 THIS YEAR. HE WAS INVOLVED IN SEVERAL CRIMINAL CASES REGISTERED IN DIFFERENT DISTRICTS OF THE STATE

**H**E WAS ALSO NAMED IN A CASE REGISTERED FOLLOWING THE SEIZURE OF 3.1KG BROWN SUGAR, CASH OF ₹65.32 LAKH, THREE 7MM PISTOLS, SEVEN MAGAZINES AND 43 ROUNDS OF 7MM AMMUNITION

The accused, as the STF sources said, could not produce any document or authority for possessing such contraband, for which he has been arrested and will be

forwarded to a court.

In this connection, STF has registered a case U/s 21(c)/29 of NDPS Act 1985 against the person and the investigation is on.

Sibu, a noted accused, was absconding since January 25, 2022. He was involved in several criminal cases registered in different districts of the state.

He was also named in a case registered following seizure of 3.1kg of brown sugar, cash of ₹65.32 lakh, three 7mm pistols, seven magazines and 43 rounds of 7mm ammunition. This apart, six other criminal cases are also pending against Sibu, the STF said.

Since 2020, the STF in its special drive against narcotic drugs, has seized more than 49kg of brown sugar and 89 quintals of ganja, and has arrested 123 drug peddlers.

# Central Universities' NEP venture marred by lingering vacancies

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** Amid plans to implement the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) in 46 Central Universities across the country, a new challenge has emerged in the form of a shortage of at least 6,481 teaching staff.

The Central University of Odisha, Koraput, too is currently facing a severe staff crunch, with as many as 143 posts of teachers in the varsity lying vacant.

The University of Delhi is the largest university among all the Central Universities. However, a total of 859 posts of teachers are lying vacant here. Besides, 317 posts are vacant in JNU, 211 in Jamia Millia Islamia, 611 in Allahabad University, and 499 in BAU.

Academicians say that the posts of professors, associate professors and assistant professors have been vacant for a long time in Central Universities. Advertisements have also been issued many times to fill the vacant position. However, despite the screening process by several varsities such as Delhi University, the posts were not filled.

Minister of State for Education Subhash Sarkar had said in written information that 859 posts in Delhi University, 611 in Allahabad University, 499 in Banaras Hindu University, 359 in Aligarh Muslim University, 317 in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), and 230 posts of teachers in Dr. Harisingh Gour University are vacant.

Also, 230 posts of teachers in Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, 211 in Jamia Millia Islamia, 199 in Pudukcherry University, 191 in Visva Bharati (West Bengal), 175 in Northeast Hill University, 153 in Hyderabad University and 148 in IGNOU,



Tripura University.

There are 143 vacant posts of teachers in Central University of Odisha, 137 in Central University of Haryana, 129 in Haryana Central University, 124 in Guru Ghasidas University, 119 in Manipur University and 100 in Rajasthan University.

The situation is no different in Himachal Pradesh where the Central University is located. It has 97 vacant posts while Karnataka Central University has 91, Rajiv Gandhi University (Arunachal Pradesh) 89, Punjab Central University 89, Maulana Azad National Urdu University 86, Kerala Central University 81, 80 in Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, 80 in Nagaland University, 78 in Assam University, and Central University of Gujarat - 68 posts are vacant.

There are 61 vacant posts of teachers in Jharkhand Central University, 58 in South Bihar Central University, 58 in Jammu Central University and 58 in Mizoram University. Amit Khare, then Secretary in the Ministry of Education, had issued a circular August 24, 2021 to fill the posts of teachers, directing all central universities and institutions of higher education to fill up the vacancies.

The Union Education Ministry says that creation and filling of vacancies in 46 central universities is a continuous process. The Ministry has issued instructions to all the Central Universities to fill the vacancies in mission mode.

# Khimji to 'Go Green' with e-vehicles for all its employees



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 21:** Taking a small step towards a 'clean smart city', Khimji Jewellers, one of the leading jewellery brands of Odisha, has come up with an initiative 'Go Green' with e-vehicles for its employees.

All the employees of Khimji Jewellers will be commuting by e-vehicles from now onwards, in order to make a positive impact on environment. The e-vehicles are rental scooters by Khimji Jewellers in collaboration with 'Let's driveEV', a rental bike taxi service based out of Bhubaneswar.

Speaking on this occasion, Mitesh Khimji, Director of Khimji Jewellers said, "Being a responsible citizen, Khimji Jewellers has always been committed towards making a better environment for people to live in. The 'Go Green' initiative by Khimji Jewellers will not only promote pollution free commuting for its employees but also motivate others to come forward with such initiatives to make our environment green."



The LIG and MIG allottees of Dumduma Phase 7 area in Bhubaneswar pressing for their demands before the housing board office, Monday

OP PHOTO

# 'Social media echo chambers spread vax misinformation'

*The study confirms the echo chamber effect, making it hard for vaccine advocates and opponents to encounter each other's views on the internet - because social media algorithms ensure that people interact with others whose opinions align with their own*

**M**isinformation on social media contributes to vaccine hesitancy and creates a false image of benefits and disadvantages concerning the jabs, reveals a recent study.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has named vaccine hesitancy as one of the greatest threats to global health.

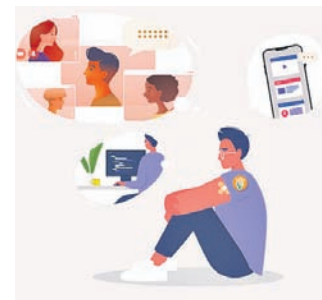
Where vaccine supporters often refer to news media and science sites when sharing knowledge about vaccines on Twitter, we can see that profiles far more often belonging to anti-vaccine individuals share links to YouTube videos and to sites that are known to spread fake news and conspiracy theories, said Bjarke Monsted from Technical University of Denmark (DTU).

Vaccine opponents' profiles often link to commercial sites that sell alternative health products. This is surprising, given that vaccine hesitancy often stems from a fear of financial conflicts of interest, Monsted said.

Monsted also said that previous research has shown that people who earn a fortune from the sale of alternative health products globally are responsible for vaccine misinformation.

The new study, recently published in the journal PLoS ONE, analysed some 60 billion tweets written before the Covid-19 pandemic to understand where the discussion about vaccines takes place on Twitter to better assess today's vaccine hesitancy on social media.

Using newly developed methods in the area of artificial intelli-



gence (AI) called 'deep learning and natural language processing', Monsted and Professor Sune Lehmann from DTU taught a computer to identify which views on vaccines were expressed in a given tweet.

They identified the users who consistently expressed strong views in favour of (pro-vax) or against (anti-vax) vaccines and from which sources the profiles

shared their vaccine information. The finding shows that 22.5 per cent of anti-vax profiles' vaccine tweets link to YouTube videos, the researchers said.

They then grouped the sources into five categories - sites known for sharing pseudoscience and conspiracy theories, news sites, social media, YouTube, and commercial sites relating to medicine and health.

The study confirms the echo chamber effect, making it hard for vaccine advocates and opponents to encounter each other's views on the internet - because social media algorithms ensure that people interact with others whose opinions align with their own.

"We discovered that the sources of information, which people are exposed to in their social networks, depend heavily on their

own attitudes towards vaccines," said Monsted.

The more resistance to vaccines a user expressed, the further from the norm was the media picture they were exposed to from their circle of friends, the researcher said.

The researchers noted that when it comes to avoiding medical misinformation, the responsibility lies not just with the tech giants but also with media outlets.

Lehmann hopes that the novel method can provide a greater understanding of the vaccine discussion during the pandemic and in the future.

"Our research covers the period before Covid-19. And there is no doubt that vaccines have become a talking point in a whole new way in the last two years," Lehmann added.

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SHORT TAKES

Explosives seized in Malkangiri

Malkangiri: A plan by the ultras to unleash violence during panchayat polls in Swabhiman Anchal was foiled after security forces Monday seized a huge cache of weapons and explosives from Nadamanjeri forest under Jantri panchayat in the district. It is suspected that the weapons and explosives were buried by Maoists with an intention to target the security forces and residents during panchayat elections. The security forces comprising SOG, BSF and DVF jawans were carrying out a search operation in the area, when they traced a Maoist hideout and seized 21 items including guns, tiffin bombs, an IED, 2 detonators, electric wires, walkie-talkie, containers, tools like hammer, remote control device, mobile chargers, battery and substances used for manufacturing landmines, Malkangiri SP Nitish Wadhvani said. Search operation has been intensified in the area to avoid any untoward incident. Panchayat polls are scheduled to be held in Swabhiman Anchal February 24.

7 girls fall ill after eating 'stale food'



Koraput: At least seven girl students of Navodaya Vidyalaya here were taken ill after consuming 'stale dalma' Sunday night. School authorities rushed the ailing students to Sahid Laxman Nayak Medical College and Hospital where they were administered saline and treatment at late night. They were sent back to their school hostel after their condition improved following treatment. All the ailing girls are in the age group of 13-14 years. When contacted, some of the ailing girls said they had vomiting and diarrhoea after consuming rice with stale dalma kept since morning. Principal Milani Mitra confirmed the development stating that action was taken against the official who was in charge of the kitchen.

Nesting of Olive Ridleys begins at Gahirmatha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, Feb 21: Sporadic nesting of Olive Ridley turtles has begun in Gahirmatha beach, the world's largest known rookery of the marine species, an official said Monday. Millions of Olive Ridley sea turtles emerge on the tranquil Gahirmatha beach every year to lay eggs between February and March - a rare natural phenomenon and breathtaking sight. "Small groups of turtles have crawled their way to the nesting beach at Outer Wheelers' Island and began laying eggs. Sporadic nesting of turtles is a positive sign and is a prelude to en-masse emergence," said Debashis Bhoi, the forest range officer of the marine sanctuary.

Last year, 3,49,694 female turtles had turned up at the nesting grounds to lay eggs from March 9 to 23. Female turtles virtually invade the nesting beaches, usually at the dead of the night, for laying eggs. After laying eggs, the turtles leave the nesting ground to stride into deep sea. Hatchlings emerge from these eggs after 45-60 days. Gahirmatha beach of the Bay of Bengal is widely regarded as the world's largest-known nesting ground of these reptiles. The ground-level staffers are maintaining vigil on the beach to save the nests from predators such as wild dogs, hyenas and jackals. Fishing has also been banned in the area to ensure the safety of the breeding turtles, Bhoi said.



Traffic at Tinimuhani Square in Kendrapara town was disrupted due to requisition of a large number of vehicles for panchayat polls, Monday. OP PHOTO

Violence accused freed from custody

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sajanagad, Feb 21: A group of irate workers of a particular party Monday waylaid a police van and forcefully released some youths, who had allegedly assaulted a reporter of a web channel at Santragadia village under Oupada block of Balasore district Sunday, from police custody.

The accused workers reportedly owing allegiance to Biju Janata Dal (BJD) had thrashed the reporter of a web channel during campaigning Sunday. On receipt of a complaint, police arrested two youths and were bringing them to the police station when the mob intercepted the police van and freed the accused from police custody. The mob also detained the police for some hours before additional forces rushed to the spot and intervened.

Meanwhile, the owner of the web channel and some staffers staged a sit-in outside the police station demanding arrest of the accused. They released after Nilagiri IIC Droupadi Das assured them of arresting the accused within 24 hours.

Sources said the ruling party workers were campaigning at Kanpur area for the candidate from zilla parishad (ZP) zone-2 under Nilagiri Assembly segment when the incident of violence was reported. A campaign rally of the ruling party was reportedly in progress at Kanpur Sunday evening which was in violation of model code of conduct. The reporter was clicking photographs of the rally when Bhaskar Behera, the sarpanch candidate, Soumya Ranjan Jena, the son of ZP candidate in zone no-2, Ajay Mahalik, Suji Jena and Santosh Kumar Brahma hurled abuses at the journo and assaulted him. They also allegedly threatened him of dire consequences. Later, the reporter lodged a complaint at Nilagiri police station.



Police rushed to the spot and arrested two youths in this connection. The ruling party workers, however, claimed that the opposition has falsely implicated their workers due to fear of losing the seat. They alleged the police are working at the behest of the opposition.

The reaction of the police on the forceful release of the accused from custody is could not be obtained.

10 held for attack on scribes

Jajpur: Binjharpur police Monday arrested 10 more persons including six women in connection with alleged attack on three scribes in Bachhol panchayat under this block of Jajpur district during the third phase of rural polls Sunday.

The prime accused of the attack was arrested Sunday night. The 11 arrested were forwarded to local court later in the day. "As investigation regarding involvement of other persons in connection with the incident is underway, more people will be arrested soon and strict action will be taken against attackers," Jajpur PR said. "A total of 22 persons including the prime accused were detained by Binjharpur police for interrogation after searches were conducted in Bachhol panchayat Sunday evening following the attack on three scribes. As many as 10 out of them were arrested Monday after they were quizzed," the senior official stated.

Around 35 people were named in the FIR lodged by the three scribes at Binjharpur police station. The three scribes were identified as Debashis Sahoo, Gulshan Ali Nawaz and Bijay Sahoo of an electronic media. Notably, the trio had gone to cover the incident of ballot box loot from two booths at Bachhol panchayat when they were severely assaulted by a number of unidentified miscreants. Irked locals intercepted the journalists and severely beat them. Vehicles of the scribes were also ransacked by the mob.

Villagers hide in jungle over pre-poll violence

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, Feb 21: Residents of Guruda village in Balada panchayat under Bamebari police limits of Joda block in Keonjhar took shelter in a jungle after four persons were injured in a group clash over panchayat polls late Sunday night. The block is going to polls Tuesday. The injured were identified as Anami Patra, Sajan Haiburu, Tinu Gop and Rajen Haiburu. Tinu and Rajen have been hospitalised. Reports said some rivals attacked sarpanch candidate Barun Naik and his supporters. Barun is supported by former MLA Sanatan Mahakur.

Barun, in his complaint, has alleged that miscreants led by another sarpanch candidate Ranjit Naik launched an organised attack and damaged his campaign vehicle and 10 bikes of his supporters Sunday night. The miscreants even did not spare women and assaulted them inside their houses. Ranjit is supported by Champua MLA Minakshi Mohanta, said sources. Police reached the spot and tried to control the situation but in vain. Fearing further attack, the villagers fled from their houses and took shelter in the jungle. The villagers alleged that Ranjit was forcing them to cast their votes in his favour. Minakshi, however, rubbished the charges stating that the opposite group is always resorting to violence. Bamebari IIC Manoranjan Bisi said that police forces have been deployed in the village and action will be taken over the complaint.

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Ganjam: 11 urban health & sanitation centres on cards

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Feb 21: The Health department has initiated a plan for a major overhaul of urban health centres in Ganjam. Besides, 11 urban health and sanitation centres will be set up in the civic body areas of the district. An urban health and sanitation centre each will be set up in Chhatrapur, Bhanjanagar, Aska, Kodala and Polsara notified area councils (NACs).

Such centres will also be set up at Ankuli, Minakhisahi and Indirasahi under Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) area and at Ambapua village. A meeting to this effect was held under the chairmanship of Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange here Saturday. As per the decision, the urban health and sanitation centres will run initially from rented accommodations in these areas. People can avail outdoor healthcare services at these centres that will function from 8am to 11am and then from 5pm to 8pm. The BeMC Commissioner and executive officers of the NACs have been asked to identify suitable rented accommodations and take steps to ensure their functioning in a stipulated timeframe.

Man behind bars for raping singer. Berhampur, Feb 21: A man was arrested and sent to jail Monday on charge of raping a woman, two days before the marriage of his daughter. The accused was identified as Abhi Pradhan, 48, a resident of Bada Bazaar police limits in the city. A medical examination was conducted on Pradhan and the survivor at MKCG Medical College and Hospital here Monday. Police also recorded the statement of the survivor in the court. A case was registered in this connection and the accused produced in court. He was remanded to judicial custody after the court rejected his bail plea. Police said that Pradhan came in contact with the woman, who is a singer by profession and a mother of one at Bhanjanagar. The woman earns her living by singing in various opera, drama and functions. Pradhan lured the woman to shift to Berhampur and rehabilitated at a house in the same area where he was staying. Later, Pradhan forced the woman into physical relationship despite her unwillingness. He even threatened to kill her only son if she discloses the matter before others and raped her in regular intervals. Finally the woman mustered courage and lodged a complaint at Bada Bazaar police station Sunday, just a couple of days before the marriage of Pradhan's daughter.

RURAL POLLS IN RAIGHAR

INDEPENDENTS MIGHT GIVE BJD, BJP A RUN FOR MONEY

THE BIJU JANATA DAL AND BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY ARE BRACING FOR A TOUGH FIGHT IN RAIGHAR BLOCK, WHICH IS GOING TO POLLS IN THE FOURTH PHASE, WHILE THE INDEPENDENTS ARE LIKELY TO PLAY A DECISIVE ROLE IN THIS ELECTION



POST NEWS NETWORK

Raigarh, Feb 21: Independents might give the BJD and BJP candidates a run for their money under this block in Nabarangpur district in the three-tier panchayat elections scheduled for February 24. With a couple of days left for the polls, political atmosphere is fully charged up in the area. The ruling BJD and opposition BJP are set for a tough fight while the independents are likely to play a decisive role in the outcome of polls. Both the parties are leaving no stone unturned to grab the block chairperson's post for which they are trying to ensure the victory of their proposed samiti member candidates. Both the parties are trying to keep good rapport with the independents and making calculations to form the block council if they fall short of majority after declaration of the results. However, independent candidates are in no way any less than the party-supported candidates and have posed stiff challenge to the BJD and BJP. These independents have intensified their campaigns in various panchayats and their clout is increasing with each passing day as the day of polling draws closer. Reports said that as many as 82 candidates are contesting for 26 panchayats

Both the parties are trying to keep good rapport with the independents and making calculations to form the panchayat samiti if they fall short of majority. Independents have intensified their campaigns in various panchayats and their clout is increasing with each passing day as the day of polling draws closer. Last time, the saffron party had formed the panchayat samiti on its own strength

in this panchayat polls. Both the BJD and BJP have fielded 26 candidates each while there are 30 independents in the fray. These independents might play a decisive role in formation of panchayat samiti in the block. Last time, the saffron party had formed the panchayat samiti on its own strength with the posts of chairperson and deputy chairperson remaining with the party. The ruling BJD was trounced in the election due to factionalism and internal squabbles in the party. The loss in the panchayat elections for the ruling party was reflected in the general elections. Nityananda Gond from BJP became the MLA of Umerkote Assembly segment as Raigarh block, the vote bank of the party under the Assembly segment, was under its control. In this election, MP Ramesh Majhi of BJD has strengthened the party base by inducting several leaders and workers of other parties through merger meetings. However, many leaders are staying away from active electioneering as internal rivalry is plaguing the party in many panchayats. It is learnt that party leaders might drop in soon to mend the disputes as Raigarh block will go to polls in the last phase of panchayat polls. Leaders of the political parties are keeping a close watch on the candidates for the post of samiti members in Sadar panchayat of Raigarh block. No rebel candidate of any party is contesting from this panchayat but the BJD and BJP candidates are facing a tough fight from an independent Ranjita Reli who might spring a surprise in the election. Ranjita was elected as a ward member in the last panchayat polls and had done a lot of welfare work. Her rivals are fresh faces. However, which way the votes will swing is a million dollar question.

Man behind bars for raping singer

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 21: A man was arrested and sent to jail Monday on charge of raping a woman, two days before the marriage of his daughter. The accused was identified as Abhi Pradhan, 48, a resident of Bada Bazaar police limits in the city. A medical examination was conducted on Pradhan and the survivor at MKCG Medical College and Hospital here Monday. Police also recorded the statement of the survivor in the court. A case was registered in this connection and the accused produced in court. He was remanded to judicial custody after the court rejected his bail plea. Police said that Pradhan came in contact with the woman, who is a singer by profession and a mother of one at Bhanjanagar. The woman earns her living by singing in various opera, drama and functions. Pradhan lured the woman to shift to Berhampur and rehabilitated at a house in the same area where he was staying. Later, Pradhan forced the woman into physical relationship despite her unwillingness. He even threatened to kill her only son if she discloses the matter before others and raped her in regular intervals. Finally the woman mustered courage and lodged a complaint at Bada Bazaar police station Sunday, just a couple of days before the marriage of Pradhan's daughter.

STATE BANK OF INDIA JAGAT Singhpur A.D.B. E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE. SALE OF IMMOVABLE ASSETS CHARGED TO BANK UNDER SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002. The undersigned as Authorized Officer of State Bank of India, has taken over Possession of the following property u/s 13(4) of the SARFAESI Act. Public at large is informed that e-Auction (Under SARFAESI Act, 2002) of the charged property in the below mentioned cases for realisation of Bank's dues will be held on "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS" AND "WHATEVER THERE IS" basis on 23.03.2022 and on the terms & conditions specified hereunder. Date & Time of E-Auction: 23.03.2022 from 11.00 AM to 02.00 PM with unlimited extensions of 10 minutes each. Sl. No. Name & Address of Borrowers Property Details & Name of Owner of the property Outstanding Dues for Recovery of which property/ies is/are being Sold / Demand Notice Date Reserve Price EMD BID Increment Amount. 1. Borrowers : Smt. Santilata Naik, W/o: Sri Anant Kumar Naik & Sri Anant Kumar Naik, S/o: Rama Naik, At: QTR No: IVR-255, Unit-VI, Bhubaneswar, Dist: Khurda, Odisha. All that part & parcel of the property consisting of Land & Building situated at Mouza: Ichhapur, P.S.: Balikuda, SRO.: Balikuda, Dist.: Jagatsinghpur, Khata No.: 1076/133, Plot No.: 905, Area: Ac. 0.08 Dec., KISSAM: Gharabari, standing in the name of Smt. Santilata Naik. Bounded by East: Kartik Naik, West: Road, North: Road, South: Premalata Naik. ₹10,25,944/- as on 21.11.2017 with Further interest & Incidental expenses, costs, charges etc. ₹ 11,82,000/- ₹ 1,18,200/- ₹ 30,000/- 21.11.2017. Date & Time of inspection of the property : 21.03.2022, Between 11.00 AM to 04.00 PM. STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE TO BORROWER/GUARANTORS FOR SUBSEQUENT SALE UNDER RULE 8(6) & 9(1) AS PER AMENDED SARFAESI ACT, 2002. For detailed Terms & Conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in the State Bank of India, Secured Creditor Website: www.sbi.co.in, https://bank.sbi/web/sbi-in-the-news-auction-notices/sarfaesi-and-others, https://ibapi.in For further detailed any query please contact: Bidyadhar Sahoo (Authorised Officer) : Mob.: 9437064716. Place : Jagatsinghpur, Date : 21.02.2022. Sd/- Authorised Officer, State Bank of India.

EAST COAST RAILWAY 'E' PROCUREMENT SYSTEM. Tender Notice No.PCCM/EP/2021-22/57. Dt. 16.02.2022. The following tenders have been uploaded on website www.ireps.gov.in. SI.No.01 Tender No. 04215033A, Short Description of item : GROOVED COPPER CONTACT WIRE, Quantity : 18.285MT. SI.No.02 Tender No. 04215066B, Short Description of item : CADMIUM COPPER WIRE, Quantity : As per T.S. SI.No.03 Tender No. 04205072B, Short Description of item : COPPER CATENARY WIRE, Quantity : As per T.S. SI.No.04 Tender No. 04215083, Short Description of item : VACUUM CIRCUIT BREAKER, Quantity : As per T.S. SI.No.05 Tender No. 03211995, Short Description of item : LOCK FOR HIGH TENSILE CBC, Quantity : 6118 Nos. SI.No.06 Tender No. 03223855, Short Description of item : YAW DAMPER, Quantity : 483 Nos. SI.No.07 Tender No. 04213703, Short Description of item : LEAD ACID BATTERY, Quantity : 300 Nos. SI.No.08 Tender No. 08223390, Short Description of item : DISSOLVED ACETYLENE GAS, Quantity : As per T.S. SI.No.09 Tender No. 04215084, Short Description of item : SINGLE POLE VACUUM INTERRUPTER, Quantity : As per T.S. SI.No.10 Tender No. 04215085, Short Description of item : SHORT NEUTRAL SECTION ASSLY., Quantity : As per T.S. Tender Opening Date : 28.02.2022 for SI.No. 01 & 02, 01.03.2022 for SI.No. 03, 02.03.2022 for SI.No. 04, 08.03.2022 for SI.No. 05, 14.03.2022 for SI.No. 06, 15.03.2022 for SI.No. 07 & 08 & 21.03.2022 for SI.No. 09 & 10. Regarding detailed notice, EMD, Purchase restrictions and entitled tender conditions, please visit website www.ireps.gov.in and www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in. Principal Chief Materials Manager, PR-828/M/21-22, Bhubaneswar.



FOCUS RUSSIA-UKRAINE

# GENESIS OF CONFLICT



The current crisis owes its genesis to a vital source of energy -- natural gas -- which both Russians and Americans have not clearly mentioned in their talks or given out as a reason for conflict

The Russian strategy in the ongoing Ukrainian crisis is aimed at not allowing NATO to accept Ukraine as its member. In reality the war clouds have thickened due to the American and British stance and verbosity. The ongoing war of nerves and escalating tensions between the US and Russia over Ukraine has entered its fourth month after Russian forces started their build-up in areas near the Ukrainian border in November 2021, but the genesis of the conflict goes back to 2013 or even to 2008, when Ukraine applied for NATO membership.

Historically, Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union until 1991 and is currently a country lodged between Russia and Europe. After 1991 even its polity seemed to be under Moscow's influence and its foreign policy over the years has wavered being either pro-Russia or pro-European Union. But the current crisis owes its genesis to a rather vital source of energy, i.e. natural gas, which both Russians and Americans have not clearly mentioned in their talks or given out as a reason for conflict.

It is a fact that in spite of various global initiatives and campaigns to replace fossil fuels, we still do not have any viable source of sustainable technology, which could provide low-cost and dependable power on a global scale. In this scenario, natural gas, the least polluting fossil fuel has become more and more critical as a viable energy source.

Russia, which is the world's largest exporter of natural gas, currently supplies about 35% of Europe's demand. In reality at the heart of the current conflict lies the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline which will link Russian gas fields directly with Germany, resulting in Western Europe becoming more dependent on Russian gas. Germany whose 13.3% energy needs were met by nuclear energy needs Nord Stream 2 gas supply re-

dule of this year, follows the same route and will double the gas supply through the network to 110 billion cubic metres per year.

Further, US advisors think that Putin will be able to use Nord Stream 2 for strategic leverage as he'll be controlling a vital energy source to many European countries. And this may impact American influence in the region.

Historically, Ukraine has always acted as a natural buffer zone between Russia and Europe. It has always given enough lead-time to Russian army to prepare while the enemy forces passed through the vast steppes of Ukraine. However, even after the break-up of the former Soviet Union in 1991, Russia has tried to control Ukraine, through installing puppet governments. But since early 2010s, most of the regimes in power in Ukraine have shown pro-US tendencies. To warn such regimes, Putin annexed the Crimean region from Ukraine in

2014. After losing Crimea, Ukraine applied for NATO membership with more vigour. Putin cautioned NATO that it would face consequences if Ukraine were accepted as a member.

In the latest episode, American and British reactions, after Russia started to build up its military presence at Ukrainian border were hysterical and during the last two months American leadership has predicted a Russian attack the very next week, but so far nothing has happened on that front. Biden's first statement on the conflict avowed that the US would not allow Nord Stream 2 to go on-stream if Russia invaded Ukraine. He also warned Russia of strict sanctions.

Meanwhile, to complicate matters further, Russian-backed rebel leaders in eastern Ukraine have announced plans for military mobilisation amidst increasing tensions. Denis Pushilin, leader of self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, said he had issued a decree for 'general mobilisation' Saturday, while another separatist leader, Leonid Pasechnik, signed a similar decree for the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic. But Putin knows quite well that a full-scale invasion of Ukraine will be enormously costly for the US and West European countries. No one could predict Putin's next action but the real intention behind all this brinkmanship is that he is insistent on keeping Ukraine as a buffer zone and could go to any extent to thwart the West's effort to allow Ukraine in NATO's camp. So far, he has been able to achieve this through intimidating tactics and not war, as he also knows how costly that scenario would be for Russia. And if Germany were forced to cancel Nord Stream 2 contract than the economic cost of a war would be a financial catastrophe for Russia, which it is ready to avoid.

The writer is a political commentator based in New Delhi.

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Asad Mirza

**HISTORICALLY, UKRAINE HAS ALWAYS ACTED AS A NATURAL BUFFER ZONE BETWEEN RUSSIA AND EUROPE**

## Language Day

Every year February 21, the world celebrates International Mother Language Day. The theme chosen for this year's celebration is 'Using technology for multilingual learning.' This gives an opportunity to take stock of the experience of the past two years of the CoVID-19 pandemic and chalk out a programme to promote online education through mother tongue. A major problem in this area is the fact that many regional languages are not present on the internet. English makes up nearly 80 per cent of all online content. Only a handful of languages still dominate. These include English, Chinese, Spanish, Japanese, Arabic, Portuguese, German, French, Russian, and Korean. Among Indian languages, Odia is still out of the ambit and is not recognised by Google. In a country with 22 official languages and countless mother tongues and dialects, an important software like Google Classroom has included Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu only in the Indic languages list. This probably also reflects the commercial viability that a company like Google finds attractive enough in any language to invest in.

The importance of education through the mother tongue cannot be over-rated. Research shows education in the mother tongue is a key factor for inclusion and quality learning. It also ensures better learning outcomes and academic performance. This is particularly valid in primary school and it helps avoid knowledge gaps and increases the speed of learning and comprehension. All this above is true but in today's internet universe, it is impossible to expect charity or goodwill from corporates.

In India, we clutter our children's learning by introducing too many languages from the beginning. The child should first be rooted in her or his mother language and one international language, preferably English, should be given priority. The forcible introduction of any third language could lead to jumbling of the faculties. It is also known that children can learn multiple languages much easier than grownups. However, before that stage comes when a child is exposed to multiple languages, it is vital to give the supple mind a thorough grounding in the mother language. When a child has control and dexterity in the mother language, there is a change in characteristics too. Here, the poser about ancestors and descendants can be considered. A child unfamiliar with the mother language gets isolated from history and literature of that language. Writings of the past become irrelevant to the current generation and if they don't write in the mother language, literature of future is doomed. Literature is not only stories and poetry but it is the lens which shows the social ethos of a particular time. The disappearance of a language does not simply mean the world is one language less. When a language disappears, it takes with it an entire cultural and intellectual heritage.

Celebrating the mother language day is not merely an occasion for promoting mother tongues. The importance of mother tongue is, more often than not, little understood. It not only fosters mutual understanding and respect for one another, but also helps preserve the wealth of cultural and traditional heritage that is embedded in every language around the world. Linguistic diversity is increasingly threatened as more and more languages disappear at an alarming rate.

Against this backdrop, CoVID-19 has come as a great threat to education in mother language. According to UN estimates, 500 million students from pre-primary to upper-secondary school could not access any remote learning opportunities during the pandemic. School closures during this period have only widened education inequalities that existed before the pandemic. The closures ranged from a global average of 20 weeks to above 70 in some cases, more than a full school year. Expectedly, it has hit the vulnerable and marginalised students the hardest. This is because in many countries distance teaching and learning tools, programmes and content did not mostly reflect linguistic diversity. They were largely provided in dominant national or international languages. When remote learning content is not available in students' mother language, it increases the risk of learning loss, dropouts and exclusion.

Nelson Mandela once said: "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart." With over 40 per cent of global languages endangered and less than 100 languages used in the digital world, the International Mother Language Day should act as a reminder that everyone should have the opportunity to use their mother language to keep memories, traditions and ways of thought that their language represents.

### WISDOM CORNER

A man can be himself only so long as he is alone, and if he does not love solitude, he will not love freedom, for it is only when he is alone that he is really free. **ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER**

Whoever doesn't know it must learn and find by experience that 'a quiet conscience makes one strong!' **ANNE FRANK**

The smallest minority on earth is the individual. Those who deny individual rights cannot claim to be defenders of minorities. **AYN RAND**

### WORDSWORTH

#### Sardoodledom

It certainly looks weird enough. Until recently it was known only to historians of the theatre, but it's having a rare moment in the spotlight. It was one of the words in the 2007 US National Spelling Bee, which brought on a fit of giggles on live television from the 11-year-old, Kenny Aoud of Indiana, who was asked to spell it. It commemorates the French playwright Victorien Sardou. He was extremely successful in the 40 years from 1860, creating more than 70 plays, some for the French actress Sarah Bernhardt. (The title of one that he wrote for her in 1882, Féдора, gave the English language a word for a new type of hat.) His plays were extravagant spectacles, full of contrivance and written to a mechanical formula, often being designed as vehicles for famous actors and actresses of the day. So sardoodledom refers to a play with an over-written and melodramatic plot. His last big success was the historical play Madame Sans-Gêne in 1892, seen in 1897 in an English version starring Ellen Terry in the Lyceum Theatre in London. In June 1895, George Bernard Shaw wrote a critical article in the Saturday Review under the heading Sardoodledom, a word he invented for the piece. He described Féдора as "claptrap" and he criticised Sarah Bernhardt for becoming involved in "a high modern development of the circus and the waxworks". Shaw used the word again two years later in the same journal: "It is rather a nice point whether Miss Ellen Terry should be forgiven for sailing the Lyceum ship into the shallows of Sardoodledom for the sake of Madame Sans-Gêne." The word has since become shorthand for technically well-crafted works of the period — "well-made plays" — that were created as pure entertainment, lacking any moral or ethical position and featuring what one critic called "a poverty of thought".

### LOL

#### Tonight is the last

One night, this guy come into a bar and asks the bartender for a drink. Then he asks for another. After a couple more drinks, the bartender gets worried. "What's the matter?" the bartender asks. "My wife and I got into a fight,"



explained the guy "and now she isn't talking to me for a whole 31 days."

The bartender thought about this for a while. "But, isn't it a good thing that she isn't talking to you?" asked the bartender. "Yeah, except today is the last night."

### SPECTRUM SOCIETY

## A long and winding road

Baje payal chhun chhun, one of the memorable melodies sung by Lata Mangeshkar, is about aspirational love among girls of age sixteen or thereabouts. And it has one line which is so central to the theme of freedom of the road for all from the dominance of the motor car.

The visual in the film Chhalla starring Nutan and Raj Kapoor tells us so much about what mobility on the road meant in the old days. The film is set in 1948. Though it is said to be based on the short story 'White Nights' by Fyodor Dostoyevsky it focuses on a family estranged in the aftermath of Partition. Then, bullock carts were the main form of transport in much of India. Nutan and other sprightly girls see a row of bullock carts on the road, climb on to them, then jump down, walk with abandon on the road holding hands. Then comes a car driven by Rahman trying to make its way. Nutan gently but very assertively stops the car, with nice gestures of the hand, and in a teasing way asks him, hujoor, itni jaldi hai kya... (Sir, what is the hurry...?). It is a 1960 film directed by Manmohan Desai.

A year later, Jane Jacobs, one of the most influential thinkers on urban planning came out with her highly cited book 'Death and Life of Great American Cities' in which she emphasised the common people's right to the road, and opposed the dominance of the

space-usurping motor car. More than that, she wrote about the movement of people on the street as a ballet. This movement is not synchronised but there is a natural rhythm about people on the street. Pedestrians never collide with each other, even if some may be stubborn and not let others hurry ahead. Unlike motorists, unconsciously pedestrians move with civility. But the invasion of the motor car on a large scale has completely removed the freedom and rhythm of the street.

The freedom of the road in the early days is also best expressed in songs on the bicycle, most notably by the joyful ride of Nutan, Shubha Khote and other girls in Ban ke panchi gave pyar ka tarana in the film Anari directed by Hrishikesh Mukherjee. The bicycle indeed can give you the feeling of freedom of flying.

The bicycle has also been a source of liberation for women more recently in India and for a much longer time in the West. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's distribution of free bicycles to school-girls has been considerably appreciated.

The scooter on the other hand has been all that and more, providing mobility and freedom with speed. The man whose name is inseparably linked with the scooter, Rahul Bajaj, passed away in Pune February 12. He was 83. The chairman emeritus of the Bajaj group

passed away six days after Lata Mangeshkar who died in Mumbai's Breach Candy hospital at the age of 92. Both are recognised, revered and will always be remembered as legends in their fields. Lata Mangeshkar, the nightingale of India, is synonymous with the country's music, just as Rahul Bajaj is associated with the scooter. His name was always connected with the scooter from the Bajaj group, and the company's scooter advertised as 'Hamara Bajaj' has become, overtime India's Bajaj. Since it appeared on Indian roads 'Hamara Bajaj' has been a major contributor to the mobility and freedom of the common person. The role of Rahul Bajaj in greatly reducing emissions from scooters has been recalled by Anumita Roychowdhury of the Centre for Science and Environment. Comparatively car manufacturers have resisted pollution reduction technology. The scooter is now also seen as empowering women. Prime Minister Modi launched a scheme in Tamil Nadu in 2018 on the anniversary of former Chief Minister the late J. Jayalalitha to give subsidised scooters to working women.

Then again, nothing immortalises the scooter more than the joyful ride Audrey Hepburn has with Gregory Peck in the classic film Roman Holiday. Again, it shows the joy of freedom that a princess enjoys away from the constraints of the palace. Street life can be vi-

brant and fun. There is the human longing to mix with other people, for community purposes and freedom. We forget that this is also our basic right.

The motor car culture has completely curbed this freedom and its life-threatening role is now passively accepted. But it was not always been so. Under common law practice the street is for all, not just for cars. There was great resistance to the car's role as a killing machine in the early years of the 20th century in the US, as Peter Norton has amply demonstrated in his book Fighting Traffic. The judiciary, the mainstream media, public opinion were strongly against motor cars and people's right to walk with dignity was widely recognised. In response, a massive public relations campaign was launched by the powerful motor car industry in the 1920s. It branded the pedestrian as the intruder and got the traffic rules amended to give the motor car an anti-democratic, almost monopolistic, right to the road.

In India the uses of the car have to be accepted, but more than that a culture has to be created for people's safe walking, cycling and social mingling on the road. This is essential for democracy.

The writer is a senior Mumbai-based journalist and author of the book 'Traffic in the Era of Climate Change'. ©THE BILLION PRESS

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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

### Children's safety first

Sir, It feels good to learn that the road transport ministry has notified new rules to make the use of safety harness and crash helmet mandatory for children below the age of four on motorcycles. The new rules state that the speed of a motorcycle with a child up to the age of four being carried on the pillion will not be more than 40 kmph. These rules will come into force after one year from the date of publication of the Central Motor Vehicles (Second Amendment) Rules, 2022. The ministry of road transport and highways, vide notifications dated February 15, 2022 has amended rule 138 of CMVR, 1989 and has prescribed norms related to safety measures for children below four years on a motorcycle. According to the ministry, for children below four years, safety harness shall be used for attaching the child to the rider of the motorcycle. Safety harness is a vest to be worn by the child, which shall be adjustable, with a pair of straps attached to the vest and forming shoulder loops to be worn by the rider. This way, the upper torso of the child is securely attached to the driver. A feature by which this is achieved is by attaching the straps to the back of the vest and crossing the straps over the vest so that two large crossing-over loops are formed that pass between the legs of the passenger and the child sits on the seat of the two wheeler. All parents and guardians must follow these rules strictly and protect their children.

Hitesh Kumar Parida, PANIKOILI

### Disturbing findings

Sir, According to app monitoring firm 'App Annie', worldwide people are spending an average of 4.8 hours a day on their smartphones, which is nearly a third of their waking hours. The firm says that during last year, globally consumers spent 3.8 trillion hours on mobile phones and downloaded over 435,000 apps per minute. "The big screen is slowly dying, as smartphones continue to break records in virtually every category — time spent, downloads and revenue," says Theodore Krantz, the Chief Executive Officer of App Annie. These findings are really disturbing, as constant use of smartphones is linked to depression, and other health complications. Getting addicted to smartphones undermines happiness, ruins relationships, productivity, and a total disconnect from the real world.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI





**The BJP government has stalled the development of Uttar Pradesh and it will be removed from power like the Central farm laws were repealed**  
AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

### SC DIRECTION

The Supreme Court Monday directed states and the Union Territories to implement the suggestions for formulation of rehabilitation policy for street children and said it should not remain on paper



### of the day quote

Mother tongue is an underlying component of one's culture and identity, and every effort should be made to protect the linguistic diversity of Jammu and Kashmir

FAROOQ ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

Whether we stand united or fight separately, you have to vote those who do not betray your vote in the assembly. I request you to take this message to every nook and corner that we have to choose among the PAGD constituents and vote for their candidates

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP CHIEF

Universities should develop facilities in line with the highest standards of sports, and academic and research work

KALRAJ MISHRA | RAJASTHAN GOVERNOR

### SHORT TAKES

#### Woman killed

**New Delhi:** A speeding car Monday crushed two women in the national capital of which one succumbed to her injuries, an official said. The deceased was identified as Payal, 23. Furnishing details about the accident, DCP (north) Sagar Singh Kalsi said a PCR was received at 12.58 p.m. regarding the accident of two women near Gali No 3, near Kali Ghat, Wazirabad, Delhi.

#### Man found dead

**Gurugram:** A 27-year-old man was found dead inside a hotel room in Gurugram, after reportedly inhaling gas leaking from a geyser in the bathroom, the police said Monday. Pankaj, a resident of Rajasthan's Jhunjhunu and serving in the Army Medical Corps, said in his police complaint that he and his friends left Dehradun on February 14 and arrived in Gurugram on February 19 where they booked two rooms at a hotel.

#### Trekker rescued

**Chikkaballapur (Karnataka):** Much appreciation is pouring in from all over the country for the Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel for successfully rescuing a young trekker who fell 300 feet into a gorge at Nandi Hill, about 60 km from Bengaluru. The daring operation was carried out on Sunday evening. Nishank Koul (18) from Bengaluru's PES University fell into the gorge while trekking at Bramhagiri Rocks, adjacent to the Nandi Hills early Sunday.

#### Three drown

**Aurangabad:** Three teenage boys drowned in a farm pond in Daulatabad area of Maharashtra's Aurangabad district after failing to gauge its depth, police said Monday. Shivraj Pawar (16), Pratik Bhise (15) and Tirupati Kudalkar (15), all residents of Bajajinagar in Waluj, died while swimming in the pond in Bhangsi Matagad area on Sunday, an official said.

#### Body found

**Gopeshwar (Uttarakhand):** More than a year after the Rishiganga flash flood, the body of yet another victim was recovered Monday from a tunnel at the NTPC's hydel project site in Tapovan. The body was found when the debris inside the tunnel was being cleared at the Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project, an official at the site said. The body is that of Rohit Bhandari, an employee of the NTPC's subsidiary company Ritwik who happened to be at work inside the tunnel when the tragedy struck, he said.

## Tension in K'taka over Bajrang Dal activist's death



Police personnel walk past a shop allegedly destroyed by rioters, as tension spread in Karnataka's Shivamogga town over the murder of a member of Bajrang Dal Sunday night

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shivamogga (Karnataka), Feb 21:** Three persons have been arrested in the Sunday night killing of a 28-year-old Bajrang Dal activist here, as BJP leaders decried the murder and demanded NIA probe into the matter alleging the role of some Islamic outfits.

The funeral procession of the deceased Harsha witnessed violence including stone-pelting and arson, with a photojournalist among others sustaining injuries.

At least three persons, including the photo journalist and a policeman, were injured when miscreants pelted stones during the funeral procession that took place amid tight security on Monday while several vehicles were damaged and torched.

"Detailed investigation is on... An investigation report will reveal things on reason and details.... Three people have been arrested so far... Who, where, how I cannot disclose as investigation is on, interrogation has to happen to know the reasons for the murder," Home Minister Araga Jnanendra said.

He said, prima facie according to his information five people were said to be involved in the murder,

There were reports about some shops being ransacked by miscreants, and police vehicles too being set on fire as part of the violence

At least three persons, including the photo journalist and a policeman, were injured when miscreants pelted stones during the funeral procession

but how many are behind them and all other related details will come out from investigation.

There were also reports about some shops being ransacked by miscreants, and police vehicles too being set on fire as part of the violence. According to official sources, there was stone pelting when Harsha's body was being taken from District McGann Hospital here.

Police tried to bring the situation under control by firing in the air and lathi charge to disperse the crowd, and made way for the funeral procession to move further and the final rites to take place. Harsha, a resident of Seeghatti, was attacked by a group of unknown persons at Bharati Colony here on Sunday night, following which he was taken to McGann Hospital where he succumbed to injuries.

## Hijab not essential religious practice: K'taka AG

THE ADVOCATE GENERAL MAINTAINED THAT THE QUESTION OF WHETHER WEARING OF HIJAB IS AN ESSENTIAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICE MUST BE SETTLED AND THEN OTHER ISSUES COULD BE ADDRESSED

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, Feb 21:** Wearing hijab is not an essential religious practice in Islam and it can't come under the Constitution's Article 25 (Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion), Advocate General Prabhuling Navadagi argued in the Karnataka High Court Monday.

He said that petitioner students have approached the court not just seeking the permission to wear headscarves, but want to wear hijabs to attend classes as part of their religious right. Contending that the petitioners can't press for right to wear a hijab under Article 25, he said that the provision doesn't state it as a fundamental right.

"It is impossible to define religion. Article 25 does not protect the practice of the religion but, which is essential religious practice, so they narrowed it to essential religious practices. In Sabarimala case also, they used the word 'essential'," he said.



The core religious practices, those things without which any religion is no religion, shall be considered as religious practices which could be considered under the right to religion, he said. The practice which is prevented and feared to cause fundamental change in the character of religion is essential practice, he said, adding that essential practice is what causes a religion to vanish if the practice is not allowed.

Food and dress shouldn't be considered as essential part, Navadagi said, and went on to quote Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's statement of not allowing religion into the institutions and how it should be consciously

kept out, which could be in the present context of religious symbols.

He also cited imposition of religion on others and noted when the Parliament discussed adoption of secularism, it was argued if it is necessary to have religious rights? The Parliament, at the time of throwing open of temples to all Hindus, stated that social reform must be brought to all religions.

The Advocate General maintained that the question of whether wearing of hijab is an essential religious practice must be settled and then other issues could be addressed. He reiterated that the petitioners simply would not come to the court with a request to permit them to wear headscarves, but seeking they be permitted to wear it as a religious practice. At this, the bench questioned Navadagi as to what is the stand of the government on wearing of hijab, and if the government order is not specifying anything on hijab, what is the stand - can hijab be permitted or not?



Paramilitary soldiers stand guard outside a sealed strong room where Electronic Voting Machines are kept, after the Punjab Assembly polls, in Amritsar

### STRICT VIGIL

## Demand, acceptance of bribe key to prove offence, says SC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** The Supreme Court Monday said the proof of demand of bribe and its acceptance by a public servant is important to establish offence under the provisions of the anti-corruption law.

A bench of Justices Ajay Rastogi and Abhay S. Oka said: "We have given careful consideration to the submissions. We have perused the depositions of the prosecution witnesses. The offence under Section 7 of the PC (Prevention of Corruption) Act relating to public servants taking bribe requires a demand of illegal gratification and the acceptance thereof. The proof of demand of bribe by a public servant and its acceptance by him is sine qua non for establishing the offence under Section 7 of the PC Act."

The top court's stand came as it set aside a Telangana High Court judgment, which upheld the con-



viction of a woman commercial tax officer at Secunderabad, for the alleged offences under Section 7 of the Act. The woman officer moved the top court challenging the high court verdict.

The top court said: "This is a case where the demand of illegal gratification by the appellant was not proved by the prosecution. Thus, the demand which is sine qua non for establishing the offence under Section 7 was not established."

The prosecution said the appellant

was working as a commercial tax officer at Secunderabad and the complainant was then working as a supervisor of a co-operative society.

The high court upheld her conviction for taking a bribe of Rs 2,000 from a supervisor of Farmers' Service Co-operative Society for issuing a final assessment order.

It was alleged that she was offered Rs 2,000 in her office, and instead of taking the amount directly, she took out a diary from her table drawer and asked the complainant to keep the money there. The Anti-Corruption Bureau arrested her after recovering wads of currency notes, which tallied with the numbers recorded in pre-trap proceedings.

The bench noted the complainant, in his examination-in-chief about the demand made by the officer, improved from time to time, and the evidence is not at all reliable, therefore the demand made by her has not been conclusively proved.

## Sonia hits out at BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Raebareli (UP), Feb 21:** Congress president Sonia Gandhi Monday accused the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh of doing nothing in five years except dividing people, and claimed that it had meted out "step-motherly" treatment to her constituency Raebareli.

In her maiden election speech for the ongoing UP polls, Sonia Gandhi also hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, accusing them of mismanagement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's going to be an important election because for the last five years you have seen a government which did nothing except divide people," Sonia Gandhi said during a virtual address on the last day of campaign for the fourth phase.

Sonia Gandhi is the Lok Sabha MP from Raebareli, where voting will take place on February 23 on all five assembly seats of Raebareli (Sadar), Harchandpur, Bachhrawan, Sareni and Unchahar. "We had brought several development schemes for you but the



Modi-Yogi government banned all of them. Step-motherly treatment was meted out to Raebareli," Sonia said.

"You have seen the politics of Congress which is based on service of people and giving rights to people," she said. She said Congress workers have worked really hard in UP in the last five years and 8,000 party workers were jailed while fighting for the rights of the people in the state.

"Brothers and sisters, I consider myself an inseparable part of your family. We are committed to pursuing a politics which makes your life better. We want to give you an MLA who works day and night for you, and makes policies that empower you," Sonia said.

## Over 2 mn in Punjab consume alcohol: Study

There are also a large number of injecting drug users in Punjab with high prevalence of HIV (19.5 per cent), said the recent survey

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, Feb 21:** More than three million people, mainly men, in Punjab are consuming one or the other kind of drug. Alcohol is the maximally abused substance by more than two million, followed by tobacco consumed by more than 1.5 million people, a study by the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER)

here said Monday. The abuse of opioids is by 1.7 lakh individuals, followed by cannabinoids as well as sedative-inhalant stimulants. The latter are largely a class of pharmacological or prescription drugs being used illicitly. There are also a large number of injecting drug users in Punjab with high prevalence of HIV (19.5 per cent), said the recent survey.

It was published in the second edition of 'Roadmap for Prevention and Control of Substance Abuse in Punjab'.

Edited by J.S. Thakur, Professor of Community Medicine at PGIMER, it was released by Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit in the presence of PGIMER Director Surjit Singh and Director Health



Services G.B. Singh. The report contains information on the burden of substance abuse in the country and in Punjab, various types of substances abused by people, strategies for prevention and control and the district substance abuse prevention plan and

its implementation. As per the State of Punjab Household Survey (SPHS) and statewide NCD STEPS Survey by the PGIMER, the projected number of overall substance use in Punjab is 15.4 per cent. The book is in simple form, eas-

ily understood by the technical and the layman.

"The book has incorporated a few interesting case studies from different parts of Punjab. It has advocated introduction of life skills education in the school and college curriculums. It also emphasizes peer group approach in educational institutions which is an effective way to motivate adolescents and young adults. Since the focus is on prevention, the life-cycle approach actually caters to individuals of every age group," said Thakur.

The Governor appreciated the role of public health approaches to deal with these social menaces. He endorsed the essence of this report - prevention is better than cure in all respects.

### RED SANDERS SMUGGLING CASE

## Charge sheet filed against four

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Monday said that they have filed a prosecution complaint or charge sheet, against Badshah Majid Malik and three others before a Special Court in Mumbai under Prevention of Money Laundering Act in a case pertaining to the smuggling of Red Sanders. The ED officials said that the court after accepting the charge sheet took cognisance of it. "On February 15, we filed the charge sheet while the cognisance of the charge sheet was taken on February 18".

The ED initiated money laundering investigation against Badshah Majid Malik and others on the basis of prosecution complaint filed by the DRI in a case relating to seizure of Red Sanders worth Rs 3.16 crores in 2015.

Investigations by DRI had established that Badshah Majid Malik was the kingpin of the syndicate involved in the smuggling of Red Sanders. The ED had conducted searches at eight locations in Mumbai and Thane resulting in the seizure of incriminating documents.



# Ready to quit Cong and revive Patidar agitation: Hardik Patel

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Gandhinagar, Feb 21:** Hardik Patel, the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee working president, Monday threatened to revive the Patidar agitation if the pending demands are not met by March 23, and said he was ready to quit the party for this.

He said that demands related to the 2015 agitation put forth by the Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti (PAAS) have still not been fulfilled. And this has forced him and other Patidar leaders to revive the agitation.

"During the month preceding the ultimatum date of March 23, which is Bhagat Singh's death anniversary, we have planned to hold four programmes. The Patidar leaders and all those who want to join the agitation will approach the elected representatives and submit their memorandum. Similarly, the government offices at Tehsil and districts will also be approached," said Jayesh Patel, Hardik's aide and convenor, PAAS.

"The BJP government has not heeded to our demands so far and their assurance of fulfilling all the pending demands has proven to be just a lollipop. I am once again raising this issue. If the demands are not met, then we will once again revive the Patidar agitation, and it will be of the same intensity as was in 2015," said Hardik.

He said the PAAS demands regarding the reservation for the Patidar community was justified since the state government and the Centre had made provisions to give reservation to the poor and backward classes and 10 per cent quota for the economically back-



**The BJP government has not heeded to our demands so far and their assurance of fulfilling all the pending demands has proven to be just a lollipop. I am once again raising this issue. If the demands are not met, then we will once again revive the Patidar agitation, and it will be of the same intensity as was in 2015**

HARDIK PATEL | CONGRESS LEADER

ward upper castes. "The government can take our ultimatum of March 23 as a request as well as a threat. We have been requesting the government to fulfill their assurances," Hardik Patel said. "Anandiben as the chief minister withdrew many cases but the Vijay Rupani-led government has not withdrawn any. So we are repeating our demands to the new leadership. If the government wishes to have vengeance against me let it be, but at least withdraw the sedition cases against 202 others," said Hardik.

Hardik said that three to four thousand youths were still affected due to those cases. "They are having trouble in securing government jobs, studies or for going abroad," said Hardik.

Patel said that after their movement in 2015, the Central government had announced 10 per cent reservation for the backward upper castes. "It is not that only the Patel community benefited out of that reservation, but the entire society benefited," Hardik said. Besides the withdrawal of police cases, the other demands of PAAS include providing jobs to the kin of the Patidar youth who lost their lives during the agitation. "The government has still not fulfilled our demands such as jobs for the family members of those who died during the Patidar movement," he said.

The working president of GPCC said that he was ready to step down from the party to revive the agitation if the need arose.

# Row over BJP cartoon on blasts case verdict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, Feb 21:** A day after Twitter removed a caricature tweeted by the Gujarat BJP unit on a court verdict sentencing 38 people to death in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial blasts, the ruling party Monday claimed the cartoon was based on real photographs and did not target any particular religion or community.

But, the opposition Congress and some social activists hailed Twitter's decision to remove the cartoon, and claimed the BJP was trying to gain political mileage out of the court's judgement.

The cartoon depicted a group of bearded men wearing skull caps hanging by a noose. It had a tricolour and a drawing depicting the scene of a bomb blast in the background, with 'Satyamev Jayate' written on its top right corner.

It was posted on the Gujarat BJP's official Twitter handle Saturday, a



day after a special court here sentenced to death 38 convicts and handed life terms to 11 others in the case of 2008 serial bomb blasts in which 56 people had lost their lives and over 200 were injured.

The caricature is not available on either the Instagram or Facebook social media pages of the state BJP unit.

"The sketch was based on real photographs of the convicts published by newspapers a day after the

verdict. The Gujarat BJP or its social media team had no intention to target any particular religion or community through the sketch," state party unit spokesperson Dr Rutvij Patel said.

He said when (terrorist) Osama Bin Laden was killed by American soldiers, his sketch was also published in the US. "Our sketch was just an artistic expression shared on social media, nothing else," Patel said. Gujarat BJP's media coordinator

Yagnesh Dave Sunday said Twitter removed the caricature after "someone had reported against it."

Meanwhile, state Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi welcomed Twitter's action.

"We firmly believe that terrorism has no religion. The Congress had lost two of its leaders - Rajiv Gandhi and Indira Gandhi - fighting terrorism. The verdicts of courts must not be seen through a political prism," he said.

"But, the BJP tried to take political advantage out of this (2008 Ahmedabad blasts case) judgement. This is BJP's old tactic to remain in power. Instead of indulging in such dramas, the BJP should focus on issues concerning the common man," the Congress leader said.

Social activist Mujahid Nafees, who also runs an NGO for the minority community's welfare, claimed the BJP always targets the country's minorities, mainly Muslims and Christians, for political gains.

## AHMEDABAD BLASTS

# Accused-turned-approver deposed against us out of grudge: Death-row convicts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, Feb 21:** Three death-row convicts in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts case have claimed that an accused-turned-approver deposed against them due to jealousy, grudge and differences over their religious sects.

One the accused in the case, Ayaz Saiyed, had turned approver and his statement was crucial in proving the crime against the other accused.

tred and enmity towards me," Sheikh claimed.

"He (the approver) vented out his prolonged hatred, enmity and jealousy towards me through his false and exaggerated deposition..." the convict said.

Another death-row convict, Mohammad Iqbal Kagzi, also said that Saiyed's deposition against him was totally "false and fake."

"The main thing is that he had a grudge against me during these 10 years of our judicial custody.



A special court Friday sentenced to death 38 members of the terror outfit Indian Mujahideen (IM) in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial blasts which killed 56 people and injured over 200. It also gave life term to another 11 IM convicts in the case.

Convict Shamsuddin Sahabuddin Sheikh, who was among those sentenced to death, told the court that he and Ayaz Saiyed shared the same cell at the crime branch office and the same barrack in the Sabarmati jail here.

In his statement, as mentioned in the court's judgement copy which was made available Saturday, Sheikh said the two of them got acquainted in the jail and shared with each other their family and educational background. Saiyed came to know about Sheikh's "command over English and his Quaranic Arabic". According to Sheikh, he used to "beat him (the approver) in every field, either sports or academic competition, which increased his jealousy towards me."

Sheikh said the two of them were from different sects of Islam. Saiyed is a Sunni-Barelvi, who believed in Fateha and Dargah, while Sheikh is Sunni-non Barelvi, who does not believe in it, the convict said in his statement made in English. "These differences further increased his (Saiyed's) ha-

He assumed that he would never be released from jail, so he became an approver and narrated totally false and fake things to get released at the earliest," the convict claimed.

He said Saiyed had tried to bring a television into the barrack when Kagzi was preparing for an exam conducted by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

When Kagzi asked him not to do so, Saiyed became angry and abusive, the convict claimed.

He said since the time the jail authorities decided not to bring the TV set due to security reasons, Saiyed had a grudge against him and assumed that because of Kagzi, the television was not allowed into their barrack. "I definitely believe that he deposed against me falsely because of his enmity and grudge," he further said.

Another death-row convict, Quayyamuiddin Kapadia, claimed that Saiyed turned approver due to the threat and enticement received at the hands of crime branch officials.

Kapadia in his statement said he had a discussion with Saiyed before he turned approver, the details of which Kapadia had submitted before the court.

The contents of the said submission were not available in the court's order.

# Former finance minister now struggles financially

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 21:** Veteran CPI(M) leader and former economics professor Thomas Isaac, 69, known for dextrous handling of the state's finances for over a decade with a five-year break, today finds himself struggling with a meagre amount that is left of the pension he gets as an ex-legislator after paying party levy.

A true communist, Issac before becoming a legislator, was made a full-time Kerala State Planning Board member by the CPI(M), during which he floated the novel idea of People's Plan, a model replicated not just in the country, but found takers outside as well.

Isaac turned into full-time politician by becoming a legislator in the 2001 Assembly polls when he trounced giant killer PJ Francis, who humbled CPI(M) giant VS Achuthanandan in the 1996 polls from the Mararikulam constituency



in Alappuzha district.

Till 2001, he was a faculty member at the famed Centre for Development Studies, here, where he did his M.Phil and Ph.D in the late seventies and early eighties.

After quitting as a professor at the CDS, the amount that he got as gratuity was "invested" by him at his constituency Mararikulam for uplift of people who did not have the much needed capital infusion required for novel small projects.

But the biggest advantage that Isaac has is a huge number of his students, now placed at top positions at various institutions besides his old classmates from the CDS, who are basically his lifeline. Isaac suffered a jolt in 2021, when the party strictly decided against giving a fresh term to legislators who had served three terms.

Those close to Isaac recalled that for a few days, he was unable to stand the decision, as he expected he would get a third term in the post of Finance Minister, as he had left a few unfinished business in his pet project KLIIFB, a body to mobilise funds for infrastructure development from outside the state revenue.

Isaac is now full time immersed in party work and pursuing his passion of giving lectures and not to mention writing books on topics he is well versed with.

Today he is busy travelling across the country giving lectures at leading institutions like the IITs, various Universities and not to mention taking classes for comrades across all levels, in the state.

# 1,000 volunteers contribute for unique bird atlas

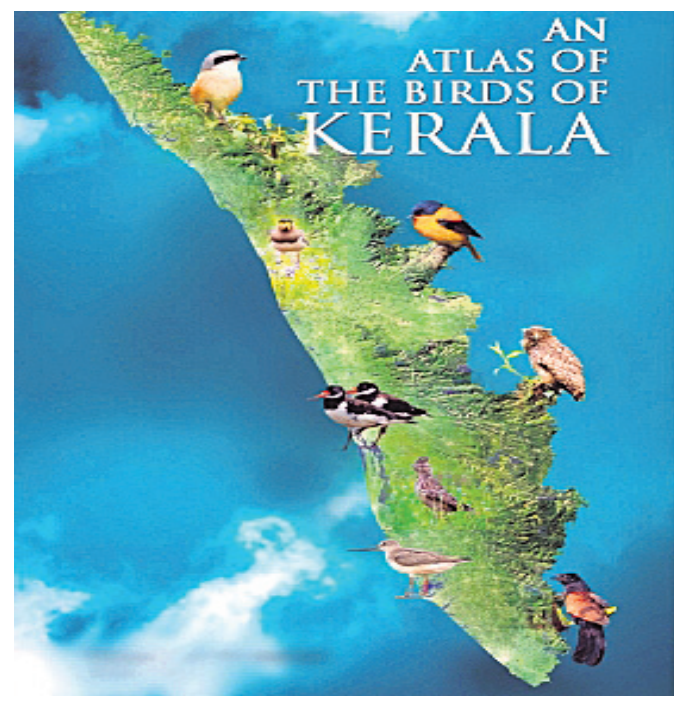
THE VOLUNTEERS SYSTEMATICALLY SURVEYED 4,000 LOCATIONS IN EACH OF TWO SEASONS - DRY SEASON (JANUARY-MARCH) AND WET SEASON (JULY-SEPTEMBER) - ACROSS KERALA FOR OVER 600 DAYS ACROSS FIVE YEARS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** Possibly for the first time for a state in Asia, a citizen science effort has resulted into a massive mapping exercise of Kerala's avian riches which is compiled into the Kerala Bird Atlas (KBA) that maps the distribution and abundance of birds across the state.

Over 1,000 volunteers systematically surveyed 4,000 locations in each of two seasons - dry season (January-March) and wet season (July-September) - across Kerala for over 600 days across five years. The KBA is Asia's largest bird atlas in terms of geographical extent, sampling effort and species coverage.

"Species count was higher in the dry season than in the wet season. Species richness (count) and evenness were higher in the northern and central districts than in the southern districts. High elevation regions of the southern Western Ghats were the largest contiguous areas lacking sufficient sampling. We found that most of the endemics were concentrated in the Western Ghats, but threatened species were



as likely to occur along the coasts as in the Ghats," said a multi-author study based on the dataset published in a peer-reviewed, open access journal 'Current Science' last

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kochi, Feb 21:** The Kerala High Court Monday said there cannot be two sets of laws -- one for the powerful and one for the ordinary citizens -- after noting that the Left government was unable to prevent flag masts being put up without permission by political parties despite the court's orders against the same.

"It must be borne in mind that every flag pole which is installed without permission is an illegality and cannot be disregarded just because it is done by powerful people or political parties. That cannot be countenanced. You would not allow an ordinary citizen to get away with it. There cannot be two laws, one for the powerful and one for the ordinary," Justice Devan Ramachandran said.

The court said that it was "worrying" that the state government was not even able to assure that no new illegal flag poles would be set up in future. It said that instead of sup-

porting an initiative started by the high court, the state government was doing nothing. The court further said that the state had earlier sought three months time to come out with a policy to regulate setting up of flag poles, and now it was seeking even more time for that.

"When the executive asks for time from the judiciary, there should be a sincerity attached to it and not just because you want to ask for time," the court added.

The state, represented by Additional Advocate General Ashok M Cherian and senior government pleader S Kannan, said that though that government machinery was resolved to regulate flag poles and ensure no new ones come up without permission, it needs time to ensure that all stakeholders are on board with that plan.

While granting time till March 28, the court reiterated that when the government seeks more time, it should be with sincerity to bring in a regulation.

# There cannot be two sets of laws: HC to Kerala govt



**ON WARPATH:** Special Recruitment Protection Council members staging a march to the Kerala Secretariat demanding to reinstate special recruitment for government jobs, in Thiruvananthapuram, Monday.





**BJP leaders have forgotten their religion of serving the people. Religion for them has become means to instigate people to get votes**  
**PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA** | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

## BAN CONTINUES

The Delhi Police have prohibited the use of Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) and the use of laser beams in the jurisdiction of the Sub-Division of Palam, Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, as it poses a serious security threat of a terrorist attack and can also be hazardous to aviation safety



## of the day quote

**Why does the SP has sympathy towards these terrorists? Will the people support those who play with the security of the nation?**  
**YOGI ADITYANATH** | UP CM

**Socialism makes the society free from the fear and crime which is what the BJP is doing**  
**RAJNATH SINGH** | DEFENCE MINISTER

**In a major decision in the agro-forestry sector, it will no longer be necessary to take permission from the forest department for cutting trees of several species in non-forested areas, like private land or agricultural fields**  
**HIMANTA BISWA SARMA** | ASSAM CM

# Rahul slams PM in Manipur

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Imphal, Feb 21:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Monday said that the vision and ideology of the BJP and the RSS is to promote one idea, one culture and one language maintaining these are superior to all other ideas, all other languages and all other cultures.

Rahul Gandhi referring to his recent Lok Sabha speech on "Union of states" said the Congress always wanted to protect and develop the diverse culture of people of all the states and Union Territories of India.

He said that the BJP and the RSS did not like the reference of "Union of states" because they have a different vision of the country.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP and RSS leaders are coming to Manipur not with respect to the people of the state, not with understanding, they come with a sense of superiority. PM comes to Manipur with the idea that he has a superior vision, superior language and he has the right to define about India. "Come to Manipur with humility; because I understand that you (people) have a lot to give. I come here to learn a lot from you because there is a diverse culture, languages and traditions here. PM will come to Manipur on Tuesday with an air of superiority to tell you what he thinks and not to learn from you," the Congress leader said.

While addressing his first election rally in poll bound Manipur at Hapta Kangjeibung in Imphal, Rahul Gandhi said the Congress believed in an India where every state had equal rights and the right to have its own language, culture and history.

Modi earlier promised to give two crore jobs in a year, deposit Rs 15 lakhs in the bank account of every Indian and he would change the destiny of the farmers, Gandhi said.

"But now he is not talking about those commitments...he is not talking about three black farm laws. He is not talking now about the severely bad effect of 'Notebandi' (demonetisation). He is not interested to help Baba Ramdev and punish Manipuri people. We are always keen to protect the interest



**Modi is the first Prime Minister in the world who campaigned for "Thali Bajao to vanish coronavirus.... when his Thali Bajao scheme failed he asked the people to switch on the mobile phone light to eradicate the virus"**

to destroy the small and medium industries and enterprises. India is now witnessing the highest number of unemployed in 40 years."

Rahul Gandhi referring to the Rs 11,000 crore National Palm oil cultivation mission of the government, said that this cultivation would not help the farmers of Manipur; it would destroy the economy of Manipur.

"Companies like Patanjali and large business organisations would be benefited and make profit from this cultivation. We are not interested to help Baba Ramdev and punish Manipuri people. We are always keen to protect the interest

of Manipur and to make the state self-sufficient in rice production," he observed.

Criticising the BJP government for not helping women, the Congress leader said that his party led government in Manipur helped a lot in the 'Ima Keithal' and more such 'Ima Keithal' would be set up in the future to empower the women in the state.

The century old and world's largest all-women run market 'Ima Keithal' or the 'Mother's Market', located in Manipur capital Imphal and other smaller all-women markets functioning in different parts of the northeastern state boost the Manipur economy to a large extent and are a great source of livelihood of thousands of women.

The all women market, which has a history of over 500 years, has around 3,615 licensed female vendors registered with the Imphal Municipal Corporation.

Slamming Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "failure to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic", Rahul Gandhi said that Modi is the first Prime Minister in the world who campaigned for "Thali Bajao to vanish coronavirus.... when his Thali Bajao scheme failed he asked the people to switch on the mobile phone light to eradicate the virus".

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also addressed an election rally in Manipur virtually from Delhi on February 15 while party leaders Jairam Ramesh and Bhakta Charan Das are spearheading the party's election campaign in the northeastern state.

# Mamata hits out at Dhankhar again



**Mamata Banerjee was referring to the incident when Dhankhar returned the Chief Minister's recommendation to convene an Assembly session from March 7, stating that the proposal did not meet constitutional norms**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, Feb 21:** A couple of days after West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar returned Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's recommendation to convene Assembly session from March 7, stating that the proposal did not meet constitutional norms, Banerjee said Monday that it has become the duty of some people to put up resistance without

even knowing the reason. "There are some people whom I respect, don't disrespect. Showing disrespect doesn't go with my constitution. It has become their duty to interrupt without even knowing the reason," the Chief Minister said, adding, "I don't know why he is doing this. This is delaying things unnecessarily."

Banerjee went on to say, "The Governor returned the file. I am the Chief Minister and I have signed the file. He is saying to get it approved by the Cabinet and then send the file."

The Chief Minister claimed that she is the voice of the Cabinet. "However, despite that I have been trying to be decent and send the file approved by the Cabinet," she added.

Banerjee was referring to the incident when Dhankhar returned the Chief Minister's recommendation to convene an Assembly session from March 7, stating that the proposal did not meet constitutional norms.

## SHORT TAKES

### Three die after consuming liquor

**Azamgarh/Lucknow:** Three people died and around 10 were hospitalised after they consumed country-made liquor bought from a government vend in Azamgarh, an official said Monday. A senior Uttar Pradesh government official in Lucknow said three officials and staff of the excise department have been suspended with immediate effect over this. Azamgarh District Magistrate Amrit Tripathi said the incident took place Sunday evening.

### Amit Singal new CVC Director

**New Delhi:** Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer Amit Kumar Singal has been appointed as the Director in the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said here Monday. According to the order issued by the DoPT, Singal has been selected for appointment as Director in the CVC for a period of five years from the date of taking charge or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

### Trader shot dead

**Patna:** Unidentified men gunned down a pan masala trader in Bihar's Muzaffarpur city, police said Monday. The incident happened Sunday night. The deceased has been identified as Govind Kumar. According to the police, the assailants barged into the house of Govind Kumar, which is located just 200 meters from the town police station and shot him in the drying room.

### Arms recovered

**Chandauli/Azamgarh:** Police in Uttar Pradesh's Chandauli police have unearthed an illegal arms manufacturing unit, while the Azamgarh police have arrested six arms smugglers. The police made huge recoveries of illegal arms and also live cartridges in a huge quantity on Sunday. In Chandauli, the Mughalsarai police raided a hut on the banks of river Ganga near Kundakhurd village and unearthed an illegal arms manufacturing unit.

### Tehsildar held

**Lucknow:** Police in Lucknow have arrested tehsildar Padmesh Srivastava and wife for the murder of a lady constable whose body was found in a drain near the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences here. She was missing since February 13. According to the police, Padmesh became friends with the deceased constable Ruchi Singh on Facebook five years ago.

# Govt approves ₹13,020 crore border management plan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** The Modi government has approved a Rs 13,020 crore central sector umbrella scheme for continuation of the Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM) during the 15th Finance Commission cycle from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

The decision will strengthen infrastructure for improving border management, policing and guarding, an official statement said.

The Narendra Modi government has approved the continuation of the central sector umbrella scheme of BIM over the 15th Finance Commission Cycle from 2021-22 to 2025-26, at a cost of Rs.13,020 crore, it said. The Ministry of Home Affairs under the guidance of Home Minister Amit Shah is committed to improving border infrastructure and management, the statement said.

The BIM scheme will help in

the creation of infrastructure such as border fence, border flood lights, technological solutions, border roads and border outposts and company operating bases to secure India's borders with Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar.

India's border with Pakistan is 3,323 km long, including about 775 km of the Line of Control. The length of border is 4,096 km with Bangladesh, 3,488 km with China, 1,751 km with Nepal, 689 km with Bhutan, 1,643 km with Myanmar.

Officials said as part of the strategy to secure the borders as also to create infrastructure in the border areas of the country, the government has been taking many initiatives that include expeditious construction of fencing, flood-lighting and roads along its borders with Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar, and construction of strategic roads along its borders with China, Nepal and Bhutan.



Skaters play ice hockey at an ice skating rink at Lakkar Bazar, in Shimla

PTI PHOTO

# Pegasus row: Panel submits interim report

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** The Pegasus panel, appointed by the Supreme Court, is learnt to have submitted an interim report appraising the apex court about the progress on the probe.

According to sources familiar with the development, the panel has submitted an interim report in the apex court. A bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and comprising Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli will take up the petitions in the matter on February 23.

The panel had earlier said that only two people submitted their mobile phones with it for forensic examination.

On October 27 last year, the top court said it was compelled to take up the cause to determine the truth, as it appointed an independent expert technical committee supervised by a retired top court judge, Justice R.V. Raveendran, to probe the Pegasus snooping allegations.

The top court had authorised the technical committee to devise its own procedure to effectively implement and answer the terms

of reference. The committee can hold an investigation it deems fit and take statements of any person in connection with the inquiry and call for records of any authority or individual.

Justice Raveendran is overseeing the functioning of the technical committee and he is assisted by Alok Joshi, former IPS officer and Dr Sundeep Oberoi, Chairman, Sub Committee in International Organisation of Standardisation/International Electro-Technical Commission/Joint Technical Committee.

# Battle for UP: Fourth phase crucial for BJP, Cong

**IN THE FOURTH PHASE, POLLING WILL BE HELD IN ROHILKHAND, TERAI REGION, AWADH AND BUNDELKHAND REGIONS**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, Feb 21:** The stage is now set for the fourth phase of polling in Uttar Pradesh in which 59 Assembly constituencies, spread across nine districts, will go to polls on February 23.

This phase includes 16 reserved constituencies. Pilibhit, Lakhimpur-Kheri, Sitapur, Lucknow, Hardoi, Unnao, Rae Bareilly, Fatehpur and Banda dis-



tricts will go to polls in the fourth phase.

A total of 624 candidates are in the fray for 59 Assembly seats. The maximum number of candidates is 15 in Sawayajpur in Hardoi while a minimum of six candidates each, are contesting for two

seats, including Palia in Lakhimpur and Sevata in Sitapur.

In the fourth phase, polling will be held in Rohilkhand, Terai region, Awadh and Bundelkhand regions.

In the elections held in 2017, the BJP had won 51 of 59 seats. One

seat was won by its ally Apna Dal (S). Four were won by SP, while two seats were won by the Congress and two by the BSP. In this phase, voting is also taking place in state capital Lucknow which has nine Assembly seats. Of these, eight are with the BJP.

Polling is also scheduled to be held in this phase in Lakhimpur Kheri which has become a focal point of the farmer movement, especially after the October 3 incident in which four farmers were mowed down by an SUV owned by union minister Ajay Mishra Teni's son Ashish Mishra.

Ashish Mishra was recently released on bail from jail last week.

The opposition has been constantly targeting the BJP on this incident and Mishra's release has further stoked the fire. This phase is crucial for the BJP which faces the challenge of retaining its 51

seats. The party is facing resistance in the Terai region where BJP MP Varun Gandhi has been speaking up on issues against his own party. Varun is MP from Pilibhit, a farmer dominated constituency.

Then the party faces hostile voters in Lakhimpur where the opposition is refusing to let the October incident fade from public memory.

In Sitapur, the BJP faces rebel candidates. For the Congress, the biggest challenge of these elections comes from Rae Bareilly that also goes to polls this week. Both the Congress MLAs, Aditi Singh and Rakesh Singh, have turned rebels and joined the BJP.

Rae Bareilly is the parliamentary constituency of Congress president Sonia Gandhi and the party will face major embarrassment if it fails to win seats here.

## Girl gangraped, killed

**New Delhi:** A 32-year-old man was arrested in connection with the gang-rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl in the national capital, an official said Monday. The other accused, however, is still at large, he added. Sharing details of the case, DCP (Outer north) Brijendra Kumar Yadav said a kidnapping case was registered on February 15 against unidentified persons after a girl went missing in the Narela Industrial Area Police Station. On February 19, an information was received from one Rahul Rai of village Sannoth, who had returned from Jhansi, regarding a foul smell emanating from his shop and a labourer working there missing. Acting on the information, a police team searched the shop and found partially decomposed body of the missing girl hidden under gunny bags containing cow dung cakes.



# international

## of the day quote

In order to reach an agreement, it is necessary to ensure the interests of the Iranian people, especially the lifting of sanctions



EBRAHIM RAISI | PRESIDENT OF IRAN

In view of its repeated breaches of the defence agreements, the Mali government invites French authorities to withdraw (French forces) without delay



We are always ready for diplomacy. We are also ready to impose swift and severe consequences should Russia instead choose war. And currently, Russia appears to be continuing preparations for a full-scale assault on Ukraine very soon



JEN PSAKI | WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

## SHORT TAKES

### Imran to visit Russia

**Islamabad/Moscow:** Prime Minister Imran Khan will travel to Russia Wednesday on a two-day visit - the first by a Pakistani premier in over two decades - during which he will hold talks with President Vladimir Putin and review the bilateral ties including energy cooperation besides exchanging views on major regional and international issues. Prime Minister Khan will pay an official visit to Russia February 23-24 at the invitation of President Putin, the Foreign Office said in a statement Monday.

### UK to end self-isolation

**London:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson Monday laid out the details of his "living with Covid" plan, which involves an end to the legal requirement to self-isolate after a positive coronavirus test from Thursday and a rollback of free mass Covid tests from April. In a House of Commons statement, the PM confirmed that all temporary laws brought in to tackle the Covid will lapse next month.

### F-5 fighter plane crash kills three

**Tehran:** A fighter jet crashed onto a football pitch in a city in northwest Iran, the country's state-run news agency reported Monday. The crash killed two pilots and a civilian. IRNA said the F-5 fighter crashed onto the field in a residential area of Tabriz, a city of 1.6 million residents. Authorities are investigating the incident, the report said.

### 100 evacuated in building fire

**Berlin:** A huge fire broke out in an apartment building in the western German city of Essen early Monday, and three people were taken to a hospital after inhaling smoke, authorities said. About 150 firefighters were dispatched to battle the blaze. The cause wasn't immediately clear.

### SL returns 3K tones of garbage to UK

**Colombo:** Sri Lanka Monday shipped out to the UK the last 45 containers containing hazardous garbage, including clinical waste, used cushions and mattresses, that arrived from Britain, according to media reports. The containers were part of 263 containers imported to Sri Lanka in 2019. A local company said that the waste had been brought to Sri Lanka from the United Kingdom, the Colombo Gazette reported.

# Putin mulls freedom to separatist states

The world is watching the fighting warily since Western officials have warned for weeks that Russia would look for a pretext to invade - and that the conflict in Donbas could provide just such an excuse

AGENCIES

**Moscow, Feb 21:** Russian President Vladimir Putin convened top officials Monday to consider recognising the independence of Russia-backed separatist regions in eastern Ukraine.

The meeting of the presidential Security Council comes amid Western fears that Russia could invade Ukraine any moment, using skirmishes in eastern Ukraine as a pretext for an attack.

Putin's statement follows televised statements by separatist leaders, who pleaded with Putin to recognise them as independent states and sign friendship treaties envisaging military aid to protect them from what they described as the ongoing Ukrainian military offensive. Russia's lower house made the same plea last week.

Ukrainian authorities deny launching an offensive and accuse Russia of provocation amid intensifying shelling along the line of contact. The Kremlin initially signalled its reluctance to make the move that would effectively shatter a 2015 peace deal for eastern Ukraine that marked a major diplomatic coup for Moscow, requiring Ukrainian authorities to offer a broad self-rule to the rebel regions. The US and Russian presidents tentatively agreed to meet in a last-ditch effort to stave off a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine, even as sustained shelling continued Monday in a conflict in eastern Ukraine that Western powers fear could provide the spark for a broader war. If Russia invades, as the US warns Moscow has already



UKRAINE CRISIS

Civilians study weapons during a training session by Ukrainian right-wing group Right Sector in a city park in Kyiv

PTI PHOTO

decided to do, the meeting will be off. Still the prospect of a face-to-face summit resuscitated hopes that diplomacy could prevent a devastating conflict, which would result in massive casualties and huge economic damage across Europe, which is heavily dependent on Russian energy.

Russia has massed an estimated 150,000 troops on three sides of Ukraine - the biggest such buildup since the Cold War. And Western officials have warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin is now looking for a pretext to invade the country, a western-looking democracy that has defied Moscow's attempts to pull it back into its orbit.

Even as diplomatic efforts inched forward, potential flashpoints multiplied. Fighting escalated in eastern Ukraine, Russia said it had fended off an "incursion" from Ukraine - which Ukrainians officials denied - and Russia decided to prolong military drills in Belarus.

Moscow denies it has any plans to attack, but wants Western guarantees that NATO won't allow Ukraine and other former Soviet countries to join as members. It has also demanded the alliance halt weapons deployments to Ukraine and roll back its forces from Eastern Europe - demands flatly rejected by the West.

With the prospect of war loom-



Iran may soon sign a new nuclear agreement with world powers but the new deal is weaker than the previous one

NAFTALI BENNETT | ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER

## TRUMP'S 'TRUTH SOCIAL' APP

Banned from all top social media platforms including Twitter, former US President Donald Trump Monday launched his own social media app called Truth Social on President's Day that is currently available for Apple users. The app on iOS platform resembles Twitter, which was previously Trump's preferred social media network



# China to provide fighter jets to Pak



The images of the J-10C fighter jet with the marking of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) recently surfaced on social media and were widely circulated by media outlets

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Islamabad/New Delhi, Feb 21:** China will deliver 25 J-10C fighter jets to Pakistan within weeks in a major boost to the country's military capabilities to defend its airspace, The News reported.

UK's Financial Times reported that the first batch of combat aircraft is being tested in Chengdu, the base of its manufacturer Chengdu Aerospace Corporation.

"They will be transferred to Pakistan once Pakistan Air Force pilots and technicians complete an introduction to the aircraft," a journalist, working with a Chinese military publication, told FT.

Senior officials in Islamabad said the jets would be delivered before the end of the month, the report added.

First published on social media last week, the images show two J-10Cs, equipped with China's domestically developed WS-10B Taihang turbofan engines, undertaking test flights at an undisclosed location.

"If confirmed, this could be the first time China has exported the J-10 series fighter and also the first time it has exported the WS-10 series engine," observers said.

Commenting on the matter, Chinese analysts have lauded the latest defence cooperation between the two countries, saying that the move yields great significance to them, in terms of boosting combat capabilities of the Pakistan military, promoting China's aviation equipment, and responding to their security interests in the region, The News reported.

## Rocket set to crash into Moon, China says 'not ours'

**Beijing:** China Monday denied responsibility for a rocket set to slam into the Moon, after experts said the piece of space junk likely came from Beijing's lunar exploration programme. Astronomers initially thought the wayward object was a chunk of a SpaceX rocket that blasted off seven years ago and was abandoned in space after completing its mission. But it is now believed to be the booster for the Chang'e 5-T1, launched in 2014 as part of the Chinese space agency's lunar exploration programme. The rocket is expected to crash into the far side of the moon March 4. But China's foreign ministry rejected the claim Monday, saying the booster in question had "safely entered the Earth's atmosphere and was completely incinerated". Beijing "conscientiously upholds the long-term sustainability of activities in outer space", spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a regular press briefing. China has set its sights on becoming a space superpower and took a landmark step last year with the launch of the longest crewed mission to its new space station. The world's second-largest economy has ploughed billions into its military-run space programme and hopes to eventually send humans to the Moon.

## Ukraine denies Moscow's allegation

**Moscow/Paris:** Russia's military said Monday Ukrainian military saboteurs had tried to enter Russian territory in armed vehicles, an accusation dismissed as "fake news" by Kyiv amid Western accusations that Moscow could fabricate a pretext to invade. The Russian military said five people had been killed when the Ukrainian saboteurs were thwarted. Ukraine and its Western allies have been saying for days that Moscow could manufacture a pretext to invade Ukraine with a huge force it has massed on the border.

## Don't play with human lives: Germany

**Brussels:** German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock accused Russia on Monday of playing an "irresponsible" game with the civilian population of eastern Ukraine and urged it to return to the negotiating table. Sporadic shelling across the line dividing Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists in the east has intensified since Thursday. "I urgently call on the Russian government, on the Russian president: Don't play with human lives," Baerbock told reporters after arriving for a meeting of European Union foreign ministers in Brussels.

Johnson and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Even as the diplomacy pressed ahead, there were signs it might head off a broader conflict. Russia and its ally Belarus announced Sunday that they were extending massive war games on Belarus' territory, which could offer a staging ground for an attack on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, located just 75 kilometers (less than 50 miles) south of the border.

# UN court to open hearings in Rohingya genocide case

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**The Hague, Feb 21:** Myanmar's shadow civilian administration called on the United Nations' top court Monday not to allow the country's military rulers to represent the Southeast Asian nation at hearings into a case accusing the country of genocide against the Rohingya ethnic minority.

Four days of hearings into the Myanmar military's deadly 2017 crackdown on the Rohingya are scheduled to open Monday afternoon at the International Court of Justice amid a dispute over who should represent the country in court. Representatives of Myanmar are scheduled to address judges to outline why they believe the case that was filed by the African nation of Gambia, representing a group of Muslim nations, should be dropped. But members of Myanmar's National Unity Government, urged the court not to accept representatives of the military rulers. "We do not believe that the International Court of Justice will want to allow the military to appear before them as if they speak for the Republic of

# Forex-starved SL runs out of cash to buy fuel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Colombo, Feb 21:** Sri Lankan government Monday admitted that it has run out of cash to buy fuel as pumps in most filling stations across the country have run dry, exacerbating the deepening foreign-exchange crisis that has crippled the island nation's economy.

So dire is Sri Lanka's current economic situation that it does not even have adequate US dollars to pay for two shipments of fuel.

"Two shipments of fuel have arrived today, but we are unable to pay for it," Sri Lanka's Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila said Monday. Last week, state-owned refinery Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) said it was out of money to procure supplies from abroad.

The CPC suffered losses to the tune of \$415 million in 2021 due to the sale of diesel at prices fixed by the government. "I had warned about the impending fuel shortages due to the dollar crisis twice in January and once earlier this month," Gammanpila said.



JUST CHILL: World's Greatest Sleigh Rides is an event raising money for Camp Capella, a summer camp programme for individuals with disabilities. The event brings hundreds together to enjoy a horse-drawn sleigh ride over snowy fields

# Oz welcomes back tourists with toy koalas, Tim Tams

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Canberra, Feb 21:** International tourists and business travellers began arriving in Australia with few restrictions Monday, bringing together families in tearful reunions after separations of two years or longer forced by some of the most draconian pandemic measures of any democracy in the world.

Tearful British tourist Sue Witton hugged her adult son Simon Witton when he greeted her at Melbourne's airport.

"Seven hundred and twenty-four (days) apart and he's my only son, and I'm alone, so this means the world to me," she told reporters.

Travellers were greeted at Sydney's airport by jubilant well-wishers waving toy koalas and favourite Australian foods

including Tim Tams chocolate cookies and jars of Vegemite spread.

Federal Tourism Minister Dan Tehan was on hand to welcome the first arrivals on a Qantas flight from Los Angeles which landed at 6:20 am local time.

"I think there'll be a very strong rebound in our tourism market. Our wonderful experiences haven't gone away," Tehan said.

Danielle Vogl, who lives in Canberra, and her Florida-based partner Eric Lochner have been separated since October 2019 by the travel restrictions.

She said she burst into tears when she heard about the lifting of the restrictions, which will allow them to reunite in April, and telephoned him with the news.

"I actually woke him up to tell him, because I thought it was big



enough news to do that," Vogl told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"He couldn't believe it. ... He was like Are you sure, is this true?" and I'm like Yes, it's happening. This is

or living together. "It's been a very long and very cruel process for us," Vogl said.

Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews said all travellers' vaccination status

**Australia closed its borders to tourists in March 2020 in a bid to reduce the local spread of Covid-19, but Monday removed its final travel restrictions for fully vaccinated passengers**

would be checked before they arrived to avoid a repeat of Serbian tennis star Novak Djokovic's visa debacle. Djokovic was issued with a visa

through an automated process before he left Spain to compete in the Australian Open in January but was deported after he arrived in Melbourne because he was not vaccinated against Covid-19.

Tourism Australia managing director Phillipa Harrison said she expected tourist numbers would take two years to rebound to pre-pandemic levels.

The Sydney-based airline's chief executive Alan Joyce said bookings have been strong since the federal government announced two weeks ago that the country was relaxing restrictions.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said 1.2 million people had visas to enter Australia with 56 international flights due to touch down in the first 24 hours of the border reopening.



## of the day quote

Entrepreneurs are only going to lead India into a different economic growth and we cannot be dependent on the government for increasing our growth. It is only the entrepreneurs, who will make India prosperous

**HARSH MARIWALA** | CHAIRMAN, MARICO

Leveraging digital channels and using technology to strengthen agriculture, healthcare and education which are the foundational pillars driving India towards its \$5 trillion ambition are indeed welcome

**SANJIV MEHTA** | CHAIRMAN & MD, HUL

In the current scenario, where uncertainty characterizes ties, economic and social structures, it is a race for organisations to move away from the traditional approaches of strategy and adopt evolved models

**PAWAN MUNJAL** | CHAIRMAN & CEO, HERO MOTOCORP

## SHORT TAKES

### 4th straight loss for Sensex, Nifty

**Mumbai:** Domestic equity gauges Sensex and Nifty logged their fourth straight session of fall Monday as participants remained cautious over lingering geopolitical tensions in eastern Europe. Persistent foreign fund outflows added to the gloom, traders said. Tracking deep losses in other Asian bourses, the BSE Sensex dived around 700 points in the opening session but staged a recovery to briefly trade in the positive zone as market jitters were calmed by hopes of talks between the US and Russia over the Ukraine crisis.

### Tata Power, RWE announce MoU

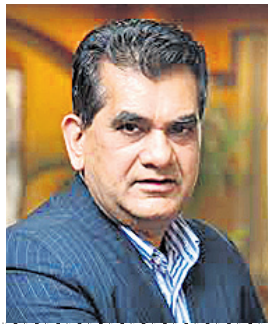
**New Delhi:** Tata Power Monday said it has collaborated with Germany-based RWE Renewable GmbH to explore potential for a joint development of offshore wind projects in India. A corresponding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited, a 100 per cent subsidiary of Tata Power, which is one of India's largest integrated power companies, and RWE Renewables GmbH, one of the world's leaders in offshore wind, a Tata Power statement has said.

### IndiGo's parent skids over 4%

**Bangalore:** Shares of InterGlobe Aviation, the parent of India's biggest airline IndiGo, dropped Monday after one of its co-founders resigned from the board last week and said he will trim his stake in the company over the next five years. The company's shares fell as much as 4.3% and hit a two-week low. In a letter to the InterGlobe's board Friday, Rakesh Gangwal said he was stepping down immediately as he didn't want access to unpublished price sensitive information when he begins trimming his stake in the company.

### Wego acquires Cleartrip's ME biz

**Bangalore:** Online travel marketplace Wego Monday said it is acquiring Cleartrip's Middle East (ME) business from Flipkart Group for an undisclosed sum. The transaction also includes the sale of Flyin.com and a technology co-operation agreement between Wego and Flipkart. Cleartrip expanded into the Middle East region in 2010 and acquired Riyadh based Flyin.com in 2018



Today India is witnessing unprecedented levels of economic development and technological disruptions. The economy is growing at 9.2 per cent and is expected to grow at similar rates in the coming years

**AMITABH KANT** | CEO, NITI AAYOG

## METAVVERSE OF EDUCATION

Invect Metaversity, founded by former Twitter India head Manish Maheshwari, Monday announced it has received \$5 million in funding led by Antler India. Maheshwari said the startup will use the funds to build a metaverse of education and expand globally. Invect Metaversity is a platform built at the intersection of education and Web 3.0



# Be more customer-friendly: FM to banks

**AT A MEETING BETWEEN BANKERS AND FM, A STARTUP FOUNDER IN THE BAKING BUSINESS SUGGESTED FOR CREDIT TO BE AVAILABLE HASSLE-FREE, TO WHICH SBI'S CHAIRMAN DINESH KUMAR KHARA SAID A STARTUP'S WORRIES ARE MORE ON THE EQUITY SIDE AND ASSURED FULL SUPPORT IN LENDING IF SUFFICIENT EQUITY IS ON THE TABLE**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 21:** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Monday said banks need to focus more on being customer-friendly so that the process of availing credit becomes more hassle-free for borrowers.

At a meeting between industry representatives and the finance minister, a startup founder in the baking business suggested for credit to be available hassle-free, to which largest lender SBI's Chairman



SBI Chairman said it is a normal perception that banks do not sanction loans, but pointed to very high levels of underutilisation of sanctioned working capital limits, which generally point to slowing demand in an economy

He noted even after a 9 percentage points improvement in a quarter, the underutilisation of working capital is as high as 52 per cent for the country's largest lender

HE ADDED THAT THE FOCUS IS ON INCREASING THE RELIANCE ON END-TO-END DIGITALISATION OF THE PROCESS, WHICH WILL ENSURE A HASSLE-FREE EXPERIENCE

**Banks need to be cognisant of the needs to lend more and support the economic growth. The balance sheet of corporates is in better shape now**

**TARUN BAJAJ** | REVENUE SECRETARY

Dinesh Kumar Khara said a startup's worries are more on the equity side and assured full support in lending if sufficient equity is on the table.

Later, he also made a mention of the government's Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).

Stressing that the person asking the question is a woman operating an innovative enterprise, Sitharaman had a few suggestions for the banking community and also spoke out against their attitude.

"Initially, Mr Khara gave a very bland answer. And then after being prompted somewhat, he went into talking about a scheme which has a lot of government support, the CGTMSE," she said.

"Banks will have to be a lot more customer friendly. Not to the extent of taking adverse risks which you don't need to take, but you need to be a lot more friendly to customers," the minister said.

Khara said in the next two months, the bank will go fully digital for lending. Also, provided there

## Trust, confidence to gain traction among investors

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Monday emphasised that trust and confidence in the financial markets are critical to gain traction among investors. During an interaction with leaders of the financial and capital markets, Sitharaman urged the market participants to strive for efficiency and transparency to help to channelise resources for productive investment in the most effective manner, according to an official release. The finance minister is interacting with various stakeholders as part of her two-day post-Budget outreach programme being held in the country's financial capital, starting Monday. She highlighted the important role of market participants in institution-building and for making the financial market stronger and investor-friendly, the release said.

is credible cashflow visibility available to a bank, the credit growth to small businesses can touch that of personal loans over time.

He said his optimism on growth in lending to small businesses in the future comes from the experience in the retail banking space and the changes in lending, where the balance sheet alone is not important but access to cash flows of an entity also helps.

## NSE CO-LOCATION CASE

# Probe shifting towards money trail, illicit gains

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** As a multi-agency probe into the NSE case gathers pace, the grant of preferential server and data access to select brokers and their suspected misuse are being investigated threadbare to unveil all quid pro quo arrangements in a highly-sophisticated scheme that worked like a cricket betting scandal, officials said Monday.

While the bourse has said it has taken several steps over the years to strengthen its technology infrastructure, including as per regulatory orders, the officials said certain fresh disclosures call for a detailed probe into whether a select group of individuals in high positions had banded together to make illicit gains by facilitating the preferential trading slots, beginning over a decade ago.

Even a split-second faster access is said to result in huge gains for a trader. The preferential access allegedly did not include just close proximity to the exchange servers but also provided faster and 'Tick-By-Tick' (TBT) data containing minute details about all trades and orders.

Explaining how the system worked, one of the senior officials said, "The best analogy to understand this highly-technical matter is cricket and betting."

"For a common investor or a broker trading on his or her normal terminal is like watching the live telecast of the match on television or in a stadium. But imagine your eyes and ears right behind every single player in the field, getting to know their moves and strategies on a real-time basis before anyone else," the official said.

"And, we are not even talking about match-fixing. The sophisticated algorithms at play make it possible to access a huge amount of data on a real-time basis with the use of modern computer systems and high-tech software solutions," the official added.

"The difference may be very small for one individual investor, possibly just one rupee or a few paise per share, but when you look at the huge amount of trades



The preferential access allegedly did not include just close proximity to the exchange servers but also provided faster and 'Tick-By-Tick' (TBT) data containing minute details about all trades and orders

The genuine investors were definitely on the losing side as this system was facilitating a select few to buy shares at a lower price and sell those at a higher price due to their faster access, said an official

One major roadblock in the investigations has been a missing trove of e-mails as a large number of computer hardware, including laptops, used by some top officials were destroyed long back as 'e-waste'

NSE'S CO-LOCATION FACILITY ALLOWED BROKERS TO TAKE ON RENT-SPECIFIC RACKS TO CO-LOCATE THEIR SERVERS AND SYSTEMS WITHIN THE EXCHANGE PREMISES FOR A LOW LATENCY CONNECTION TO THE EXCHANGE

running into lakhs and crores every day, the overall gains for the selected brokers could have run into hundreds and thousands of crores of rupees over a period of few years," he added.

The officials said the money trail at various levels, including to and from the concerned brokers' accounts, would be looked into, in addition to financial accounts of a large number of individuals who were directly or indirectly associated with the matter, especially between 2009 and 2016, from inside or outside the exchange. If required, help would be sought from foreign regulators and agencies, they added.

## SEA asks edible oil players to cut MRP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** Stating that domestic edible oil prices are showing no sign of easing in view of global developments, industry body SEA Monday appealed to its members to reduce minimum retail price (MRP) of cooking oils by Rs 3-5 per kg with immediate effect in order to give relief to consumers.

This is the second time the industry body is requesting its members to cut MRP. Last time, it had asked its members to reduce MRP on edible oils by Rs 3-5kg around Diwali in November 2021.

India, which meets more than 60 per cent of its edible oils demand through imports, has taken several steps like reducing import duty on palm oils, imposing stock limits in the last few months, to keep domestic retail prices under check.

Despite these proactive efforts of the government, all-India average retail prices continue to rule higher than the year-ago period's.

These prices are showing no immediate signs of moderating and some exporting countries like Indonesia have also started regulating exports of palm oil by way of licensing, the Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) said.

SEA said it has requested and advised their members to reduce Minimum Retail Price by Rs 3,000 to 5,000 per tonne (Rs 3 to 5 per kg) on edible oils, with immediate effect to soften the prices.

SEA also noted that the domestic mustard crop is shaping quite well and it is expecting a record crop during the current year.

## 'LIC may not sell entire IDBI stake'

**PRADHAN MANTRI JEEVAN JYOTI BIMA YOJANA SUBSCRIBERS ARE ALSO ELIGIBLE TO AVAIL THE QUOTA BENEFITS RESERVED FOR THE LIC POLICYHOLDERS**

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** State-run Life Insurance Corp Of India (LIC), which is planning the country's largest IPO next month, may not sell its entire stake in IDBI Bank and can use its large network of branches to market its insurance services, its chairman said.

LIC, the country's biggest insurance company, is planning to float a 5% stake to raise about \$8 billion next month, which could make it India's largest initial public offering (IPO) by far. Its majority stake in IDBI Bank, which it rescued in 2019, is seen as a risk to its



balance sheet.

"I would like to have some stake in IDBI Bank. It has been the strongest contributor to the bancassurance channel for us. This will help us to grow that part of the channel," said MR Kumar in a press conference with reporters Monday. India's government and LIC hold

## Organic exports grew 51% last yr

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** Despite the pandemic, India's organic exports grew 51 per cent over 2019-20 levels, government officials said, adding it envisages targeting 10 per cent export share in the global fruits and vegetable market by 2030.



About the export potential of organic and horticultural produce in India, Joint Secretary, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Priya Ranjan said: "India's organic exports stood at 8,88,180 metric tonne in 2020-21."

"To ensure the quality of our organic produce, we need to have a robust system of certification and the Government has anchored two systems of certification for organic products," he said, emphasising that appropriate phyto-sanitary protocols need to be ensured for better acceptability of Indian organic products.

"We envisage targeting 10 per cent export share in global fruits and vegetable market by 2030," he said at EXPO2020 Dubai.

## BOOSTING HIGH-SPEED GLOBAL NETWORK CAPACITY

# Airtel joins undersea cable consortium; anchors 20% investment

The 12 other consortium members of SEA-ME-WE-6 include Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company, Dhiraagu (Maldives), Djibouti Telecom, Mobily (Saudi Arabia), Orange (France), Singtel (Singapore), Sri Lanka Telecom, Telecom Egypt, Telekom Malaysia, and Telin (Indonesia)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 21:** Bharti Airtel Monday said it has joined the 'SEA-ME-WE-6' undersea cable consortium in a bid to scale up its high-speed global network ca-



capacity to serve India's fast-growing digital economy.

Airtel said it is participating as a "major investor" in the SEA-ME-WE-6 and is anchoring 20 per cent of the overall investment in the cable system, which will go live in 2025.

The 19,200 Rkm (route kilometres) SEA-ME-WE-6 will connect

Singapore and France, and will be among the largest undersea cable system globally.

In a statement, Airtel said it has joined SEA-ME-WE-6 undersea cable consortium to scale up the high-speed network for India's emerging digital economy.

"Through SEA-ME-WE-6, Airtel will add a significant amount of

## Jio's cable to connect Maldives to India, S'pore

India's largest mobile operator Reliance Jio Infocomm will land the multi-terabit India-Asia-Xpress (IAX) undersea cable system in Hulhumale, Maldives, according to a statement Monday. The high capacity and high-speed IAX system will connect Hulhumale directly with world's major internet hubs in India and Singapore. Jio's IAX project will land in the Maldives in collaboration with Ocean Connect Maldives, the statement said. The IAX system originates in Mumbai in the west and connects directly to Singapore, with branches including additional landings in India, Malaysia, and Thailand. "These high capacity and high-speed systems will provide more than 200Tb/s of capacity at speeds of 100Gb/s, over 16,000 kilometers," Jio statement informed. IAX is expected to be ready for service end-2023.



Undersea cable systems along with data centres are vital infrastructure for supporting 5G and the digital economy. Our investment in SEA-ME-WE-6 is another step in our journey to future-proof our network and build large integrated capacities to enable India's digital ecosystem

**Ajay Chitkara** | Business Director & CEO, Airtel

100 TBps capacity to its global network," the statement said.

Airtel has acquired one Fiber Pair on the main SEA-ME-WE-6 system and will co-build four Fiber

Pairs between Singapore - Chennai - Mumbai as part of the cable system. Airtel will land the SEA-ME-WE-6 cable system in India at new landing stations in

Mumbai and Chennai. According to the statement, SEA-ME-WE-6 will be integrated with Nxta by Airtel's large data centres in Mumbai and Chennai to enable global hyperscalers and businesses to access integrated solutions and strengthen India's position as an emerging data centre hub in the region.

Airtel said it already operates the largest undersea cable network out of India in addition to the biggest network of data centres.



# DRAVID CLEAR ABOUT COMBINATION

# Desperate India aim to end losing streak



Head coach Rahul Dravid has something to suggest for skipper Rohit Sharma as batting coach Vikram Rathour looks on in one of India's practice session during recently concluded West Indies series

he probably will need you at a critical time. And I think he's done a really good job for us, really good series he has had," he added.

### TAKE ON SAHA'S COMMENTS

Dravid is not "hurt" by Wriddhiman Saha revealing the "difficult" conversation that the two had about his future as he firmly believes that the veteran keeper-batter "deserved the honesty and clarity" which was provided to him. Dravid said his intention behind talking to Saha was to ensure he has a clear picture of where he stands and he does not regret it.

"I'm actually not hurt at all. I have deep respect for Wriddhi and his achievements and his contribution to Indian cricket. My conversation came from that place. I think he deserved honesty and clarity," said Dravid.

Dravid said he will continue having such conversations with players whether they like the discussion or not. "It's about conversations I constantly have with players. I don't expect players to always agree with everything I say about them.

"That's not how it works. You can have difficult conversations with the players, but that doesn't mean you brush it under the carpet and don't have the conversations," Dravid was crystal clear about his approach.

Dravid said that his philosophy is to have discussions with players before every playing XI is picked. "I always believe in having those conversations before every playing XI is picked and be open to questions such as why they are not playing. It's natural for players to get upset and feel hurt," he said.

Dravid also explained the rationale behind speaking to Saha, saying that it was necessary as Rishabh Pant has already established himself as the new No.1 wicketkeeper across formats and the Bengal man wouldn't have got chances going forward.

"I was just trying to convey that with RP (Pant), having established himself as our No.1 wicketkeeper-batsman, the idea was to say that we are looking to groom a younger wicketkeeper (Kona Bharat). This doesn't change my feelings or respect for Wriddhi," he asserted.

For Dravid, telling a harsh truth is better than avoiding a conversation altogether. "Easiest thing for me is to not have these conversations and not speak to players about it. That's not what I am going to do. But at some stage, I hope they respect the fact that I was able to front up and have those conversations," he added.



Experienced pacer Jhulan Goswami (L) would be eager to carry her momentum into the fourth ODI against the White Ferns, Tuesday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Queenstown, Feb 21:** The series already out of its grasp, a desperate Indian women's cricket team will look to snap the losing streak and salvage some pride by sorting its bowling and fielding woes in the fourth ODI against New Zealand here Tuesday.

India suffered a second successive three-wicket loss to hosts New Zealand in the third game to concede the five-ODI series. It was yet another limited-overs series loss for the Indian team, following the defeats to South Africa at home and in England and Australia in the last 12 months.

In the ongoing rubber, if batting let the team down in the one-off T20I and the first ODI, it was the bowlers and fielders who failed to keep things under control in the last two matches as the New Zealand side successfully chased down big totals.

With the World Cup looming, Mithali Raj's team will have to iron out the flaws in the next two ODIs and the return of star opener Smriti Mandhana and pacer Meghna Singh will bolster the team as it looks to get some momentum ahead of the big-ticket event.

In the bowling department, veteran pacer Jhulan Goswami was the only bright spot in the 3rd ODI as she rocked the top-order with three wickets but she lacked support as New Zealand recovered from 171/6 to chase down 280 with five balls to spare.

With Meghna back, India will look to field a strong and settled pace attack in the remaining two ODIs after experimenting with Pooja Vastrakar, Simran Bahadur and Renuka Singh.

Among spinners, Deepti Sharma has shone bright with seven scalps, including a four-wicket haul in the second ODI, but the likes of Poonam Yadav and Rajeshwari Gayakwad will have to put up more consistent shows.

India's batting has looked good with Sabbhineni Meghana grabbing the opportunity with both hands, hitting 49 and 61 in the last two ODIs in Mandhana's absence. Shafali Verma also returned to form with a 57-ball 51 in the third game.

With Mandhana back, it will be interesting to see the combination that skipper Mithali fields in the next two ODIs, especially with Harmanpreet Kaur struggling to get runs in the middle.

New Zealand, on the other hand, have been working like a well-oiled machine. The hosts are high on confidence after chasing two big scores but one area they would like to improve is bowling in the final two games.

Amelia Kerr (219) and Suzie Bates (127) have been their best batters with each hitting a hundred in the first two games. If the two have provided solidity at the top order, Amy Satterthwaite has been impressive in the middle with 122 runs in the series so far.

In the third ODI, it was Lauren Down and Katey Martin who showed their prowess down the order, stitching a match-winning 76-run stand for the seventh wicket.

In bowling, Jess Kerr and regular skipper Sophie Devine have been their most successful bowlers with five and four wickets respectively but the hosts allowed the Indians to score big totals and they will have to pull their socks up in the next two games.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Feb 21:** Finding the perfect combination can be tricky and there is no set formula, but India head coach Rahul Dravid says he and skipper Rohit Sharma are pretty clear about the team for the T20 World Cup in Australia in less than eight months' time.

The former captain, who took over from Ravi Shastri after India's group stage exit in last year's T20 World Cup in UAE, will have his first big challenge in Australia. Dravid said he and Rohit understand what should be the team combination for the mega-event.

"I think we have got a fair idea between Rohit and myself and the selectors and the management," Dravid said Sunday. "I don't think there's a set formula to it. But we're pretty clear about the balance and the com-

bination (for the T20 World Cup). We are just structuring a little bit of the team around it and also balancing individual workloads as well.

"We have got a pretty fair idea of the kind of skills we're looking for in Australia, with the kind of guys who are in running. Not everything is set in stone but we want to give everyone a fair chance to stake their claim for those spots," he added.

### BACKS STRUGGLING KISHAN

Giving full support to IPL 2022 auction's most expensive buy Kishan, Dravid said: "Ishan has been picked on his potential, his performance. Yes, you cannot specify this many games. Sometimes it's combination, sometimes it's injuries."

"Never always give a player the same number of games, there cannot be a written number in stone whether it's seven or six matches.

Whether it's Rituraj Gaikwad or Avesh Khan today (Sunday). We are not judging them on one game. They're here because they perform and deserve to be here," the former captain stressed.

"We like to give the players confidence in the group in and around the squad and that they are not going to be judged on one game. It's always a tricky balance. But in the larger group, I'm not concerned about one-off series. In this format, it's going to happen," Dravid added.

### PRAISING 'ALL-ROUNDER' IYER

For long, India have been fretting over their sixth bowling option especially after the back injury to their pace bowling all-rounder Hardik Pandya. In the absence of an unfit Pandya, India have tried out the likes of Venkatesh Iyer and Shardul Thakur and it's the former

who has impressed the head coach.

"I know he plays a different role (opener) for his IPL franchise but we're very clear with what is the kind of role that we see him filling in our situation. Obviously our top three isn't really a spot, because these guys have established and have been performing very well in the top three," he said.

"So we challenged him, we gave him the role to be able to bat in that position. Every time he's improved, he's gotten better. That's really pleasing. The role of a sixth bowler is something that you always be called upon to bowl. But in a situation like today where we unfortunately lost Deepak, you have to bowl a few critical overs," Dravid said.

"That is the role of a sixth bowler. If you are having a good game and the captain doesn't need you then he doesn't need you. If he needs you,

# Aubameyang treble outsmarts Valencia



**MEMORABLE OUTING:** (From R) Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang celebrates Barcelona's fourth goal with Pedri and Ousmane Dembele, Sunday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Madrid, Feb 21:** The last-minute scramble to secure the signing of Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has started to pay off for Barcelona.

Aubameyang scored a hat-trick Sunday for his first goals since joining from Arsenal at the end of the winter transfer window, leading the Catalan club to a resounding 4-1 win at Valencia in the Spanish league Sunday.

It's a reminder of what the striker is capable of, scoring for the first time in four months after falling out of favor and form at Arsenal.

Ousmane Dembélé, whom Barcelona wanted to leave but ended staying after rejecting a couple of offers at the transfer deadline, made his first start since then and set up Frenkie de Jong's goal as Barcelona ended a two-game winless run in all competitions.

The result moved Xavi Hernández's team back into fourth place in the final Champions League qualification spot in the Spanish league. Defending champion Atlético Madrid, who won 3-0 at Osasuna Saturday, are fifth. Barcelona trail league leader Real Madrid by 15 points with a game in hand.

It was the fifth loss in the last seven league games for Valencia, who sit in 12th place. It is winless in seven straight matches in the competition.

Aubameyang's first goal came when he calmly hit the upper corner in a one-on-one situation in the 23rd minute. His second came from close range in the 38th after a pass by Gavi Páez, and the Gabon forward closed the scoring with a slight redirection of Pedri González's long-range strike in the 63rd. The goal was initially given to Pedri but the league later changed it to Aubameyang.

De Jong had added to Barcelona's lead from inside the area by completing Dembélé's right-flank pass in the 32nd. Dembélé had come off the bench against Espanyol and Napoli after not accepting the club's request for him to leave during the transfer window.

Valencia had pulled one closer in the 52nd with a header by Carlos Soler off Bryan Gil's cross. Valencia had two goals disallowed in the first half - one by offside in the 26th and another in the 41st after video review determined the ball had gone across the sideline in the buildup.

# Team Spain arrive for FIH Pro League encounters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 21:** Spain men's hockey team arrived here Monday ahead of their two-legged FIH Pro League tie against Olympic bronze medallist India to be played at the iconic Kalinga Stadium, February 26 and 27.

Having lost both their opening matches against England earlier this month, World No.9 Spain will look to register their first win in this season's Pro League.

"We are not too concerned about the losses against England. We have just started, we've played only two matches, so I wouldn't put too much emphasis on winning or losing yet. We were really competitive in our opening matches, and will try to play our brand of hockey against India," Spain head coach Max Caldas said.



Spain captain Marc Miralles said they are well prepared to give India a run for their money in the upcoming matches.

"Despite the losses, I think there were a lot of things that we did great. So hopeful of learning from our mistakes and improving on them. We need the first wins in

this Pro League season, so we keep having faith in the way we trained, and what our coach is telling us to do," he said.

The Indian team have won three out of the four matches it has played so far in the FIH Pro League. The team will be playing the first home matches of the league this season.

### CM MEETS INDIA HOCKEY TEAMS

**BHUBANESWAR:** Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday met with the Indian men's and women's hockey teams at the Kalinga Stadium here and wished them luck for the upcoming home leg of the FIH Hockey Pro League. He also watched the Odisha Women's League football tournament match between Sports Hostel and Rising Student Club.



"Watched a wonderful match of Odisha Women's Football League at Kalinga Stadium and assured the players full support so that they bring glory for the country. Interacted with the Women & Men Hockey teams and wished them very best for upcoming Pro League matches," Patnaik wrote on his Twitter handle. In another tweet, he congratulated Odisha's women hockey stars Deep Grace Ekka and Namita Toppo for their selection for the upcoming FIH Pro League tie against Spain. "Congratulate Odisha players, Deep Grace Ekka & Namita Toppo on being selected in the 22-member Indian Women's Hockey Team for the upcoming FIH Pro League matches to be played at Kalinga Stadium against Spain. Wish the team all the very best."

# Praggnanandhaa stuns Carlsen



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Feb 21:** Teenaged Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa stunned World No.1 Magnus Carlsen in the eighth round of the Airthings Masters online rapid chess tournament, becoming only the third from the country to clinch a victory over the Norwegian superstar.

The 16-year old prodigy was hailed by many on the social media, including cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar and All-India Chess Federation president Sanjay Kapoor, after he followed five-time former World Champion Viswanathan Anand and P Harikrishna in getting the better of Carlsen, the 31-year-old who is also the reigning

**Congratulate young Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa on his stunning victory over reigning World Champion GM Magnus Carlsen during ongoing Airthings Masters Chess Tournament. Wish him all the best for the future**

world champion. Praggnanandhaa won with black pieces in 39 moves in a Tarrasch variation game early Monday to halt Carlsen's run of three straight wins. Praggnanandhaa was not celebrating big just yet and said he wanted to stay focussed on the rest of the tournament. The teenaged GM said there was no specific plan for the match against the Norwegian. "No special plan or preparation for the Carlsen match. I just wanted to enjoy playing against him and not put too much pressure on myself (of taking on the world champion)," Pragu, as he is affectionately called by friends and coach RB Ramesh, said.

# FEDERATION CUP VOLLEYBALL: ODISHA TEAMS FINISH THIRD



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 21:** Odisha volleyball teams performed splendidly as both the men's and women's teams finished third in the 34th Federation Cup Volleyball (men & women) Championship at the Biju Patnaik Indoor Stadium in KIIT Deemed to be University here, Monday.

Odisha thrashed Haryana 3-1 (25-19, 13-25, 25-20, 25-20) in the third-fourth place match. Services clinched the title beating Railways 3-0 (25-18, 29-27, 25-20). Odisha bagged a prize money of ₹30,000, while Haryana got ₹20,000. Champions Services and runners-

up Railways bagged ₹60,000 and ₹40,000, respectively.

In the women's category, Kerala defeated Railways 3-0 (25-19, 25-19, 25-16) in the final. Kerala and Railways bagged prize money of ₹40,000 and ₹30,000 respectively. Odisha bagged ₹20,000 while fourth-placed West Bengal settled for ₹10,000.

**ODISHA FC LOSE TO BFC**  
Odisha FC went down 1-2 in their ISL match against Bengaluru FC in Bambolim, Monday. Nandhakumar Sekar (eighth minute) put Odisha up front but Danish Farooq's (31st) header levelled the score. Cleiton Silva (49th) scored the winner from the penalty spot.