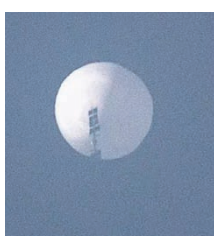




FASHION DIVA

Actor Nora Fatehi's sneak peeks at her newest appearance in a red-hot couture had the netizens gasping

LEISURE P2



SPY BALLOON

A suspected Chinese spy balloon, said to be the size of three buses, was spotted over the United States' airspace

INTERNATIONAL P10



DOMINATING DISPLAY

India maul Bhutan 12-0 in their opening match of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship football tournament

SPORTS P12

Cash, jewellery worth ₹1cr looted from OGB

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Feb 3: Four armed robbers barged into a branch of Odisha Gramya Bank (OGB) located under Mahabirod police limits of Parjang block, and decamped with ₹5 lakh in cash and jewellery worth over ₹1 crore.

Although the bank is situated in a crowded area, five out of the nine employees, including the manager, were absent Friday. Taking advantage of the situation, the robbers raided the bank, said sources.

The masked robbers entered the bank and blank-fired two rounds to create panic among the employees. Then they locked up the employees before decamping with cash and jewellery. Police reached the spot and started investigation into the incident, said sources.

Recently, the Mahabirod police outpost was upgraded into a police station. According to sources, this is the second robbery within one month. The first incident had occurred in Rasol Odisha Gramya Bank branch of Hindol block. However, police busted the gang near Gobindapur outpost. Most of the cases of robbery are coming from interior pockets of the district as the frequency of patrolling is declining by the day, as per the sources.

Dhenkanal superintendent of police Gyana Ranjan Mohapatra said, "The bank should take adequate steps to deploy adequate number of trained security guards depending on the need."



BEAUTY AND THE EAST: People participate in a cultural rally taken out during the 76th session of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, at Narayanpur in Lakhimpur district, Friday

Sub-collector faces wrath of sand mafia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balasure, Feb 3: The sub-collector of Balasure district and his driver were seriously injured Friday when they were attacked allegedly by sand mafia during an inspection, police said. Two persons were arrested in this connection.

Kunal Sitaram Chouhan in his official vehicle went to Fuladi under Balasure Sadar Tehsil to inspect a sand site near Budhabalanga river, about 5 km from here.

A group of people attacked the IAS officer and his driver there resulting in serious injuries to them. He was admitted to the district headquarters hospital.

Balasure Collector and district



magistrate Dattatreya Bhausaheb Sinde and SP Sagarika Nath visited the hospital and went to the spot to take stock of the situation. Shinde said the government will take stringent action against the persons responsible for the attack.

₹10K-cr Railway package, pilgrimage boost for state

■ A world-class train like Vande Metro, on European model of transport, will be flagged off from Lingaraj Road station in Bhubaneswar to Puri

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 3: The Union Ministry of Railways Friday said that it has allocated ₹10,012 crore to the state for financial year (FY) 2023-24, which is more than the state government's demand of ₹8,400 crore. For FY 2022-23, the Railway Ministry had allocated ₹9,734 crore to Odisha.

In order to boost pilgrimage to Puri, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that a world-class train like Vande Metro Train, on a European model of transport, will be commenced from Lingaraj Road station in Bhubaneswar to Puri.

For the ease of air passengers and devotees coming from across the globe, the minister said, battery bus services will be started from airport to Lingaraj Road station from where the passengers can travel to Puri in the world-class train. The minister further stated that the concept and design of Vande Metro

PROJECTS	PROPOSED INVESTMENT (₹ in cr)
Khurda Road-Bolangir	1,599
Talcher-Bimlagarh	300
New line connecting for energy corridor (Umbrella 23-24)	284
Janjatiya Gaurav Corridor (Umbrella 23-24)	284
Angul-Sukinda Road	200
Jeypore-Malkangiri	115
Jeypore-Nabarangpur	100
Talcher & Angul with 'Y' connection at Talcher	100
New Port Connectivity (Umbrella 23-24)	57
Haridaspur-Paradip line	50
Extension of Naupada-Gunupur new line upto Theruvali New BG line connecting Kodingamali	50
Bauxite Mines to Singaram Railway Station	20
New BG line connecting Gandhamardan Iron ore mines to Goadih Railway Station	20
Sambalpur-Gopalpur line	10
Digha-Jaleswar with new MM for Digha-Egra	10
Kiriburu-Barbil	5

NOVEL INITIATIVES

Battery bus services will be started from Bhubaneswar airport to Lingaraj Road station from where the passengers can travel to Puri in the world-class train

RAILWAYS WILL MODERNISE AT LEAST 57 STATIONS, INCLUDING BHUBANESWAR, CUTTACK, KHURDA, BOLANGIR, BALASORE, BHADRAK, ANGUL, JEYPORE, JHARSUGUDA AND KORAPUT



The Centre made the record allocation for Odisha keeping in view the PM's 'Purvodaya' policy that focuses on the overall development of the eastern region

ASHWINI VAISHNAW | UNION RAILWAY MINISTER

Train will be completed by August this year and production will start from next year.

The Railways will also modernize at least 57 Railway stations, including Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Khurda, Bolangir, Balasore, Bhadrak, Angul, Jeypore, Jharsuguda and Koraput.

The Union minister said the aim of Railways is to provide better amenities to the passengers. He said the allocation to Odisha is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for the next 25 years. The minister also said that all the pending projects would likely complete this year in the state.

The passenger reservation system will also be revamped, he added.

The state generates freight revenue of around ₹20,000 crore per annum for the Indian Railways, the sources said.

Mishra gives up PSO, says no faith in Odisha Police

MISHRA, WHO DEMANDED A CBI PROBE INTO THE MURDER, SAID THERE IS NO POINT IN RETAINING THE PSO PROVIDED BY THE STATE GOVT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Leader of Opposition in Odisha Assembly Jayanarayan Mishra gave up his personal security officer (PSO) Friday, claiming that he has lost faith in the police force following the murder of Health Minister Naba Kishore Das in the presence of security personnel.

Das was gunned down by an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) in Jharsuguda district January 29. He succumbed to his bullet injuries later that day.

Demanding a CBI probe into the murder, the senior BJP leader said, "As I have no faith in the Odisha Police any longer, there is no point in retaining the PSO provided by the state government."

Mishra's move came a day after he sought central security for the accused.

As for the slain minister, the Odisha police have placed his PSO under suspension, he said.

Meanwhile, police sources said Crime Branch officers, probing into the murder, visited the rented residence of accused Gopal Das at Brajarajnagar during the day to find out more details about him.

Das, 60, breathed his last January 29 evening, hours after he was shot by a policeman at Gandhi Chhak in Brajarajnagar area of Jharsuguda



DGP TO HOLD TALKS WITH SPG

Bhubaneswar: In order to ensure that an incident like Naba Kishore Das' assassination does not happen again, Director General of Police (DGP) Sunil Kumar Bansal Friday said the Odisha Police will hold discussion with the Special Protection Group (SPG), which is providing protection to the Prime Minister. "We will look into their SOP and good practices, and to what extent we can implement it in our system," said the chief cop of Odisha. "We will review and investigate the events of the day, and decided on the punishment if lapses are found," the DGP stated. **MORE P3**

district, where he had gone to attend an event.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



In which stock should I invest so that I can afford buying milk for my kids?

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	60841.88 ↓ 909.64
NIFTY	17854.05 ↓ 243.65
DOLLAR	81.80 ↑ ₹0.11
EURO	89.13 ↓ ₹0.37
GOLD	₹56,930 ↓ ₹765
SILVER	₹68,300 ↓ ₹1904

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	30.7°C	29.8°C
MIN	19.1°C	14.4°C
Humidity	67%	79%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	

SHORT TAKES

Meghalaya woman refuses freebies

SHILLONG: An elderly woman in Meghalaya, where Assembly poll will be held later this month, has allegedly refused to accept freebies from contestants in East Khasi Hills district and has returned the 'gifts' given to her family. Purity Phawa, president of the women's organisation in her locality, reportedly told candidates' agents in person that she wants to elect legislators and not distributors. Election to all the 60 seats in the state Assembly will be held February 27. "I was not at home when the freebies arrived. When I returned, my daughter told me that the candidates had sent us a pressure cooker and two sets of imported bowls January 28 and 30," Phawa said. Phawa claimed that she returned the freebies.

1,800 held in Assam for child marriage

GUWAHATI: Assam Police Friday arrested over 1,800 people in a massive crackdown on child marriage, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. The crackdown began early in the morning across the state and it will continue over the next three to four days, Sarma told reporters on the sidelines of a programme here. The police had registered 4,004 cases of child marriage in less than a fortnight since the state cabinet decided January 23 to take action, with the arrest of offenders and a simultaneous launch of an extensive awareness campaign. The highest number of 136 arrests so far has been made in Dhubri where 370 cases were registered.

IndiGo flies passenger to Rajasthan instead of Bihar

THIS IS SECOND SUCH INCIDENT REPORTED IN AN INDIGO'S FLIGHT IN THE LAST 20 DAYS

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 3: A passenger landed at Udaipur in Rajasthan instead of Patna as his boarding pass was not scanned thoroughly by Indigo authorities when he boarded a wrong flight from Delhi airport.

The flyer identified as Afsar Hussain was supposed to take an Indigo flight to Patna instead of flight to Patna from Delhi. According to a DGCA source, the passenger had booked an IndiGo flight for Patna from Delhi. The source said that when he was in the boarding area, the boarding process was on for the flights to Patna and Udaipur from different gates. The passenger by mistake got into the queue for the Udaipur flight and boarded that flight. He realised the mistake only on landing at the Udaipur airport, the source

destination the next day. "We are aware of the incident that took place with a passenger in 6E-319, Delhi-Udaipur flight. We are engaged with the authorities on this matter," the airline said in a statement Friday.

Later, IndiGo flew him back to Delhi and the next day, he took the flight to Patna, the source added.

"We have sought a detailed report about the incident from the airline. We will act and do whatever is to be done," the source said.

"We are engaged with the authorities on this matter. We regret the inconvenience caused

to the passenger," the airline added. This is the second such incident reported in an Indigo's flight in the last 20 days.

Earlier January 13, a passenger who had the airline's ticket and boarding pass for an Indore-bound flight boarded a wrong flight and was taken to Nagpur airport.

The DGCA will find out as to why the boarding pass of the passenger was not scanned thoroughly and how he boarded the wrong flight



AIR INDIA EXP FLIGHT ENGINE CATCHES FIRE

NEW DELHI: An Air India Express flight made an emergency landing at Abu Dhabi airport Friday after one of its engines caught fire. The incident occurred while the Calicut-bound Air India Express B737-800 flight was at a height of 1,000 feet during its climb after taking off from the Abu Dhabi airport, according to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). A full emergency was declared on the flight, following which it made a safe emergency landing. Officials said that the 184 passengers on board the aircraft were safely evacuated. During 2021-22, a total 1,090 incidents of technical snags were reported.



SHANIA TWAIN DROPS NEW ALBUM *QUEEN OF ME*

Grammy Award-winning country music artist Shania Twain released her new album, *Queen of Me* Friday. The record is a limitless expression of pop that allows it to sit comfortably next to her many chart successors, enshrining it as an upbeat, playful, and joyous album.

SYLVESTER STALLONE, FAMILY TO FEATURE IN REALITY SHOW

Hollywood star Sylvester Stallone and his family are the latest to join the reality TV world. Paramount+ Thursday announced *The Family Stallone*, which will follow the Oscar nominee, wife Jennifer Flavin Stallone and daughters Sophia, Sistine and Scarlet.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

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

TAURUS
You will be fondly thinking about your close friends, particularly about the ones of the opposite sex. It may suddenly dawn upon you that you are in love, says Ganesha. If per chance, there is a romantic encounter, go ahead and dive fearlessly in the pool of love.

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

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

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

VIRGO
In all likelihood you will indulge in some writing or artistic work, which will bring about wonderful results. As you are passionate about these things, you may convert them into your hobbies, if you are not involved in them as a professional.

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

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

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

CAPRICORN
You'll be popular today at your workplace. Your honesty and efforts will be recognised, which will be fulfilling for you. But, tomorrow will be a different day and times may not be favourable for you. It is, therefore, necessary for you to understand the importance of today and utilise it to the maximum, advises Ganesha.

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

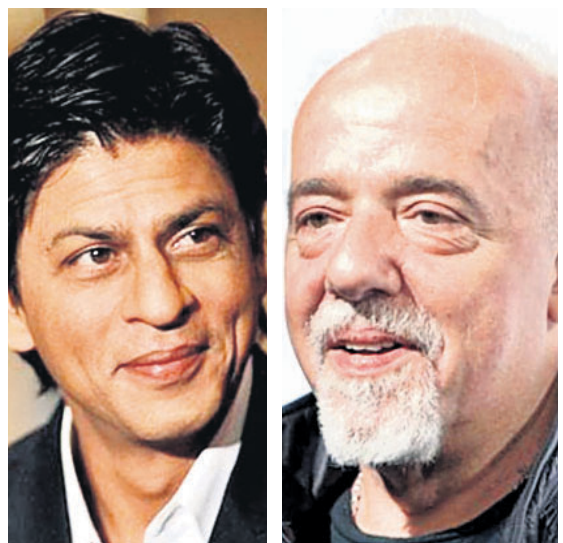
PISCES
Today will be a hectic day for you. Most of your time will be spent in making your relationships on the business as well as the personal front more meaningful. You will likely find yourself attending social events. There is also the possibility that you will attend some religious ritual today.

Janhvi shows off her funny side

Mumbai: Janhvi Kapoor only has a few films to her name, yet despite this, she is always in the media limelight and has a sizable online following. Being highly active on social media, Janhvi Kapoor never misses an opportunity to blow up the internet with her pictures and videos. That's not everything. The Dhadak actress is renowned for showing off her fun side in her really

cool videos. Janhvi recently made the decision to surprise her fans with a video of her dancing happily like a chicken while wearing a stunning feathered outfit. The video appears to be from a shoot's set. Janhvi can be spotted sporting a pink mini dress with rhinestone straps and faux feather detailing. The dress' sparkly details were the crucial component that

raised the glam factor: She chose to wear pink makeup and textured hair, and the only other accessories she required were diamond earrings and glossy lipstick. Meanwhile, on the work front, Janhvi is currently busy prepping for *Mr and Mrs Mahi*. She will be seen with Rajkumar Rao.



Paulo Coelho calls SRK 'king', 'legend'

Mumbai: As the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer *Pathaan* continues to set new records at the box-office, the 'Badshah of Bollywood' received praise from acclaimed author Paulo Coelho, who recently took to Twitter and spoke about his 'king' friend while calling him a 'legend' in the same breath. Paulo Coelho posted a tweet from SRK, which has a video of fans swarming outside his Mannat residence in Mumbai, with the caption, "King. Legend. Friend. But above all, A GREAT ACTOR (for

those who don't know him in the West. I strongly suggest *My Name is Khan* - and I am not a terrorist)." Reacting to the tweet, SRK wrote, "You are always too kind my friend. Let us meet up sooner than soon!! Bless you." This is not the first time that Paulo Coelho has lavished praise on SRK. In 2017, the author had congratulated the *Baazigar* actor on the seventh anniversary of the movie *My Name Is Khan* on Twitter, saying the actor delivered an Oscar-winning performance in the movie.



Artists of New Delhi-based theatre troupe Sutradhar staged Hindi play *Are Mayabi Sarobar* on the third evening of National Theatre Festival Purva Ranga-2023 at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Friday. Written by Shankar Shesh, the drama was directed by Chittaranjan Tripathy. The comic play, adapted from a story of Mahabharata, shows that man and woman are like two sides of the same coin and one can't exist without support of the other. Apart from director Tripathy, Shiv Prasad Gond, Aniket Chouhan, Manisha, Krishna Bharti and Kabir Khan played key roles in the 100-minute drama. Joint secy of Culture dept. Subodh Acharya, dramatists Shankar Tripathy, Manoj Patnaik, Sangeet Natak Akademi vice-president Manmath Satpathy and secretary Prabodh Rath were among the dignitaries who were present on the occasion.

Nora glams up in red-hot couture

Mumbai: Nora Fatehi is well known for more than only her outstanding dance abilities and lovely appearance. She is someone one can always look to for significant fashion inspiration from time to time. She is one of the B-town fashionistas who creates daring and extraordinary fashion choices. The actress' sneak peeks at her newest appearance had many gasping. Nora this time picked a red dress for her photo-shoot. Her dress had a plunging neckline, long ruffled sleeves, and a

belted waist. Her dress features a mini ruffled skirt, and behind the ruffled sleeves is a crimson bodice with sparkle. With crimson shimmering gloves and heart-shaped sunglasses, Nora gave this already-wild ensemble her own unique spin. Nora was a princess and closed her day on a high note with a look no one could match. She had a long braid, baby hairs down with the brush side and made in the shape of a rat tail, and rhinestones dot the ends of her looped edges. Her eyes, lips, and face were all monochromatic in colour and had a dewy, lit-from-within appearance.



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

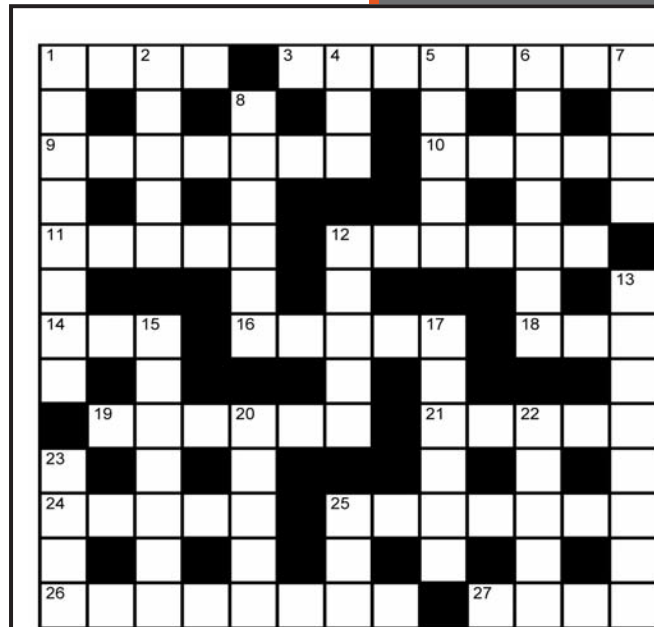


BREVITY



FUN post

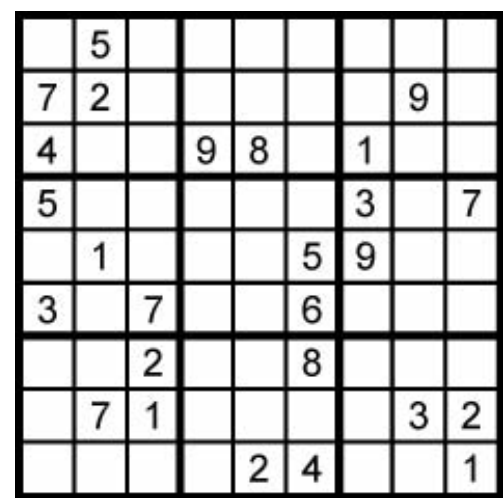
CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2023 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Cumberbund
 - 3 Angry; ready to fight (2,2,4)
 - 9 Envisage
 - 10 Stand-offish
 - 11 Boredom
 - 12 Edible marine mollusk
 - 14 Ale dispenser
 - 16 Musical notation
 - 18 Tibetan wild ox
 - 19 Hearsay
 - 21 Sharp
 - 24 Italian violin maker
 - 25 Disembodied spirit
 - 26 Macnee, Rigg 1960s TV spy drama, *The _____*
 - 27 Samovars
 - 4 Pastry
 - 5 Approaches
 - 6 Bird breeding ground
 - 7 Strongbox
 - 8 Imitates
 - 12 Olfactory sensation
 - 13 Sea captains
 - 15 Feathers
 - 17 Surpass
 - 20 Indebted
 - 22 Entomb
 - 23 Volcanic rock
 - 25 Knight's title
- Down**
- 1 Small dagger with a tapered blade
 - 2 Valencia setting

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



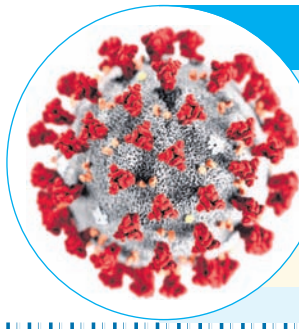
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



STAGE PLAY

Artistes stage a play during the eighth day of Theatre Movement at VVK auditorium in Cuttack, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	67,58,52,150	64,81,56,186	67,68,076
India	4,46,83,122	4,41,50,617	5,30,741
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

Naveen launches ₹1,600 crore worth projects in Koraput



POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, Feb 3: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday inaugurated a slew of projects in Koraput worth Rs 200 crore and laid foundation stones of many more, estimated to cost Rs 1,400 crore, besides calling upon youth to take part in nation-building.

Patnaik also attended the platinum jubilee celebrations of Vikram Dev University, and announced the construction of a state-of-the-art auditorium on its campus.

"The auditorium will have 1,000 seats and will be constructed at an investment of Rs 8 crore," the Chief Minister stated.

He advised students to work towards fulfilling personal dreams as well as those of their families and the entire state.

"Education enhances the potential within us. You (students) should read good books and stay

connected to your roots," Patnaik stressed.

Noting that the tribal-dominated district has always held a special place in his heart, the CM said steps are being taken to develop the infrastructure in Koraput.

Highlighting his government's Mission Shakti programme for the welfare of women, Patnaik said that mothers in this state have done great work and made the state proud.

"By stitching national flag and supplying them in hordes on the occasion of 75 years of the country's Independence, they have shown their skills and strengthened our faith in them," he asserted.

Projects related to road development, drinking water accessibility and tourism were launched during the day by the CM.

Patnaik unveiled a special postal cover based on Koraput tourism on the occasion.

City's Care Hospitals celebrates 6th annual day

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Dance, music and felicitation to healthcare personnel marked the sixth annual day celebration of Care Hospitals, Bhubaneswar on its premises here Friday.

Attending the event as chief guest, Dharitri and OrissaPOST Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy praised the premier private healthcare facility for treating patients with a human touch.

Sharing her experience at Care Hospitals when her mother was being treated at the facility, she said, "Care Hospitals always believes in treating patients with a human touch. And that has been possible due to its good doctors, nurses and administration."

She thanked Care Hospitals' doctors and staffs for their dedication and congratulated the facility for completing six years.

Among others, hospital's Chief Operating Officer Kislay Anand and AVP-BD Lokanath Dash were present.



Dharitri and OrissaPOST Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy, Care Hospitals-Bhubaneswar Chief Operating Officer Kislay Anand and AVP-BD Lokanath Dash with others during the sixth annual day celebration of the premier healthcare facility in the City, Friday

NABA DAS ASSASSINATION

Murder of minister by policeman rare: DGP

Stating that some vital clues have emerged so far from the detailed investigation by the Crime Branch, Bansal said he was optimistic of a conclusive end to the probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Odisha DGP Sunil Kumar Bansal Friday said murder of a cabinet minister 'by a policeman in uniform', is one of the rarest cases seen anywhere in the country.

Speaking to the press for the first time after the gruesome murder of cabinet minister Naba Kishore Das allegedly by an ASI (Gopal Das) of police in Jharsuguda district January 29, the DGP said the police will work to ensure such events do not recur.

The DGP said, "It is an incident, the probability of which is .0000 per

cent. As you all know, sometime such events do take place. It is one of those rare events. Still as a police officer, I would say, we should see that probability is (totally) neutralised."

Bansal said that the Odisha



SUNIL KUMAR BANSAL | DGP

THE ODISHA POLICE WILL BE CONSULTING THE SPECIAL PROTECTION GROUP IN DUE COURSE TO FIND OUT WHAT IS THE BEST PROCESS TO PROVIDE PROTECTION TO VVIPs

THE STATE POLICE HAS CONTACTED THE CENTRAL FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORY TO ASSIST IN THE ONGOING PROBE

said he was optimistic of a conclusive end to the probe. "It will take some time," he however said.

The DGP said that Odisha Police has contacted the Central Forensic Science Laboratory to assist in the ongoing probe.

"I have personally discussed the matter with Home Ministry officials and they have assured us of all possible help. A CSFL team will also be visiting Odisha," the DGP said adding that the investigation is being done with an open mind.

Meanwhile, the CB team conducted sustained interrogation of accused ASI Gopal Krishna Das for the third consecutive day. The team also examined injured eyewitness Jiban Kumar Nayak and other eye-witnesses to the killing.

10 districts get virtual high courts



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud Friday inaugurated 10 virtual high courts at as many districts of Odisha through video-conference from Delhi.

The inaugural event was held at Odisha Judicial Academy in Cuttack, where Orissa High Court Chief Justice S Muralidhar and other judges of the high court were present.

With this, Odisha became the first state in the country to have virtual high courts in districts.

The new virtual high courts were inaugurated at Balasore, Ganjam's Berhampur, Bhadrak, Kalahandi's Bhawanipatna, Khurda's Bhubaneswar,

Balasore, Bolangir, Bhadrak, Ganjam's Berhampur, Bhadrak, Kalahandi's Bhawanipatna, Khurda's Bhubaneswar, Bolangir, Koraput's Jeypore, Puri, Sundargarh's Rourkela and Sambalpur

Bolangir, Koraput's Jeypore, Puri, Sundargarh's Rourkela and Sambalpur. The remaining 20 districts of the state are likely to get the benefit by March this year, said a source.

Speaking on the occasion, Justice S Muralidhar said that setting up virtual high courts in the districts is a big step forward. "If it succeeds, it will change the face of the judiciary."

Delivering the inaugural address, CJI DY Chandrachud applauded the initiative of the Orissa High Court and said that it has been a trailblazer in e-Initiatives and the movements spearheaded by it will turn into a national movement when the other high courts in the country will follow the suit.

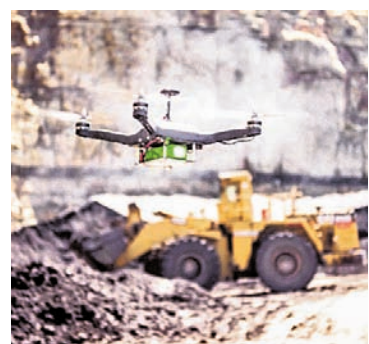
The CJI said while most of the high courts have only one seat and few high courts have second benches, the Orissa High Court will be the first to be accessible from all the districts of the state.

He congratulated the HC Chief Justice saying that it has been possible due to his dynamic leadership.

The CJI said the virtual high courts in districts will ensure decentralisation of administration of justice and ensure accessibility of the high court to the advocates of remote districts. He added that talent has no geographical boundaries and videoconferencing facility in the virtual high courts will give exposure to the legal talents of the smaller cities who often find it difficult to practise in the high court due to lack of accessibility.

Now, drones to help monitor coal mines

This pilot project is at present operational at Bhubaneswari and Lingraj opencast mines of Talcher Coalfields in Odisha



Coal India arm Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) has introduced drone technology in coal mines for environmental monitoring, volume measurement and photogrammetric mapping of mines for digitalisation of the mining process.

The technology has been introduced through the launch of a web-based portal 'VIHANGAM' along with a drone and ground control system.

"The portal allows an authorised person to access real time drone video from the mine through a dedicated 40 Mbps internet lease line near the mines," the coal ministry said in a statement.

There is a control station that flies the drone and the system can be operated through the portal from anywhere.

This pilot project is at present operational at Bhubaneswari and Lingraj opencast mines of Talcher Coalfields in Odisha.

Besides deploying state-of-art technology to further enhance record coal

production, MCL has also stepped up the use of latest equipment to further increase safety standards.

It has recently introduced robotic nozzle water sprayer in its coal stockyard.

The companies operating in the coal sector use robot-assisted firefighting and dust suppression advanced technology to carry out difficult and dangerous jobs.

The equipment can spray water up to 70 metres in the form of mist. The nozzle, also termed as swivel nozzle, is installed on a water tanker of 28 kilolitre capacity.

Engaged in coal mining activities in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda and Angul

Tech to the rescue

► The technology has been introduced through the launch of a web-based portal 'VIHANGAM' along with a drone and ground control system

► The portal allows an authorised person to access real time drone video from the mine through a dedicated 40 Mbps internet lease line near the mines

► Besides deploying state-of-art technology to further enhance record coal production, MCL has also introduced robotic nozzle water sprayer in its coal stockyard in a bid to further increase safety standards

► Engaged in coal mining activities in Sundargarh, Jharsuguda and Angul districts, Mahanadi Coalfields contributes more than 20 per cent of the total coal produced in the country

districts of Odisha, Mahanadi Coalfields contributes more than 20 per cent of the total coal produced in the country.

Coal India accounts for over 80 per cent of the domestic coal output.

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Reintroduce PMGKAY, BJD requests Centre



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Friday urged the Centre to reintroduce the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) for the poor and the farmers.

BJD vice-president and lawmaker Debi Prasad Mishra told a press conference that it was a good decision on part of the Union government to start providing additional 5 kg of free rice per person apart from the 5 kg of rice provided through National Food Security Act (NFSA) to counter ad-

verse impact of the pandemic.

"However, the Centre has decided to stop the programme. And it is going to affect the household food security of the poor and marginal farmers. That's why we are appealing to the Centre to restart the PMGKAY programme in their interest," Mishra said.

The recent Budget saw a reduction in food subsidy by about Rs 71,000 crore as compared to the amount spent by the Centre in 2021-22, primarily because of the cessation of PMGKAY.

The Budget this year has also seen a reduction of about Rs 20,000

THE RECENT BUDGET SAW A REDUCTION IN FOOD SUBSIDY BY ABOUT RS 71,000 CRORE PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF THE CESSATION OF PMGKAY

THE BUDGET ALSO SAW A REDUCTION OF ABOUT RS 20,000 CRORE IN PROCUREMENT OF FOOD GRAINS COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS FISCAL

crore in the procurement of food grains compared to the amount spent by the Centre in the previous fiscal.

"This too is due to the stopping of PMGKAY. And this reduction in procurement will impact farmers as they will be deprived of the minimum support price (MSP) for their food grains," Mishra said.

Mishra expressed his hope for BJP MPs of the state taking up the matter with their central leadership and stressed on the need for restarting PMGKAY in the larger interests of the household food security.

"Before stopping the programme, the Centre should have either provided an alternative or have taken care of its adverse impacts," said the BJD leader.



BEHOLDING BEAUTY: Visitors observe a craftsman molding clay at the Toshali National Crafts Mela at Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar, Friday. OP PHOTO

71 MPs' assets grew by 286% since 2009: ADR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: The assets of 71 MPs, who were re-elected to the Lok Sabha between 2009 and 2019, grew by a whopping 286 per cent on an average and the highest increase was recorded by the BJP's Ramesh Chandappa Jigajinagi, according to a report released by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) Friday.

The total worth of Jigajinagi's assets, which was about Rs 1.18 crore in 2009, went up to Rs 8.94 crore in 2014 and further to Rs 50.41 crore in 2019, registering an overall increase of 4,189 per cent, the report noted, referring to the self-sworn affidavits submitted by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader during the Lok Sabha elections held in the respective years.

Re-elected to the Lower House of Parliament for a sixth consecutive term in 2019, the MP from Karnataka's Bijapur served as the Union minister of state for drinking water and sanitation from July 2016 to May 2019 in the previous term of the government led by



THE AVERAGE ASSET OF 71 MPS, INCLUDING INDEPENDENTS, WAS RS 6.15 CRORE IN 2009. THE AVERAGE GROWTH IN THEIR ASSETS FROM 2009 TO 2019 WAS PEGGED AT RS 17.59 CRORE

■ The properties of Pinaki Misra, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP from Puri, climbed by 296 per cent (Rs 87.78 crore), from Rs 29.69 crore in 2009 to Rs 117.47 crore in 2019

■ The assets of BJP MP Varun Gandhi, who was re-elected from Uttar Pradesh's Pilibhit for a third consecutive term in the last Lok Sabha election, rose from Rs 4.92 crore in 2009 to Rs 60.32 crore in 2019

Sabha election, rose from Rs 4.92 crore in 2009 to Rs 60.32 crore in 2019, the report noted.

According to the report, the assets of Harsimrat Kaur Badal, the Shiromani Akali Dal MP from Bhatinda, went up from Rs 60.31 crore in 2009 to Rs 217.99 crore in 2019, registering a rise of 261 per cent.

"Assets of Supriya Sadaanand Sule of the NCP (Nationalist Congress Party) from the Baramati constituency (in Maharashtra) have increased by Rs 89.35 crore (173 per cent), from Rs 51.53 crore in 2009 to Rs 140.88 crore in 2019," the report said.

The assets of Pinaki Misra, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MP from Puri in Odisha, climbed by 296 per cent (Rs 87.78 crore), from Rs 29.69 crore in 2009 to Rs 117.47 crore in 2019, the report added.

It noted that the average assets of the 71 MPs, including independents, was Rs 6.15 crore in 2009. The report pegged the average growth in their assets from 2009 to 2019 at Rs 17.59 crore, an increase of 286 per cent.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

According to the report by ADR-National Election Watch, another BJP MP from Karnataka, PC Mohan, grabbed the second spot in the list of the top 10 members of Parliament who registered an increase in their assets between 2009 and 2019.

Mohan, who was re-elected to the Lok Sabha from the Bengaluru

Central constituency in 2019, had declared assets worth about Rs 5.37 crore in the 2009 parliamentary polls. The figure climbed up to Rs 75.55 crore in 10 years, showing an increase of 1,306 per cent, the report noted.

The assets of BJP MP Varun Gandhi, who was re-elected from Uttar Pradesh's Pilibhit for a third consecutive term in the last Lok

Gridco to procure 400MW wind power

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Gridco and Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) signed a power sale agreement (PSA) in presence of department of Energy additional chief secretary Nikunja B Dhal here recently.

With the PSA in place, Gridco will procure 400 MW of wind power through SECI from ISTS connected wind power projects in Karnataka and Gujarat, from financial year 2024-25 for a period of 25 years at a tariff range of Rs 2.96-3.01 per unit.

"There is waiver of ISTS charges for procurement of this power for a period of 25 years. With this capacity addition, now Gridco has a total contracted renewable power



capacity of 5,203 MW including wind power 750 MW, solar power 1,941 MW, small hydro 129 MW, large hydro 2,363 MW & biomass 20 MW," said a company official.

In addition to meeting future energy demand of the state, wind power will be helpful towards compliance of Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPO). Among others, MDs and directors of all the power utilities of the state, EIC (electricity) and senior officers of Energy department were present at the occasion.

Cold wave to continue

Bhubaneswar: Cold wave condition is very likely to prevail at one or two places over three districts of the state till early morning of Saturday, informed the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Friday. The districts are Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, and Kandhamal. Dry weather is most likely to prevail over rest districts of Odisha for the next five days, the IMD added.

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LOST

I, Devdutt Mohanty, declare that my original pass certificate of Indian Certificate of Secondary Education of 2017 from St. Teresa's School, Joda is lost. Index No.1172679/031, Address: Joda West Golden Camp, Block-F, Flat No.-08, Mahanadi Gardens, P.O.- Joda, Dist.-Keonjhar, Pin-758034.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Court of Executive Magistrate, Bhubaneswar, I, Rashmita Mishra @ Pati, W/o- Sri Bamadev Pati, At- Naharakanta, P.S.- Pahala, Bhubaneswar, Dist.- Khurda do hereby solemnly affirm and state that I had purchased Plot No. 606 from Sri Narottam Mohapatra & 607 from Smt. Mohini Sahoo & Smt. Sashi Sahoo vide Sale Deed No. 92/2000 & 3923/2001 dtd. 07.01.2000 & 02.06.2001 of SRO, Bhubaneswar respectively. Both the original sale deeds had lost and inspite of best effort I could not find it out. I hereby declare that the facts stated above are true to the best of my knowledge. Smt Rashmita Mishra, Deponent

I Sri Sushil Ch. Sarkar, FN Late Kartik Sarkar, At- Jhatinuagaon Colony, P.O.- Bhusandapur, Dist.- Khordha. My landed deeds has lost anywhere. Its Khata No. 131/ 291, Plot No. is 271/ 607. If any person get my landed deeds please contact me in this no. 9777963740.

BMC FOR SMOOTH KHANDAGIRI MELA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) is tirelessly working round the clock to make the Khandagiri Mela a hassle free affair.

"Cleanliness and sanitation has been the priority. The BMC and its allied sanitary agency Jagruti have been conducting cleanliness activities in six phases slotted at different hours of the day. The BMC workers are engaged in activities such as regular sweeping of roads, collection of garbage from stalls, disposing scraps thrown by visitors and cleaning of toilets," said a BMC employee. The BMC has stopped the practice

of piling or burning the leaf plates which the sadhus use for the purpose of having food. These plates are being collected by the cleanliness workers.

The use of polythene has been completely banned and plastics are being avoided to the maximum extent possible. The BMC workers have been going around stalls, advising them to complete halt the use of plastics.

"We have separate dustbins for our shop. Besides, the BMC is constantly carrying out cleanliness activities. This augurs well for our customers. I want to thank the government of the state for such arrangements," said a vendor from Kolkata.



RAZING DOWN:

An excavator deployed by BDA pulls down illegally built structures near Badagada Brit Colony in Bhubaneswar, Friday

OP PHOTO

'More trees could cut deaths from higher temperatures by a third'

Planting more trees could decrease deaths from higher summer temperatures in cities by a third, according to a modeling study published in The Lancet.

The study of 93 European cities found that increasing tree cover up to 30 per cent can help lower the temperature of urban environments by an average of 0.4 degrees Celsius and prevent heat-related deaths.

Of the 6,700 premature deaths attributed to higher temperatures in cities during 2015, one third of these (2,644) could have been prevented by increasing urban tree cover up to 30 per cent, the researchers said.

These findings highlight the need for more sustainable and climate-resilient strategies to be integrated into local policy decisions to aid climate change adaptation and

improve population health, they said.

"We already know that high temperatures in urban environments are associated with negative health outcomes, such as cardiorespiratory failure, hospital admission, and premature death," said study lead author, Tamar Lungman from Barcelona Institute for Global Health in Spain.

"This study is the largest of its kind, and the first to specifically look at premature mortality caused by higher temperatures in cities and the number of deaths that could be prevented by increasing tree cover," Lungman said.

The researchers estimated mortality rates of residents over 20 years old in 93 European cities between June and August 2015, accounting for 57 million inhabitants in total.

Mortality data from this period



was analysed with daily average city temperatures in two modelling scenarios: the first comparing the city temperature without urban heat islands to city temperature with urban heat islands, and the second simulating the temperature reduction as a consequence of increasing the tree cover to 30 per cent.

Exposure response functions were used to estimate the number of deaths attributable to urban heat as well as the number of deaths that could be prevented through increasing the tree cover.

In total, 6,700 premature deaths could be attributed to hotter urban temperatures during the summer

The study found that increasing tree cover up to 30 per cent can help lower the temperature of urban environments by an average of 0.4 degrees Celsius and prevent heat-related deaths

Of the 6,700 premature deaths attributed to higher temperatures in cities during 2015, one third of these (2,644) could have been prevented by increasing urban tree cover up to 30 per cent, the researchers said.

The findings highlight the need for more sustainable and climate-resilient strategies to be integrated into local policy decisions to aid climate change adaptation and improve population health

months, accounting for 4.3 per cent of summer mortality and 1.8 per cent of year-round mortality.

The research found that one in three of these deaths (2,644) could have been prevented by increasing tree cover up to 30 per cent, and therefore reducing temperatures.

This corresponds to 39.5 per cent of all deaths attributable to hotter urban temperatures, 1.8 per cent of all summer deaths, and 0.4 per cent of year-round deaths, they said.

There was a large variability in temperature-related mortality rates between cities, from no premature deaths attributable to hotter urban temperatures in Goteborg, Sweden, to 32 premature deaths per 100,000 people in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Overall, cities with highest temperature mortality rates were in Southern and Eastern Europe where the highest temperatures were reached, with these cities benefitting the most from an increase in tree coverage. PT

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FISH KILL IN BATA RIVER

SPCB blames obstruction of river, severe pollution



The expansion of the port town and establishment of industrial plants has shrunk the river routes leading to obstruction in free flow of water in these rivers. Things have come to such a pass that many rivers and water bodies like Bata, Shamukati, Munda, Kapilajor, Haladipani, Kaudia, Majhidian, Saharapentha, Matsyadian have either lost their existence or are on the verge of extinction. The Kansaripatia and Sandhakuda rivers are barely visible now. Some rivers have lost their existence and have turned into small ponds at many places.

A residential colony has come up around the Bata river since last 15 years where the fish deaths occur. The residential colony comprises over 2,000 multi-storied buildings. The waste and sewage water of the colony is discharged into the Bata river. Some people of Balijhara slum have even installed some bamboo platforms on the riverbank and are openly defecating in the river.

The Sukhuakahala slum where dry fish is prepared in large numbers is on the other side of the river. The water used during preparation of dry fish containing toxic chemicals like formaldehyde is discharged into the river. Encroachment by people has also led to shrinking of the river basin.

Long back, the river used to flow from Paradipgarh via Udayabata and Atharbanki before merging at Kansaripatia river, a traditional fisherman Alok Rout said. The river was then over 25 km in length but with the rapid shrinking, it is apprehended that it may vanish from eyes within a few years, he added.

vere pollution to be the reason behind the fish kill.

The report says that shrinking of Bata river, open defecation and dumping of wastes like polythene, plastics and growth of weed has resulted in severe pollution of the river and subsequent mass death of fish. The shrinking of the river route and heavy pollution has led to decline in acidic content in the river water. This was stated by SPCB regional officer Pushkar Chandra Behera to mediapersons.

To prevent such fish kills in future, the river route has to be freed from obstruction and the river should be cleaned failing which such incidents will continue to occur in future, he warned.

Sources said there were 18 rivers and other forms of water bodies in and around Paradip in the sixties (1960s). Meanwhile, 15 industrial plants have come up in the port town after construction of Paradip Port.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paradip, Feb 3: A month after the fish kill in Bata river here in December, the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) has said in a report that obstruction of river route and severe pollution are the reasons behind the mass death of the aquatic creatures.

Dead fish in large numbers were found floating in Bata river near the Balijhara slum here, December 31, 2022. Orissa POST had carried a report on the fish kill. Although the incident had sparked concern among the people, no one could state the actual reason behind it.

Notably, the death of such large number of fish without any particular reason was a first-of-its-kind incident in winter season. On being informed, SPCB officials collected dead fish and river water samples and sent it for laboratory examination. Meanwhile, its report has come out which claims obstruction of river route and se-



EXECUTION WOES: Students of Radhakrushna High School in Kuanr village under Dunguripali panchayat of Saintala block in Bolangir district study under the open sky as their school building has been taken up for renovation after its inclusion in 5T

Fake notes worth ₹31.27L seized; 1 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: The Special Task Force (STF) of Crime Branch with the help of Bolangir police Friday arrested one person for possession of Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) worth over ₹31 lakhs. The accused was identified as Lingaraj Behera, 50, of Kantamal village under Kegoan police station in Kalahandi district.

Following a tip-off, a joint team of STF and Bolangir police conducted a raid near the main gate of Titilagarh Bus Stand Park Wednesday evening while Lingaraj was executing a deal. Police arrested Lingaraj while



another accused managed to give police a slip.

The cops during search found Lingaraj in possession of FICN worth ₹31,27,500 of various denominations.

"The accused could not produce any valid authority in support of possession of such Fake Indian Currency Notes, for which he has been arrested and forwarded to the court of SDJM, Titilagarh. In

this connection STF PS Case No.04 dated 02.02.2023 U/s. 420/488/471/489-A/489-B/489 C/489-D/120(B) IPC was registered," informed STF sources.

The STF has sought court's permission to take Lingaraj on remand to nab other accused involved in the link.

STF also revealed that the seized FICN will be sent to Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudrana Pvt. Ltd., Mudrana Nagar, Salaboni, Pachima Medinapore, West Bengal for examination and opinion.

The STF has so far seized FICN to the tune of ₹78,70,600 including the current seizure of more than ₹31 lakh.

Woman, son killed as car hits scooter

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 3: A woman and her son were killed after a speeding car hit their scooter in front of MKCG Medical College and Hospital on the National Highway-16 here in Ganjam district, late Wednesday night.

The deceased were identified as Sitamma Patra (55), and her son Rama Chandra Patra (36), of Ankuli area in the city.

Police seized the bodies which were identified by the deceased woman's brother M Niranjana on the hospital premises in the presence of police, Thursday. A case was registered in this connection and the car driver Jyoti Ranjan Mohapatra of Alakapuri area in the city was detained and being questioned at the police station in this connection.

The mishap occurred when Rama Chandra with his mother on pillion was leaving the MKCG Medical College and Hospital after visiting his sister who was undergoing treatment in the hospital. They were coming out of the hospital on a scooter when a speeding car hit their two-wheeler just in front of the gate.

The impact of the collision was so strong that the two were flung off their vehicle and crash landed on the road and the road divider was damaged. Critically injured, the two were rushed back to the hospital where doctors pronounced them brought dead. Traffic police personnel seized both vehicles and launched an investigation. Notably, five persons have died so far during last one month under this traffic police limit in the Silk City.

Ailing woman forced to get off midway from bus, dies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Feb 3: An ailing 50-year-old woman died on a road after she, along with her son, was allegedly forced to get down from a private bus on the way to Berhampur from Bhubaneswar, as her condition deteriorated.

The son did not get help from anyone on the highway till the police arrived and took her to a hospital where she was declared brought dead, her relatives said Friday.

He also did not have enough money to hire an ambulance.

The incident occurred Thursday afternoon when Runu Swain of



Padmatola village was returning home after being treated at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar. His son Sujit was accompanying him.

On the way, her condition suddenly deteriorated and Sujit pleaded with the driver and conductor to take her mother to a hospital at Chhatrapur or Berhampur.

However, the staff of the bus allegedly forced them to get off the vehicle in the middle of the road on NH-16, about four kilometres away from Ganjam town.

"After getting information about the incident, our employees along with local people reached the spot," said Ganjam police station inspector in charge, Santosh Kumar Behera.

The police arranged an ambulance that took her to a hospital and then to her village.

Sujit lamented that his mother could have survived if she got medical treatment immediately.

No police complaint was made in this regard, Behera said.

Decomposed carcass of jumbo calf found

POST NEWS NETWORK

Telkoi, Feb 3: There is no let-up in elephant deaths across the state as the decomposed carcass of an elephant calf was recovered from Kalapata reserve forest under Telkoi range in Keonjhar forest division, Thursday.

The matter came to the fore after villagers spotted the rotting carcass near Odhana village under Padanga panchayat inside the reserve forest



and informed the forest officials. On being informed, forest officials

led by Keonjhar DFO HD Hanumant and Telkoi ranger Sanjiv Mohan Ray rushed to the spot and recovered the carcass. The carcass was buried at the spot after veterinarians conducted a post-mortem.

Telkoi ranger Ray said that a 35-member elephant herd is moving in the area for the last one month. It is suspected that the calf aged within one year might have died after being attacked by a tusker in the herd.

30 INJURED AS BUS CRASHES INTO TRUCK

POST NEWS NETWORK

Mayurbhanj, Feb 3: At least 30 persons were injured after a private bus hit a sand-laden truck on the National Highway-220 under Karanjia police station in Mayurbhanj district, Friday morning. The condition of five of the injured passengers was critical.

The mishap took place when the bus hit a sand-laden truck moving ahead after it showed a wrong indicator while turning. As the bus was moving at high speed, the driver applied sudden breaks but lost control of the wheel. Subsequently, the bus crashed into the rear of the truck.

Those sitting in the front seats of the bus, which was carrying around 60 passengers from Mayurbhanj to Keonjhar, sustained critical injuries. The front portion of the bus was completely mangled in the accident.

Informed, Fire personnel rushed to the spot and rescued the injured. The injured have been admitted to the nearby Karanjia Primary Health Centre (PHC). The condition of the injured is said to be stable.



TAKING TO STREETS: Members of Paschim Odisha Yuva Morcha participated in Ulgulan Yatra over separate Koshal state demand in Sambalpur, Friday

JSP Foundation to build hospital in Barbil

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda/Barbil, Feb 3: Taking forward its endeavour to improve the quality of life of the people in rural and tribal areas, JSP Foundation, the social arm of Jindal Steel & Power (JSP) has started the building of a hospital at Deojhar, Barbil in Keonjhar District. JSP chairman Naveen Jindal and chairperson of JSP Foundation Shalju Jindal performed the 'bhoomi puja' and laid the foundation stone for Jindal Aarogyam Hospital Friday.

The Hospital is expected to be completed in 18 months and will have various facilities to provide advanced healthcare services to the people.

Speaking on the occasion, Naveen Jindal said, "Health is one of the major building blocks for enhancing

improved quality of life of people and achieving national development. This hospital is a part of our effort to build a healthy society."

Addressing the gathering, Shalju Jindal said, "Jindal Aarogyam Hospital will provide quality health care service to people and hence work towards improving the quality of life of people in the locality. It will make advanced healthcare accessible and affordable for all." This hospital will provide free consultation and medical treatment of all under privileged and socially vulnerable people across India, she added.

The hospital, to begin with, will have 19 beds and provide regular medical services in the specialised departments of General Surgery, Medicine, Gynaecology and



Paediatrics. Visiting specialist doctors in the departments of Cardiology, Dentistry, Orthopaedics, Gastroenterology and Ophthalmology will also be available for consultation and treatment. The hospital will be equipped with modern operational theatre, diagnostic and pathological facilities. People can avail diagnostic services like X-ray, ECG, 2D Echo, TMT, Ultrasonography and Patholab and other modern medical investigation tools.

All the needy people from the periphery villages of Barbil Pellet Plant and Kasia iron ore mines will be provided free consultation and treatment. The hospital will be providing free treatment to all the underprivileged and socially vulnerable belonging to any part of India.

Notice for Retired Employees of FCI regarding Hon'ble Supreme Court Judgment dated 04.11.2022 regarding Employees Pension Scheme, 1995 (EPS-95) and availability of option for contribution to EPS-95 on actual salary for pension, FCI Headquarters has issued a circular No.EP-08/2023-04, dated 27.01.2023, which is available on FCI website www.fci.gov.in/circular.php. Through this notice, all ex-employees of FCI are hereby advised to go through the circular carefully and to contact concerned offices, where they last served for exercising joint option, if admissible. General Manager (Region)

University Grants Commission (Ministry of Education, Govt. of India) Advertisement No.21/2023 February, 2023. University Grants Commission, New Delhi invites online applications for appointment by transfer on deputation/contract basis for the following post: Financial Advisor (01) Scale of Pay (as per 7th CPC) Level-14 Rs.144200-218200. Eligibility criteria, Qualifications, Scale of pay and other details can be accessed on UGC website i.e. www.ugc.ac.in/jobs. Last date for submission of online applications is 28.02.2023. No hard copy will be accepted. Applicants applied against the previous Advertisement No.10/2022 dated 18.08.2022 need not apply again and their applications will be considered as per the eligibility with additional information, if any. Secretary CBC 21205/12/0029/2223

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BOLANGIR e-Procurement Notice No.O-1759: IFB IDENTIFICATION NO. EEBLGR-Online-14/2022-23. 1. Name of Work: Road & Building Work. 2. Total No. of Works: 3 (Three) Nos. 3. Approximate Estimated Cost: Rs.4.20 Lakh to 14.20 Lakh. 4. Time for Completion: 1 (One Calendar Month). 5. Mode of Submission of Tender: Tender should be submitted online in www.tendersodisha.gov.in. 6. Other details are as follow: As per TCN No.EEBLGR-Online-14/2022-23. Procurement Officer: Executive Engineer, R.W.Division, Bolangir. Bid Identification No: EEBLGR-online-14/2022-23. Availability of Tender online for bidding: From 07.02.2023 at 11.00 A.M. To 14.02.2023 upto 5.00 P.M. Last date and time of seeking tender clarification: 13.02.2023 upto 1.00 P.M. Date & Time of opening of tender: 15.02.2023 at 11.00 A.M. Further details can be seen from the website www.tenders.ori.nic.in. Any Corrigendum/ Addendum will be displayed in the above e tender website only. Executive Engineer, R.W.Division, Bolangir OIPR-25068/11/0015/2223

FOCUS BUDGET 2023

INFRA OBSESSION



Infra is required as per needs but sudden expenses' increase yet again now in railways and roads may lead to gradual financial and economic problems and burden the future generation

sudden expenses' increase yet again now in railways and roads may lead to gradual financial and economic problems and burden the future generation. Further, not only Joshimath but even the plains are now at risk. Let us look at Thailand's unfinished projects since 2000.

All this has created private sector dependence on the government. It strangely leaps as the government shells out from its own coffer. Interest payments and unutilised programmes burden future generations as well. Capacity utilisation has reached a tipping point - 75.3 per cent, the Economic Survey says. There are cautions also in view of the global slowdown and rising inflation. This lowers private investment.

The Himalayas sinking from north-west to north-east should have called for debate and discussion on re-fixing the path. Even various airports and other constructions as announced call for review of the destruction of aquifers leading to a severe water crisis in the Ganga Valley itself. Wherever supposedly investing, the private sector is in reality fleecing the people - road tolls and higher service costs are such instances.

The US and other western countries developed infra gradually as

and when their finances improved. America has given up hi-speed corridors and is strengthening the existing 260,000 km route, almost double of India. Japan's showcase hi-speed train has severely hit its uncomfortable life-line railways. Queerly the government is to fund junking of cars instead of doing away with the programme.

There is a galore of Amrit Kaal programmes right from incentivising savings for women to virtually every aspect that benefits farmers, wooing a strong chunk of powerful voters with over Rs 15000 crore schemes.

Looks good but while millet has higher production in the north, the research institute is set up at Hyderabad in the south. Jowar, maize, and sama were part of the staple till the Green revolution in the 1960s. Popularising it again with creation of such taste buds is time-consuming. Market increases as taste develops. The economy of scale creates remunerative prices for farmers. How will the farmers get attracted to new crops that need to be watched? Even food producers are not finding every bit workable as it needs reworking the recipe.

It may be recalled that this year, the kharif rice production is re-

duced by 6.2 per cent to 146 million tonnes, oilseeds by 8 per cent - 21.97 million tonnes, sugarcane by 0.79 per cent, groundnut by a million tonnes, as well as losses noticed in maize, soybean and urad. Quite a bit was lost due to heavy rains and because of a decline in 0.8 per cent acreage. Road and rail construction is eating up fertile lands. Farmers even in Haryana are agitating against road construction.

Still 17.25 lakh farmers have benefitted from MSP payments though for various coarse crops these are virtually on paper. The government's Situation Assessment of Agricultural Household in Rural India has found that the best deal farmers could have from are Farmers Production Organisation (FPO), APMCs, maligned by vested interests. The open or corporate market does not ensure prices or sustenance. This shows that farmers' stir was on its path and corporate needs to mend its ways. One reason BJP lost the Himachal Pradesh election was the corporate monopoly of apple business causing heavy losses to growers.

It also needs to rectify and strengthen the APMC and government-run silos. Krishi start-ups are fine, but the new tax regime may be a dampener for investors as it virtually leaves no one untouched including foreign investors. A lot remains as the government's agri extension system has not helped create skilled farm entrepreneurs. The apprenticeship scheme reinforced remains since the 1970s, but it has found less favour with private companies.

With too many programmes and acronyms the budget has missed out on creating the necessary mix of corporate, people and the farming class. It is also evident it cannot move out of APMC type marketing and now it has to move out of infra obsession for more inclusive improvement as development has become a cliché.

The writer is Professor, Indian Institute of Mass Communication. ©INFA



Shivaji Sarkar

WITH TOO MANY PROGRAMMES AND ACRONYMS THE BUDGET HAS MISSED OUT ON CREATING THE NECESSARY MIX OF CORPORATE, PEOPLE AND THE FARMING CLASS

Union Budget 2023-24 is carefully crafted aiming to cultivate voters of nine states going to polls this year with largesse dumped on agriculture, infrastructure and projects. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is right that the voter wants the glitz of infra in every field. It is a politically paying proposition whether there are jobs or not. And, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has been euphoric in announcing programmes. In her briefing to the media, she said without any qualms: "Yes we are a political party and do it for political purposes".

The perky five-step income tax is good up to an income of Rs 12 lakh. Beyond that it is rigmorale and even causes higher tax outgo for individuals. Some experts say no income-tax up to Rs 7 lakh is a misnomer with confusing new and old schemes. There are views that if corporate taxes could effectively be at 15 per cent, the highest I-T should not be more than 20 per cent and not 39 per cent as of now with various kinds of TDS including foreign remittances. This hurts the farmers too. So, a political budget needs more caution. Mere doling out is not enough.

Inssofar as infra investment is concerned and in the wake of natural disasters in Uttarakhand and severe flooding of various states, the necessary review and check has been regrettably avoided. This means the risk to the hills and fragile areas continues. It is time to put a pause on roads after hitting over 7 lakh km of highways and rail projects turning into shopping malls. Little is learnt after failure of such metro projects in Delhi itself.

Effectively it means that on the global pattern capital expenses are to go up to Rs 13.70 lakh crore, Rs 3.20 lakh crore more from Rs 10.53 lakh crore of 2022-23. It comes almost all from Rs 17.86 lakh crore of borrowings up by Rs 1.20 lakh crore. Borrowings are almost 40 per cent of the total budget of Rs 45.03 lakh crore.

This is clearly questionable. Infra is required as per needs but

Yogi's Ambitions

Uttar Pradesh's senior bureaucrats led by the state's Finance Minister & Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Suresh Kumar Khanna visited the United Kingdom recently to woo global investors for the state's Global Investors Summit to be held shortly.

Sources have informed DKB that Khanna and his core team along with India's consul general in Birmingham, Dr Shashank Vikram, have identified a roadmap and strategies to be followed to enhance trade and economic ties between the UK and UP.

Khanna is ambitious with his plans as UP's vision is to become a \$1 trillion economy. Towards this objective, the state government has provided a single window clearance for 25 sectors it has opened up for global investors. With the Yogi Adityanath government enjoying its second term in UP, there is political stability. But the moot point is will these road shows in the UK following the USA earlier, encourage global entrepreneurs to UP?

The answer to this holds the key to Yogi's political ambitions. The audacious goal of a trillion-dollar economy is seen as the blueprint for how Yogi can turn around UP's fortunes, and all ministers and babus are working hard to achieve it.

Bihar IAS Assn's silence on a key issue irks babus

Many IAS officers are upset with the Bihar IAS Officers' Association's silence at the state government's proposal to release former MP Anand Mohan from jail. Mohan is serving a life term for the murder of the former district magistrate of Gopalganj G. Krishnaniah.

Sources say that the Nitish Kumar-led government has recently been dropping several hints that it is trying to seek the release of Anand Mohan, a prominent Rajput leader, due to political compulsions (read alliance partner RJD). Anand was initially handed out a death sentence by a local court, but it was later commuted to life imprisonment by the High Court. Although no member of the IAS association has come forward to speak on the issue, their silence has not gone down well among the babus.

The secretary of the association

Dipak Kumar Singh however has said that this is a government decision, and the association has no comment on it. But a former IPS officer Amitabh Kumar Das has strongly criticised the state IAS association for keeping mum on this sensitive matter and even called for it to be dissolved if it does not take up the issues of its members. Anand's release from jail would be an insult to the murdered IAS officer, he said. For now, it seems that politics may end up trumping propriety in Bihar.



BABUDOM BYTES
Dilip Cherian

Punjab Police becomes top-heavy

The top tier of Punjab's police establishment is becoming increasingly crowded. The state may have the most officers in the rank of directors general of police (DGPs) in the country, after the Bhagwant Mann government promoted seven ADGPs to the rank of DGP, bringing the total to 13.

The state has also got its first women officers elevated to DGP rank. Gurpreet Deo, a 1993-batch IPS officer and the first woman IPS officer in Punjab Police, is also the senior-most among those promoted. Another woman IPS officer Shashi Prabha Dwivedi has also been promoted to DGP rank. Deo was earlier holding the charge of additional director general of police, community affairs division and women affairs while Dwivedi was posted as Additional DGP, Railway.

Others who have been promoted to the rank of DGPs are Chief Director Vigilance Bureau Varinder Kumar, ADGP Human Resource Development Ishwar Singh, ADGP Punjab State Power Corporation Limited Jitendra Kumar Jain, ADGP Police and Rules S K Asthana and ADGP Internal Security R N Dhoke.

IPS officers have a vertical tenure-based promotion system in accordance with IPS cadre rules. Cadre management, however, varies from state to state. Anyone who has served 30, 25 and 18 years in service is eligible to become a DGP, ADGP and IG, respectively. Further, in Punjab, promotions are done promptly after a batch becomes eligible for a higher rank, whereas some states with stricter cadre management promote officers only when a vacancy arises in the cadre posts.

Sources have informed DKB that while adding more DGPs to the police, the state government has yet to recruit adequate personnel in the lower ranks, creating a top-heavy force and a peculiar imbalance affecting its functioning.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

A country's greatness lies in its undying ideals of love and sacrifice that inspire the mothers of the race.
SAROJINI NAIDU

I am an instrument of God. The instrument is not unbreakable, but who is there to break God
KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM

Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself.
ROBERT FROST

WORDSWORTH

Wigg

On Good Friday 1664, Samuel Pepys recorded in his diary, "Home to the only Lenten supper I have had of wiggs and ale." Though they were sometimes said to be like Good Friday buns, ancestors of hot-cross buns, wiggs seem to have been linked not only with the end of Lent but with other special occasions, too; Clement Miles noted in his book Christmas in Ritual and Tradition in 1912, "In Shropshire 'wiggs' or caraway buns dipped in ale were eaten on Christmas Eve." They were also recorded as being associated with St Andrew's Day on 30 November, for some reason notably in Bedfordshire. In the nineteenth century, wiggs were widely known and equally widely variable in their recipes. Caraway was one constituent mentioned in some parts of Britain (these were presumably the type recorded in The Tale of Ginger and Pickles by Beatrix Potter: "But a person cannot live on 'seed wiggs' and sponge cake and butter buns"); in Lincolnshire, plums were considered to be a vital ingredient (though currants were meant, as in plum pudding), while in Hampshire honey was essential. On the other hand, the austere burghers of Bristol said a wigg was a local name for a plain halfpenny bun. They were nearest its origin, since a wigg was at first simply a fine wheaten loaf lacking these later elaborations.

Ansated

If you wish to confuse your hearers, you might describe the cup or mug from which you drink your breakfast cuppa as ansated. But it would merely be an irritatingly superior way of asserting that the drinking vessel in question has a handle. Ansated is from Latin ansa, a handle. When Galileo turned his primitive telescope on Saturn, its famous rings looked like two blobs either side of the planet (he thought they were moons). A little later, astronomers with slightly better instruments saw what seemed to be handles and referred, in a euphonious phrase, to ansated Saturn. The word now most often turns up in descriptions of ancient sacred signs. An ansated cross is a T shape with a circle at the top, a symbol that's more commonly called an ank (from the Egyptian word for life or soul).

SPECTRUM NATION

Governance is bedrock of economy



Jagdish Rattanani

THE SHOCKING REPORT BY HINDENBURG RESEARCH ON THE ADANI GROUP IS A POINTER TO WHAT IS GOING WRONG IN THE INDIAN ECONOMY

The budget speech of Finance Minister Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman was the shortest by her own standards but it was not short on praise for the economy.

The world, she said, has recognised India as a "bright star". The Indian economy is on the "right track" and we are "heading towards a bright future," the Minister noted, setting the tone for what will be the last full budget of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's second term. The FM's good words and fulsome praise are understandable. The budget speech after all plays a key part in preparing the optics and setting the narrative. It is important to note the narrative. It is equally important not to be swept away by it. The last full budget is a good time to take stock of where we are and what the tenure has given us, recognising equally that the economy has faced immense challenges in the face of the waves of Covid-19 that brought death and devastation of families.

While the budget is a lot about numbers, and they must surely be analysed to see if the government commits in financial numbers what it says in words, what is equally important is the principles with which the government works and how it signals to market players, inter-

nal and external. For example, the FM did well to note the words of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on governance: "Good governance is the key to a nation's progress. Our government is committed to providing a transparent and accountable administration which works for the betterment and welfare of the common citizen."

Governance is the bedrock of any economy. It may be argued that there is no good budget or bad budget - it's merely a pointer to how the government prioritises, and how it views development and growth. But there is clearly a distinction between good governance and bad governance. How well does India stand on standards of governance, not only in the public sector but in the eco-system in which we want private players to compete fairly, foreign capital to come in and set up large enterprises and for innovation and entrepreneurship to thrive? Without answering this question, any exercise in budgeting is merely a play of numbers, not a picture of the ground reality.

In this context, the shocking report by Hindenburg Research on the Adani group is a pointer to what is going wrong in the Indian economy. This is not to argue that the report should be taken at face value.

But there is no escaping the depth of the report, the track record of the researching company and the big questions that they have raised on the Adanis, who head a group that has rocketed in a rather perplexing manner on the Indian business landscape. To be sure, Adani Enterprises Limited has dismissed the research report as "malicious" and a "lie", and some will argue that the Union Budget is not about the standing of any particular group. But at the same time, what is to be said about the economy when one report by one international group brings such volatility to the markets that stocks of the fastest growing Indian business group go into a nosedive and its prestigious Follow-on Public Offer (FPO) of a mighty Rs. 20,000 crore has to be withdrawn as a result? The withdrawal came after the FPO itself was said to be over-subscribed, leading to a flood of reports from international datelines that the subscriptions were likely filled in by insiders.

As these reports mix with post-budget analysis in the news media, the contrast shows up everything that is and should be causing worry about the robustness of India's growth story. Poor regulation and weak governance in

such a big case signals the collapse of much more.

One important feature to help drive this growth is the huge spend of Rs. 10 lakh crores set out as capital expenditure in the coming fiscal. This is a robust increase of 33.4 per cent over the previous year, and three times the outlay in 2019-20. The FM pointed out that this "substantial increase in recent years" is central to the government's efforts to enhance growth potential and job creation.

That begs some simple questions. The government will borrow to make these spends, and why must it do so if the economy is doing well and has recovered from the aftermath of Covid-19? This does not appear to signal an economic situation that is as robust as it is made out to be.

In the end, the budget is about numbers but it is also more about some principles within which the numbers must sit, and at its centre are the people the numbers are meant to serve - all people, regions, religions, classes and castes, marking the diversity that makes up India.

The writer is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR. Views are personal
SYNDICATE: THE BILLION PRESS

Adani in trouble

Sir, The Adani Group stocks continued to lose sheen, falling left, right and centre as their market cap loss widened to Rs.8.79 lakh crore. Adani Enterprises plunged more than 26% after the company unexpectedly announced the withdrawal of its Rs.20,000-crore follow-on public offer (FPO), completed the day before. Meanwhile, the group has come under the lens of the banking and market regulators. While the National Stock Exchange (NSE) put the group firms' shares under surveillance, the Reserve Bank of India directed banks to provide details of their loans to Adani firms, the collateral used for these loans, and any other indirect exposure. In another whammy, Adani lost his premier position as Asia's richest billionaire to Mukesh Ambani, chairman of Reliance Industries Ltd.

One more university

Sir, The Odisha government has decided to upgrade the Vikram Deb College of Koraput into an affiliating university. The college will start functioning as a university from the 2023-24 academic calendar. This decision has come when the college is gearing up to celebrate its platinum jubilee. The college which was established in the year 1947 will now cater to students of four southern Odisha districts of Koraput, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, and Rayagada after turning into a university. This will lessen the burden on Berhampur University. Now the educational institutions in Ganjam, Kandhamal, and Gajapati districts will only be affiliated with Berhampur University. This step will bring higher education closer to the people of the undivided Koraput and help the region develop more. This is the fourth university in the southern Odisha region and the 36th university in the state. The people from that region will now be less dependent on other universities far away from their homes.

An electoral gimmick

Sir, The interim Union Budget is just an electoral gimmick on the part of the BJP government before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The people should recognise this. PM Narendra Modi had made many promises in the past but hardly fulfilled any of them in the last eight years of his tenure. The BJP had come to power in 2014 by selling the dream of 'achche din'. But the people now understand that those promises have long fallen flat. Now that the government needs to secure its position in power for another term, it is using the interim budget to raise the expectations of voters once again.

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

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NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Deba Prasad Nayak, CUTTACK

Jubel D'Cruz, MUMBAI

national

of the day quote

Narayan Rane has been making baseless allegations against me and Shiv Sena. He should prove his charge or else apologise

SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENNA (UBT) LEADER

Anyone trying to question the ED is trying to question the apex court. The judiciary has upheld that ED's job is to mitigate corruption in the country. The way the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is questioning the ED, it is becoming clear that Arvind Kejriwal is with those who increase corruption. Kejriwal does not want corruption to end from the country

MEENAKSHI LEKHI | BJP LEADER

The Union Budget has several provisions which are especially beneficial for a Himalayan state like Uttarakhand whose economy is based primarily on tourism

PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI | UTTARAKHAND CM

SHORT TAKES

Pakistani drone shot down

Amritsar: A narcotics carrying Pakistani drone entering into India from along the International Border in Punjab has been shot down by the Border Security Force (BSF) troops on Friday, a senior officer said. The unmanned aerial vehicle was downed around 2:30 am near border post Rear Kakkar in the Amritsar sector of the state. The drone has been recovered Friday morning between the border fence and zero line of the India-Pakistan International Border.

Cong suspends Preet Kaur

New Delhi: The Congress disciplinary committee Friday suspended party's Lok Sabha MP Preet Kaur and asked her to explain within three days why she should not be expelled for anti-party activities. Congress disciplinary panel member secretary Tariq Anwar said the action follows complaints against her from Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Raja Warring and other state leaders that she was helping the BJP in the northern state.

Two injured in bridge collapse

Shimla: Two people were injured as the Choli Bridge in Himachal Pradesh's Chamba district collapsed Friday evening, officials said. Both suffered injuries when the tipper trucks they were driving fell into a gorge following the collapse of the bridge near Holi around 7:30 pm, the officials said. "The drivers were injured and one of them is critical. They have been rushed to hospital," Chamba Deputy Commissioner D C Rana said. Two tipper trucks were crossing the bridge followed by a car when the incident took place.

HC grants relief to Rahul

Ranchi: The Jharkhand High Court has granted relief to former Congress president Rahul Gandhi in a case related to his remarks against former BJP president Amit Shah. The court has put a stay on the notice issued by the Ranchi Civil Court against Rahul Gandhi in this matter. Along with this, any kind of action against Rahul Gandhi has been banned. A complaint was lodged against Gandhi in the Civil Court on behalf of BJP leader Naveen Jha. Earlier, Jha had sent a legal notice to Gandhi asking him to apologise for his remarks.

ADANI ROW ROCKS PARLIAMENT AGAIN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Parliament was adjourned for the second consecutive day Friday without transacting any business after the opposition stepped up its demand for an independent investigation into the allegations of fraud against billionaire Gautam Adani's companies that triggered an unprecedented stock crash.

Proceedings in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were disrupted as Opposition members raised slogans demanding a discussion and a JPC probe into the fraud-allegation-triggered rout. Speaker Om Birla's appeals to opposition members to stop their protests and sloganeering and participate in the discussions went unheeded while Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said opposition members, who had trooped inside the well of the House, will be "dealt with".

Earlier in the day, Dhankhar rejected 15 adjournment notices filed by members of various opposition parties to discuss the Adani Group issue in the wake of allegations made against the conglomerate by a US-based short seller.

Rejecting the notices, he said these are not fulfilling the requirements of rule 267 and are not in conformity with the direction of the chair on December 8, 2022. This led to strong protests from opposition members.

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, Syed Naseer Hussain, Pramod Tiwari, Kumar Ketkar, Ameer Yajnik and Neeraj Dangi, John Brittas, Sanjay Singh, Santhosh Kumar P and Priyanka Chaturvedi were among those who had given notices under rule 267.

A discussion under rule 267 entails that all other listed business of the day will be set aside to take

up the important issue raised. Dhankhar also told the protesting members that Parliament is the essence and the North Star of democracy.

The government, however, insisted that the Opposition should allow the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address immediately by ending disruptions.

"Whatever issues they want to flag, they can during the debate... Passage of the resolution thanking the President for her address to the joint sitting of the two Houses is a priority," Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal said. In the morning, the opposition parties met in Kharge's chamber and coordinated their strategy for the day.

While 16 parties including the Congress, RJD, AAP, DMK, SP, CPI, CPI-M, BRS, Shiv Sena (Thackeray), JDU, NCP and NC participated in the meeting on Friday, Trinamool Congress did not attend the same. TMC was present in the Thursday meeting of opposition parties.

"Parliament adjourned for another day because the Opposition demands a JPC on the PM-linked Adani issue that is playing havoc on the savings of crores of Indians," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said. "Modi sarkar says MPs are wasting public money. What about the crores people have lost over the last few days of the 'Maha mega scam,' he asked. He also accused the government of being fearful of the Opposition demands for a JPC on the Adani issue and alleged that the business group has patronage at the highest levels.

"Due to the investment made by LIC-SBI in Adani Group, the money of common citizens of the country is sinking. The Opposition is demanding an inquiry into the entire matter," the Congress said.



NIA gets mail threatening 'Taliban attack' in Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 3: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has received an email claiming that a person linked to the Taliban will carry out an "attack" in Mumbai, police said Friday.



The probe agency's Mumbai office received the threat mail on Thursday, following which the city police and the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) were alerted, an official said. According to the police, the email address used to send the threat message had "CIA" in it and the sender claimed that a person connected with the Taliban would carry out an attack in the city.

The IP (internet protocol) address of the sender has been traced to Pakistan, said the official. A similar mail was sent to the federal agency last month as well. The police conducted a probe and did not find any substance in it, he said.

The police suspect this might be a mischief, as such mails were sent to the probe agency earlier as well, the official added.

SARADHA CASE | ED attaches assets of 'beneficiaries'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: The ED Friday said it has attached assets worth more than Rs 6 crore of "beneficiaries" such as Nalini Chidambaram, wife of Congress leader P Chidambaram, former CPM MLA Debendranath Biswas and a company "owned" by former Assam minister, the late Anjan Dutta, in the Saradha money laundering case.

A provisional order for attaching movable properties worth Rs 3.3 crore and immovable assets worth Rs 3 crore has been issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the federal agency said in a statement. "These properties were owned by

Our government opened 266 primary schools in Rajasthan since 2018. Did the BJP government open a single new primary school between 2013 and 2018. Can the BJP say why it toyed with the future of children by blocking their opportunities for education

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM

WELCOME MOVE

The Punjab Cabinet Friday accorded approval to Electric Vehicle Policy 2022 with a move to check the vehicular pollution



The floating restaurant 'MV Ganga Vihar' that was inaugurated by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav in Patna

PTI PHOTO

Names of 5 new judges to be cleared soon: Govt to SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: The Centre Friday assured the Supreme Court that the Collegium's recommendation of December last year for the appointment of five judges in the apex court will be cleared soon.

Attorney General R Venkataramani told a bench of justices S K Kaul and A S Oka that warrant of appointments of these five names is expected to be issued shortly.

During the hearing, the Supreme Court also expressed displeasure over the delay by the Centre in clearing recommendations for transfer of high court judges, saying "it is a very very serious issue".

"Don't make us take a stand which will be very uncomfortable," the bench told the attorney general. The Supreme Court Collegium on December 13 last year recommended five judges for elevation to the apex court - Rajasthan High Court Chief Justice Pankaj Mithal, Patna High Court Chief Justice Sanjay Karol, Manipur High Court Chief Justice P V Sanjay Kumar, Patna High Court judge Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Allahabad High Court judge Manoj Misra.



Later, on January 31, the Collegium headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud recommended to the Centre the names of Allahabad High Court Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Gujarat High Court Chief Justice Aravind Kumar for elevation as apex court judges.

The top court, which has a sanctioned strength of 34 judges including the Chief Justice of India (CJI), is currently functioning with 27 judges.

The Supreme Court was hearing a matter related to the Centre's alleged delay in clearing names recommended by the Collegium for

The top court, which has a sanctioned strength of 34 judges including the Chief Justice of India, is currently functioning with 27 judges

appointment as judges to the Supreme Court and high courts.

During the hearing, the bench observed that five names were recommended in December last year and now it is February. "Should we record that for those five, warrants are being issued?" the bench said, adding, "When, is the next question?"

Venkataramani assured the bench that the warrants of appointment of the names is expected to be issued soon.

"I was given to understand that by Sunday, it may be issued," the attorney general said.

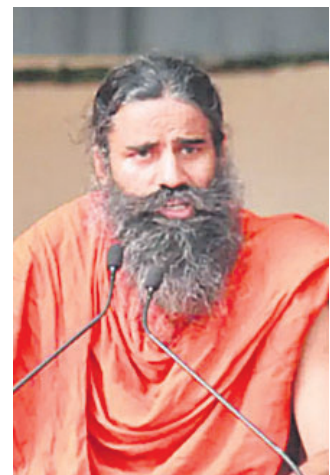
When Venkataramani said the issue concerning appointment of high court judges be deferred for some time, the bench referred to the aspect of delay in clearing the recommendations for transfer of high court judges and said it is "greatly troubling us".

Ramdev hurls barbs at Muslims

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Feb 3: In provocative remarks at a meeting of seers, yoga guru Ramdev accused Muslims of resorting to terror and abducting Hindu women while comparing Hinduism to Islam and Christianity.

He alleged that the two faiths were obsessed with conversion while Hinduism taught its followers to do good. "Muslims offer namaz five times a day and then do whatever they want. They kidnap Hindu girls and commit all kinds of sins. Our Muslim brothers commit a lot of sins but they definitely offer namaz as they are taught to do so. Hindu religion is not like this," he said Thursday at the gathering in Barmer.



A video of his speech has surfaced on social media. "I am not criticising anyone but people are obsessed only with this. Some people talk about converting the entire world to Islam and others want to convert the world to Christianity," Ramdev said.

He claimed that these faiths had no other agenda. Continuing his attack on Muslims, he said they become terrorists or criminals and yet offer namaz.

He also referred to the attire of orthodox members of the community.

He said Hinduism teaches people not to engage in violence and dishonesty. "Wake up early in the morning, pray to God, do yoga, do good work and good deeds by worshipping your deity. This is what Hindu religion and Sanatan Dharma teach us," Ramdev said.

19 families shifted after houses develop cracks in Doda

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jammu, Feb 3: Nineteen families have been moved to safer places after their houses developed cracks at Nai Basti village in J&K's Doda district, officials said Friday.

The officials said that several houses at Nai Basti village in the Thathri area of Doda district started developing cracks due to a land sink. The situation was accentuated by a landslide triggered by recent rains. "Nineteen families have been moved to safer places so far. The land sink happened due to loosened rocks," said Abdul Qayoom, SSP, Doda.

Qayoom said a team of geologists and engineers have inspected the spot. "A proper assessment



has been made," he said. Qayoom said that according to experts who studied the rocks at the site, the land there could not bear the

load of the buildings. "There are both new and old structures constructed in the area," he said. Abdul Farooq, who is among

THE OFFICIALS SAID THAT SEVERAL HOUSES AT NAI BASTI VILLAGE IN THE THATHRI AREA OF DODA DISTRICT STARTED DEVELOPING CRACKS DUE TO A LAND SINK

THE OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, REFUSED TO DRAW A COMPARISON BETWEEN DODA WITH THE SINKING TOWN OF JOSHIMATH IN UTTARAKHAND THAT POSED A MAJOR CHALLENGE AND FORCED A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE TO MOVE AFTER THEIR HOUSES DEVELOPED CRACKS

those whose house has developed cracks, appealed to the administration to shift the affected people to a safer place. "Some houses

have been totally damaged due to the landslide. A mosque has also come under its impact," Farooq said.

The officials, however, refused to draw a comparison between Doda with the sinking town of Joshimath in Uttarakhand that posed a major challenge and forced a large number of people to move after their houses developed cracks.

"The two cannot be compared. It is a very localised affair in Doda," Qayoom said. "A geology and mining team from Jammu is arriving to give inputs as to how the situation can be stopped from aggravating." Sub-Divisional Magistrate Athar Amin Zargar told reporters.

FIGHT AGAINST POLLUTION

Industries turn to biomass as Delhi bans coal

The drive has pushed about half the 1,695 units in a cluster of small industries around one of the world's most polluted capitals to use biomass



India's enforced ban on coal burning around New Delhi to fight worsening air pollution has forced local industries to shift to biomass.

Approximately half of the small industries surrounding the Indian capital now use biomass, up from 15% in 2020, regulators said.

"You can tell the fuel being used by the colour of the steam and the smell in the air," said a manager at a small unit in the global cloth recycling hub of Panipat, about 100 km (62 miles) from New Delhi, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The change to biomass, which usually consists of pellets or briquettes of farm residue, promises to slash emissions and spur farmers to sell such residue instead of burning it, say industry officials and regulators.

The switch could also bring lower costs, since biomass is 14% cheaper than coal, a 2021 study sponsored by the British government showed.

KING COAL
Coal was "king" of fuels in India's National Capital Region (NCR) after the South Asian nation banned petcoke - a polluting, energy-intensive alternative - in 2017, the CSE report showed.

It was the primary fuel for about a quarter of all industries in Haryana's three major clusters near New Delhi.

Now coal is losing out to biomass. "Many petcoke traders became coal traders after a ban on petcoke in 2017," said Kamaljeet Singh, a senior pollution control official. "Now hundreds of coal traders have become biomass traders."

About 27% of the region's companies use natural gas, while more than 250 units, or 15%, use electricity, the regulators said.

"It has been easier for small industries to convert to biomass instead of converting to natural gas because of lower prices," Monish Ahuja, chairman of the Confederation of Biomass Energy Industry of India, told Reuters. About 81% of the 398 industrial units operating in Panipat alone have converted to biomass, Singh added, devouring coal's share of 56.2% in 2020.

Greenpeace India demands revision of quality standards

A group of people along with Greenpeace India activists gathered at the CPCB office in New Delhi Friday to demand immediate revision of the national air quality standards, saying they do not reflect the impact of air pollution on human health. Holding placards and banners that read "Air Pollution Se Azadi" (freedom from air pollution), "Raise Your Standards" and "Clean Air is a Fundamental Right", the protesters gathered to direct attention of policymakers about the limitations of existing National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), a statement said. Over the past week, Greenpeace India volunteers visited many of Delhi's iconic locations wearing Hazmat suits and gas masks to raise concerns about the capital's hazardous air quality, it said.

RIISING PRICES

But biomass traders and consumers are voicing concern about rising prices after the coal ban and seasonal fluctuations in the supply of crop residue, citing these as factors limiting wider national use of the fuel. Average prices of biomass briquettes rose 36% to 7,711 rupees (\$94.80) a kg by the end of 2022, versus 5,677 rupees at the end of 2021, on online marketplace BiofuelCircle, based in the western city of Pune. But owners of industrial units in Panipat said the local nature of New Delhi's coal ban confers a cost advantage on similar industries elsewhere in India, as they can continue using coal.

"Because of these restrictions, Panipat industries are finding it extremely difficult to compete," said Bhim Rana, president of a dyers' association in the city. Higher costs fuelled by taxes and a ban on exports of biomass briquettes were among factors attributable to policy that limit supply, the British study said.

Pesticides in breast milk led to infant mortality: Study

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Maharajanj (Uttar Pradesh), Feb 3: A study by Lucknow's Queen Mary Hospital has claimed that pesticides have been found in the milk of pregnant women which were responsible for the death of nearly 111 newborns in the past ten months in Maharajanj district.

The research by Queen Mary Hospital revealed that pesticides were found in the milk of pregnant women. The tests were conducted on 130 vegetarian and non-vegetarian pregnant women to find the reason behind the death of the infants.

The research, which was done by Professor Sujata Dev, Dr Abbas Ali Mehndi, and Dr Naina Dwivedi, was also published in Environmental Research General. It stated that fewer pesticides were



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

found in the milk of vegetarian women than in non-vegetarians.

However, pesticides have still been found in the breast milk of women who stay away from non-vegetarian food. The reason behind the pesticide in milk is chem-

ical farming, stated the research.

Different types of pesticides and chemicals are put in green vegetables and crops. Animals are also injected with supplements and chemicals which have led to pesticide formation in the

MATTER OF CONCERN

► The pesticides present in the breast milk of a woman who eats non-vegetarians were triple than that of a vegetarian woman

► The research said that while a newborn does not eat any meat or crops, pesticides still reach his/her body through the milk of the mother

► Meanwhile, the district magistrate has formed a three-member committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Development Officer (CDO) to find the reason behind the rise in mortality rates

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The pesticides present in the breast milk of a woman who eats non-vegetarians were triple than

that of a vegetarian woman.

The research said that while a newborn does not eat any meat or crops, pesticides still reach his/her body through the milk of the mother.

Breast milk, which has some amount of pesticides present inside it, has severely harmed infants. Meanwhile, the district magistrate has formed a three-member committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Development Officer (CDO) to find the reason behind the rise in mortality rates.

This committee will function under the leadership of CDO, Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM), and Chief Medical Superintendent.

The team will also investigate the increase in the figures of maternal and infant mortality reports. They will also find the reason behind the deaths of new-borns.

DCPCR launches WhatsApp chatbot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights launched its WhatsApp chatbot Wednesday with Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, terming it an important initiative to make governance citizen-friendly.

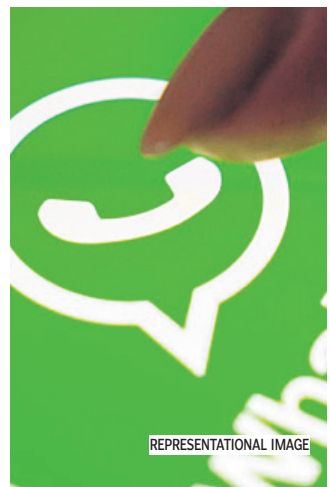
The chatbot, called 'Bal Mitra', is an effort to enable two-way communication between people and the child rights panel. The chatbot will help citizens and the commission to interact more effectively, according to a government statement.

Some of the features of the chatbot include complaint registration, searching information and tracking complaint status, and seeking information on admissions, among others.

Along with providing authentic information on various matters related to children and their rights, the chatbot will also ensure the confidentiality of the matters reported through it.

"Chatbot 'Bal Mitra', launched by the DCPCR, is a very important initiative to make governance citizen-friendly. This will serve as a source of authentic information regarding children and their rights," Sisodia said. Along with a platform to report any matter related to the protection of child rights, this chatbot will also guide people, especially parents on issues of admissions and education of their children," he said.

"Good governance involves timely nudges and DCPCR 'Bal Mitra' will help us make our governance more effective. It will eliminate the gap of information between the government and citizens," the deputy chief minister said.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE



Artists dressed as Hindu deities participate in a 'Kalash Yatra' organised by Shri Parivar Divya Mahayag Samiti in Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh

PFI PHOTO

348 mobile phones found in Delhi jails

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 3: More than 340 mobile phones have been found in different jails in Delhi in the last two-and-a-half months, official data showed.

Director General (Prisons) Sanjay Baniwal told reporters that the jail authorities found 348 mobile phones in two-and-a-half months. "On Wednesday the jail authorities conducted a raid in jail number 3 and seized 18 mobile phones and chargers. In the last over two months, the jail authorities have seized 348 mobile phones.

"The jail superintendents have started conducting raids after developing intelligence inside the prisons. Through these actions, the criminal world is now getting a strong message," Baniwal said. "We have set 23 targets for 2023. These targets will include making the jails completely phone free and setting up problem redressal system for the inmates. Such type of jammer should be installed so that no one would be able to use phone in-



IANS PHOTO

side the prisons," the DG said.

When asked about the fact that involvement of insiders helps the inmates get mobile phones inside the prisons, he said, "We admit the involvement of the prison staff in such acts. We have in the past taken stringent action against those found guilty and it will be carried out in future as well."

Baniwal also said that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is also being signed with the Art of Living Foundation to strengthen the mental well-being of the inmates.

The President and the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi have given instructions that arrangements should be developed inside the jails to give skill development training to the inmates so that they may get employment when they go out of the prisons, he said. Under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), a total of 1,020 jail inmates are getting trained in tourism and hospitality which will end in three months, the DG said.

"We will give skill training to around 1,000 inmates in stitching high-end clothes under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana so that if they get out of the jail and become entrepreneur, they would start their business of tailoring through Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency Ltd (Mudra) loan," the DG (Prisons) said.

MASSIVE TRAFFIC SNARLS IN DELHI



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Commuters had a harrowing time on Friday as heavy traffic congestion was witnessed on several roads in and around central Delhi due to a fair at the Pragati Maidan here, police said.

Traffic snarls were reported from central Delhi Thursday as

Traffic snarls were reported from central Delhi Thursday as well because of the International plastics exhibition, conference and convention -- PlastIndia 2023. The five-day fair will conclude February 5

well because of the International plastics exhibition, conference and convention - PlastIndia 2023. The five-day fair will conclude on February 5.

According to a senior police officer, two traffic police inspectors and 40 traffic personnel have been deployed in different parts of central Delhi to regulate vehicular movement. Meanwhile, several commuters took to social media to share their woes and alert others to avoid certain stretches.

"The Pragati Maidan tunnel was completely choked due to traffic and some people had parked their vehicles on the roadside near the tunnel compounding the problem. I reached my destination more than half hour late," said Viansh Tripathi. Another commuter, Amit Kumar, said he got stuck in a jam in central Delhi Thursday too and rebuked the authorities for not making any efforts to prevent the snarls.

Matters of heart to be discussed in Taj city

The objective of the conference is to discuss further improving the practice of clinical and surgical cardiology, creating a bridge of cooperation between various professionals in the field of heart diseases, and providing better healthcare to heart patients



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

Prof. Ashu Rani, will formally inaugurate the national conference.

The objective of the conference is to discuss further improving the practice of clinical and surgical cardiology, creating a bridge of cooperation between various professionals in the field of heart disease, and providing better healthcare to heart patients.

Dr. V.K. Jain, president of The

Agra Intervention Cardiology Society, said: "Continuous progress and research are being made in the field of cardiology. New technologies are coming and have brought unprecedented success in the field of tests and diagnosis of heart disease. There is a need to share these on one platform so that every patient can get benefits through every doctor in the whole

country." He said that the objective of this conference is to provide a platform to cardiologists and cardiac surgeons so that they can share with each other new medical studies, experiences, research findings, achievements, and techniques in the diagnosis of heart disease. Organising and Scientific secretary, Dr. Suvir Gupta said: "Causes and diagnosis of heart failure, Coronary Artery Disease, Acute Coronary Syndrome, Valvular Heart Disease, Arrhythmia and Pacing, EchoCardiography Bypass Surgery, Heart Valve Surgery, Diabetes will be discussed. And experts will give their presentations on these topics."

Academic coordinator, Dr. Himanshu Yadav said that more than 300 eminent doctors, including 40 specialist doctors from Delhi, Rajasthan, Lucknow, Meerut, Haryana, Punjab, and Agra, will participate in the two-day conference.

Corruption eating through the country: Allahabad HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj, Feb 3: The Allahabad High Court, rejecting the anticipatory bail application of one Devendra Kumar Hangal, has observed corruption is a menace which is eating the vitals of the economy of the country.

The applicant allegedly indulged in a conspiracy with the officers of the Noida Development Authority funnelling several crores of rupees from the public fund released for the construction of a cricket stadium with a pavilion building at Integrated sports complex at Noida.

It is alleged that Hangal through his private limited company conspired with Yadav Singh, who was the engineer-in-chief of NOIDA authority, Greater Noida Industrial

Development Authority, and Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority, for the scam.

Passing the order, Justice Dinesh Kumar Singh observed, "The court has to take into consideration while considering the anticipatory/regular bail application, the nature of offence and the court should refuse the bail if the offence is serious and is of huge magnitude, particularly, in economic offences. "Corruption is a menace which is eating the vitals of the economy of this country."

An FIR was lodged against Hangal under various sections of the IPC and of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 January 13, 2012 at Sector 39 Police Station of Noida in Uttar Pradesh.



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra, Feb 3: More than 300 heart specialists and experts will share new research, achievements, experiences and techniques in the field of heart disease at a two-day national convention in Taj city February 4 and 5.

Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister Yogendra Upadhyay, along with Agra University vice-chancellor

of the day quote

The railways plans to upgrade its capacity of issuing tickets from 25,000 to 2.25 lakh per minute and attending to enquiries from four lakh to 40 lakh per minute

ASHWINI VAISHNAW | RAILWAY MINISTER

Our opponents came together not for the development of the country or the state but to save their existence. Two separate entities have now become one

J P NADDA | BJP NATIONAL PRESIDENT

The people must protest if any activity is undertaken in forest areas without the permission of gram sabhas. The Centre is trying to exploit the state's natural resources

HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM

SHORT TAKES

CDS chairs high-level meet

Jammu: Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, who was on a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir, chaired a high-level security meeting here, officials said Friday. The meeting was attended by Udhampur-based northern Army commander Lt General Upendra Dwivedi and Director General of Police Dilbag Singh among others, they said. Additional Director General of Police, Jammu zone, Mukesh Singh and General Officer Commanding Jammu-based 16 Corps, also known as White Knight Corps, Lt Gen Sandeep Jain and General Officer Commanding 26 Infantry division Major General Gaurav Gautam also attended the meeting, they said.

Boy attacked by crocodile

Raichur (Karnataka): A nine-year-old boy was attacked by a crocodile in Karnataka's Raichur district on Friday, but saved by the quick response of locals, police said. According to police, the incident occurred when the boy, identified as Pavan, was playing in the river near Kortagunda village. Pavan had come to his grandparents' house to attend a local religious fair.

Man booked

Palghar: Police have registered a case against a man from Virar in Maharashtra's Palghar district for allegedly strangulating to death his 27-year-old wife, an official said on Friday. The body of the victim was found in the couple's flat in a housing complex at Virar on January 30. The police had initially registered a case of accidental death.

Two drown

Jhargram: Two brothers drowned in a lake in West Bengal's Jhargram district on Friday, police said. The brothers, identified as Soumitra Jana (17) and Subrata Jana (20), went to the Durgahuri Eco Park along with a relative. While Soumitra was supposed to appear in class 10 board exams this year, Subrata was an undergraduate student of first year.

Man arrested

Dhamtari: A 25-year-old man has been arrested on the charge of killing his "mentor" believing that it would earn him the ability to perform black magic in the Dhamtari district of Chhattisgarh, an official said Friday. Black magic, which is used for evil purposes, is a punishable offence in the state under the Chhattisgarh Tonah Pratadna Nivaran Act, 2005 ('Tonahi' is another word for witch).



The Narendra Modi dispensation has been "stalling" the Opposition's demand for discussions on every issue which it feels would embarrass it

SHASHI THAROOR | CONGRESS LEADER

8,343 INDIANS LODGED IN FOREIGN JAILS

As many as 8,343 Indian prisoners, including undertrials, are lodged in various jails around the world, the Ministry of External Affairs said Friday



SC seeks govt records on blocking BBC's Modi docu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: The Supreme Court Friday directed the central government to produce original records relating to its decision to block a BBC documentary on the 2002 Gujarat riots.

A bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna and M M Sundresh issued notices to the government and others on pleas filed by veteran journalist N Ram, Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan and lawyer M L Sharma. Sharma had filed a separate petition and it has now been tagged with similar pleas challenging the government's decision to block the documentary.

The matter is listed for next hearing in April. "We are issuing notices. Counter affidavit will be filed within three weeks. Rejoinder within two weeks after that. The respondents will also produce original records before this court on the next date of hearing," the bench said.

At the outset, the bench asked the petitioners why they did not approach the high court in the matter. Senior advocate CU Singh, appearing for Ram and the others, submitted that the government has invoked the emergency powers under the Information Technology (IT) Rules to block the documentary.



The matter is listed for next hearing in April. "We are issuing notices. Counter affidavit will be filed within three weeks. Rejoinder within two weeks after that. The respondents will also produce original records before this court on the next date of hearing," the bench said. A bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna and M M Sundresh issued notices to the government and others on pleas filed by veteran journalist N Ram, Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan and lawyer M L Sharma

He said he was seeking a direction to the Centre to place on record all the original records. The Supreme Court said it is also a fact that people have been accessing the documentary. It had earlier agreed to hear the plea taking note of the submissions of lawyers Sharma and Singh seeking urgent listing of the petitions against the government's ban on the two-episode BBC series using its emergency powers.

One of the petitioners has also alleged that the ban on the documentary 'India: The Modi question' was "malafide, arbitrary and unconstitutional". Reacting strongly

after Ram filed his plea, Law Minister Kiren Rijju had tweeted, "This is how they waste the precious time of Hon'ble Supreme Court where thousands of common citizens are waiting and seeking dates for justice".

Ram and others, in their pleas, have sought a direction to restrain the government from curbing their right to "receive and disseminate information" on the documentary. "All citizens, including the press, have the fundamental right to view, form an informed opinion, critique, report on, and lawfully circulate the contents of the documentary as the right to freedom

of speech and expression incorporates the right to receive and disseminate information..." the plea said and referred to several apex court orders on freedom of speech and expression.

The plea has also sought quashing of "all orders directly or indirectly censoring" the information, including those shared on social media. "Issue a writ of Mandamus or any other appropriate writ, order, or direction to the respondents restraining them from giving effect to orders curtailing freedom of speech and expression without first putting them in the public domain on a centralised database," the plea said.

No proposal to use RVM: Rijju

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: There is no proposal to use the remote electronic voting machine (RVM) in the "upcoming election" in the country and it is also not proposed for the use of Non-Resident Indian (NRI) voters, Lok Sabha was informed on Friday.

Responding to a question in the Lower House of Parliament, Law Minister Kiren Rijju said in a written reply that according to the Election Commission (EC), it has "not proposed to introduce the RVM for the upcoming election in the country". Several assembly polls are due this year, while the Lok Sabha elections will be held in 2024.

The minister said the EC has also informed that the RVM is not proposed for the use of NRI voters. Rijju noted that public sector unit Electronic Corporation of India Limited (ECIL), under the guidance of the EC and the Technical Expert Committee of the poll panel, has developed a prototype of the Multi Constituency Remote Electronic Voting Machine.

The EC, he said, had circulated a concept note to all national and state political parties on improving voter participation of domestic migrants using remote voting. The note included matters such as defining a 'migrant voter', addressing the territorial concept, the method of



remote voting and counting of votes, enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct, and setting up of controlled environment to ensure free and fair voting.

Citing details shared by the EC, he said the introduction of RVM would not increase fake votes.

The prototype RVM developed by ECIL is a robust and stand-alone system based on the existing EVMs... Independently, various statutes - the Representation of People Act, 1950, and the Representation of People Act, 1951, the Conduct of Election Rules and various guidelines and instructions of the EC will ensure that the confirmation/genuineness of voter identity is verified," Rijju said.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar had last month described the EC's proposal on remote voting as a "work in progress" and said it was not an easy subject and reaching decisions in a democracy takes time.

JAISH MODULE BUSTED, 6 HELD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Feb 3: Security forces Friday busted a module of the Jaish-e-Mohammad in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district by arresting six overground workers and recovering a huge cache of arms and ammunition, officials said.

Acting on specific information on subversive activities in the Mirhama and Damhal Hanji Pora areas, a joint team of police and the army arrested six terror associates, they said. A huge cache of arms and ammunition, including eight magazines and 446 rounds of M4 rifles, a pistol, a pistol magazine and 18 pistol rounds, were recovered on the basis of the disclosures by the accused.



Other recoveries include a hand grenade, four UBGL shells, 30 AK rounds, one magazine each of INSAS and AK rifles, two mortar shells, four walkie-talkie sets and a wireless set, the officials added.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the terror associates were in touch with handlers across the border via various social media platforms, a police spokesperson said.

"The arrested accused were hell bent on vitiating the peaceful atmosphere in Kulgam district by carrying grenade attacks, intimidating innocent civilians, stand-off fire attacks on PRI (Panchayat Raj Institution) members, minority communities etc," the spokesperson added.



Police detain members of Youth Congress protesting against the Union Budget 2023-24, outside Raj Bhavan in Kolkata

PTI PHOTO

MVA WINS AMRAVATI, JOLTS BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 3: In a boost to the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), its candidate Dhiraj Lingade won the Amravati division graduates constituency of the Maharashtra Legislative Council on Friday, defeating sitting legislator Ranjit Patil of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Counting of votes for the Amravati graduates seat lasted nearly 30 hours as it ended at 1.30 pm, even as the process had begun



at 8 am on Thursday. The results of four other seats of the Upper House of the state legislature were declared on Thursday, and two of those four seats were won by the MVA - an alliance of Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)

and Congress. In Amravati, MVA's Lingade bagged 46,344 votes, while BJP's sitting MLC Ranjit Patil secured 42,962 votes, an official said. The counting got delayed because no candidate could secure the necessary quota of votes required for the win, the official said. After the counting of votes ended, the fig-

ures were sent to the Election Commission for approval, and the results were declared at around 4 pm.

There were 23 candidates in the fray in Amravati, of whom 21 were eliminated in the counting of second preference votes. A total of 94,200 votes were polled, of which 8,387 turned invalid, the official said.

Voting for these five Council seats - three teachers segments (falling in Nagpur, Konkan and Aurangabad divisions) and two graduates constituencies (Nashik and Amravati divisions) - was held on January 30 and counting began on Thursday morning.

Why Covid kills more men than women decoded

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Scientists have found new evidence that may explain why men are more susceptible to severe infections of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, with increased death rates.

The research, published in the International Journal of Molecular Sciences, indicates males fare worse than females with the COVID-19 disease because the virus more readily attacks females' fat tissue, in lieu of lung tissue.

"Our data suggested that in female mice adipose tissue may act as a sink/reservoir for SARS-CoV-2 and thus spares the lungs from a greater viral load, preventing pul-

monary damage due to infiltrated immune cells and activated pro-inflammatory cytokines," said Jyothi Nagajyothi, from the Hackensack Meridian Center for Discovery and Innovation (CDD), US.

The researchers evaluated the effect of SARS-CoV-2 infection on the function of adipose (fat) tissue and the impact of disease on fat loss in a COVID-19 model. They examined hACE2 mice of both sexes and performed a comparative analysis. The hACE2 serves as an entry receptor for SARS-CoV-2 to infect people via binding to envelope spike proteins.

The Nagajyothi Lab's mouse models, mimicking the human immune system, showed that females



lost more fat compared to males when infected with COVID-19.

The study found that males had more virus in their lungs, while the females showed more virus in their

fat tissue. The theory is that the adipose (fat) tissue in females may act as a "sink" or "reservoir" of the virus, the researchers said. The study follows a paper pub-

lished last year in the journal Frontiers in Cardiovascular Medicine in which the team showed the virus infiltrated the lungs of males much more readily than it did in females.

The latest paper shows that an inverse relationship exists between the viral loads in the lungs and adipose tissue, and it differs between males and females, the researchers said. They found that SARS-CoV-2 infection alters immune signalling and cell death signalling differently in COVID-19 infected male and female mice.

"These data may help explain the higher COVID-19 susceptibility in males compared to females," the authors of the study added.

1,200-YR-OLD IDOLS FOUND IN NALANDA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, Feb 3: Two stone idols believed to be about 1200 years old was found from a waterbody close to the ancient Nalanda University during desilting of a pond, an ASI official said.

The idols were found earlier this week from Tarsinh pond at Sarlichak village near the ancient Nalanda Mahavihara, a world heritage site about 88 km from here, during desilting under Bihar government's 'Jal-Jeevan-Hariyali' project launched to protect and conserve water and the environment.

Details of the two idols were, however, not divulged either by Archeological Survey of India or the administration. Goutami Bhattacharya, Superintendent Archaeologist (ASI, Patna circle) said there are reports that when villagers living in the area came to know about the discovery of the idols, they started making plans to build a temple to house these.



"Our officials posted there came to know about it and immediately informed the local police. According to feedback that we have received, both the idols, which are probably 1200 year old, are now in the custody of the local police," she said. "We want to display them at the Nalanda Museum. I have requested the state government to immediately hand over these idols as per the provisions of the Indian Treasure Trove Act, 1878," Bhattacharya said.

The official said it is seen that any antiquities or treasure when found beneath the surface are usually brought to a nearby temple or other religious places by locals. But whenever any antiquities or artefacts exceeding the value of Rs 10 are found they should be deposited at the nearest government treasury by the finder, according to the Indian Treasure Trove Act, 1878. The collector of the concerned district has the power to acquire the treasure on behalf of the government.

of the day quote

The peace agreement between Israel and Sudan will promote regional stability and contribute to the national security of the State of Israel

EU COHEN | ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER

Rather than jabbing fingers at China's close cooperation with Sri Lanka, the US might as well show some sincerity and actually do something to help Sri Lanka weather through the current difficulties

MAO NING | CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON

Now, unfortunately, we see that the ideology of Nazism, already in its modern guise, in its modern manifestation, again creates direct threats to the security of our country

VLADIMIR PUTIN | RUSSIAN PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Pak: 18 killed in road accident

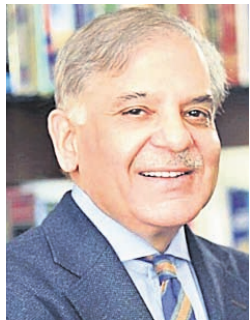
Islamabad: At least 18 people were killed and several others injured after a passenger coach collided with a trailer in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police said Friday. The accident took place late Thursday night near Kohat Tunnel on Indus Highway, Xinhua news agency reported citing the police as saying. Rescue teams had to cut through the passenger coach to retrieve the bodies and the injured trapped inside the vehicle, the police said. Authorities said the accident occurred due to the over-speeding of the trailer.

Snow, heatwave coincide in Oz

Canberra: While a cold snap has brought snow to parts of southeast Australia, people in the state of Queensland are sweltering through heatwaves. In a statement released Friday, the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) forecasted mixed and extreme weather conditions across the country, reports Xinhua news agency. A strong cold front associated with a deep low-pressure system swept across much of southeast Australia Thursday, bringing a burst of cold air as well as showers, localized hail, thunder, and strong gusty winds.

Iran military site hit by drones

Dubai (UAE): Satellite photos showed damage done to what Iran describes as a military workshop attacked by Israeli drones, the latest such assault amid a shadow war between the two countries. While Iran has offered no explanation yet of what the workshop manufactured, the drone attack threatened to again raise tensions in the region.



In the recent attack in Peshawar, the terrorist managed to breach the security check post and reach the mosque. We should not feel hesitant in admitting the facts and faults. The occurrence of the incident due to security lapses will be probed

SHEHBAZ SHARIF | PAK PRIME MINISTER

GRIM SITUATION

Drought in Uruguay has had a "direct impact" on farming production, causing about \$1.17 billion in losses or 1.9 per cent of the country's GDP, the Agriculture Ministry said. A breakdown showed agriculture suffered losses of \$490 million, livestock \$440 million and dairy \$100 million



Chinese spy balloon spotted over US

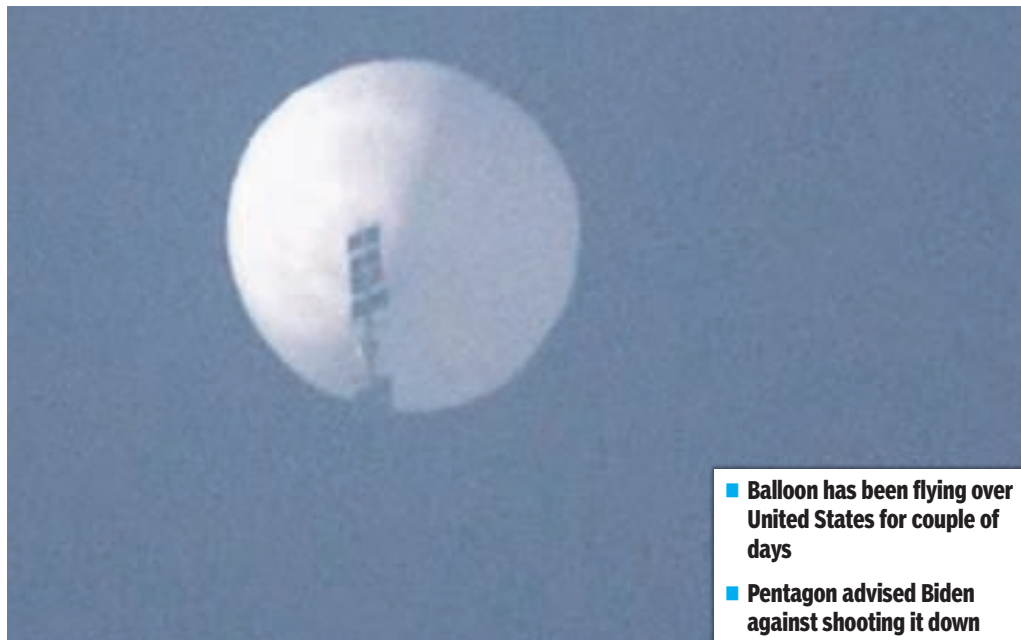
■ US Prez Joe Biden has been briefed about the incident, a senior defence official said, adding the Pentagon is exploring various options

AGENCIES

Washington/Beijing, Feb 3: A suspected Chinese spy balloon, said to be the size of three buses, was spotted over the United States' airspace, the Pentagon has said, a development that is likely to further strain the already tense bilateral ties ahead of Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Beijing.

Pentagon spokesman Brig Gen Patrick Ryder said the US government has been tracking the balloon for several days as it made its way over the northern United States and flying over sensitive installations. He told reporters Thursday that the balloon was "travelling at an altitude well above commercial air traffic and does not present a military or physical threat to people on the ground."

"NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command) continues to track and monitor it closely," he said, adding the balloon was spotted over Montana Thursday and is "said to be the size of three buses".



A balloon flies in the sky over Billings, Montana, US February 1, 2023 in this picture obtained from social media

Montana, a sparsely populated state, is home to one of only three nuclear missile silo fields in the US, at Malmstrom Air Force Base.

US President Joe Biden has been briefed about the incident, a senior defence official said, adding the Pentagon is exploring various options. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Mark Milley and

US Northern Command Gen Glen VanHerck have recommended not to "take kinetic action" because of the potential risk to the safety and security of people on the ground from the possible debris field, officials said. "Currently, we assess that this balloon has limited additive value from an intelligence collection perspective. But

- Balloon has been flying over United States for couple of days
- Pentagon advised Biden against shooting it down
- F-22s mobilised at Montana airport
- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has postponed his visit to China

we are taking steps nevertheless to protect against foreign intelligence collection of sensitive information," said a defence official. Biden has declared China

BALLOON ACCIDENTLY STRAYED, SAYS CHINA

BEIJING: China's Foreign Ministry said Friday that a balloon the US suspects of conducting surveillance was a civilian "airship" used for research, mainly meteorological purposes. The statement said the airship has limited steering capability and "deviated far from its planned course" because of winds. It said China regrets the unintended entry of the airship into US airspace.



"America's most consequential geopolitical challenge" and competition between the two major powers is growing. Bilateral tensions have flared over the self-governing island of Taiwan, China's human rights record and its military activities in the South China Sea, among a host of other issues. The US believes Chinese spy satellites in low Earth orbit are capable of offering similar or better intelligence, limiting the value of whatever Beijing can glean from the high-altitude balloon, CNN quoted a defence official as saying.

POPE LANDS IN SOUTH SUDAN TO URGE PEACE



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Juba (South Sudan), Feb 3: Pope Francis has landed in South Sudan, opening the second and final leg of his African pilgrimage with plans to encourage the young country's stalled peace process.

The pope, who was using his wheelchair, was greeted Friday at the international airport in Juba by South Sudan's president, Salva Kiir, as a crowd of thousands nearby undulated and sang in 96-degree Fahrenheit (35.5-degree Celsius) heat.

"The long, long expected moment has come," Archbishop Stephen Ameyu told the country's state broadcaster minutes before the arrival. Francis had one final appointment Friday in Kinshasa with Congo's bishops before flying to the South Sudanese capital, Juba.

There, he joins the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Rt. Rev. Iain Greenshields, in a novel ecumenical push for peace.

Francis had one final appointment Friday in Kinshasa with Congo's bishops before flying to the South Sudanese capital, Juba. There, he joins the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Rt. Rev. Iain Greenshields, in a novel ecumenical push for peace.

Together, the three represent the religious leadership of the overwhelmingly Christian country, the world's youngest, which gained independence from the majority Muslim Sudan in 2011 but has been beset by civil war and conflict. The Christian leaders are aiming to give a joint call for South Sudan's political leaders to put aside their differences and work for the good of their people.

Air raid sirens blare in Kyiv during visit by European leaders

AGENCIES

Kyiv, Feb 3: Air raid sirens sounded across Ukraine Friday as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hosted European Union leaders to discuss further sanctions on Russia and Ukraine's prospects of joining the European bloc.

The head of the EU's executive commission and the chairman of the 27 EU national leaders travelled to Kyiv to demonstrate support for Ukraine as the first anniversary of Russia's February 24, 2022, invasion of its neighbour approaches.

"There will be no let up in our resolve. We will also support you every step of the way on your journey to the EU," EU chairman Charles Michel wrote on Twitter Friday morning under a picture of himself on a central Kyiv square.

There were no immediate reports of fresh missile strikes following the air raid warning, a regular occurrence during months of Russian missile attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure far from the battlefields in the east and south. Zelenskyy is calling for more punitive measures against Russia by the European Union, though new sanctions the bloc is preparing for the anniversary are set to fall short of his government's demands.

Kyiv applied to join the bloc days after Russia invaded last year. The EU has embraced the application, although it has rebuffed Ukraine's



Zelenskyy welcomes European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen

- EU leaders to convene talks with Zelenskyy in Kyiv
- EU offers more military, financial, political support
- Zelenskyy stresses unity to defend Ukraine against Russia
- Ukraine may also get old Leopard 1 tanks from German stocks

calls for a fast track to membership while the country is at war.

"The EU will support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people against Russia's ongoing war of aggression for as long as it takes," the EU leaders were expected to say a joint statement, a draft of which was seen by Reuters in advance. EU officials have listed multiple membership requirements, from political and economic stability to adopting various EU laws.



A base jumper leaps off the Kuala Lumpur Tower during the annual KL Tower International Jump Malaysia 2023 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

British Sikh, who wanted to 'kill' Queen, pleads guilty

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, Feb 3: A British Sikh who allegedly planned to "kill the Queen" on Christmas Day in 2021 and was arrested with a loaded crossbow has admitted to treason charges.

Jaswant Singh Chail, 21, pleaded guilty to three charges, including an offence under the Treason Act, during a hearing at the Old Bailey on Friday. Chail, who appeared at the Old Bailey via video uplink from Broadmoor Hospital where he is presently held, will be sentenced by the court on March 31. He admitted intending to injure

Jaswant Singh Chail, 21, pleaded guilty to three charges, including an offence under the Treason Act, during a hearing at the Old Bailey

or alarm the late Queen under the Treason Act 1842, the Metro reported. A resident of Southampton, Hampshire, Chail had reportedly said: "I am here to kill the Queen", before he was handcuffed and arrested. He also

admitted to making threats to kill and possessing an offensive weapon in a public place, namely a crossbow.

"He had made a video of himself stating his desire to harm the late Queen, which he sent to a group of contacts shortly before he was arrested," a Met Police statement said.

In the video, which was recorded four days earlier and sent to Chail's contacts list about minutes before his arrest, he says: "I am sorry, I am sorry for what I have done and what I will do. I'm going to attempt to assassinate Elizabeth Queen of the Royal Family." In

the video posted on Snapchat he said that the attack is a revenge for the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre of Indians by British colonial troops.

"I am an Indian Sikh. My name was Jaswant Singh Chail. My name is Darth Jones," Chail, a former supermarket worker, said in the video.

The Queen, who passed away last year, had been celebrating holidays at Windsor Castle when the incident took place. According to reports, Chail had scaled the perimeter of the grounds with a nylon rope ladder, some two hours before his arrest.

Low H-1B visa limit affecting employers: Study

THE H-1B VISA DENIAL RATES HAVE RETURNED TO LOW LEVELS FOLLOWING THE ADMINISTRATION'S LOSSES IN FEDERAL COURT DURING FORMER PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP'S LAST YEAR IN OFFICE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New York, Feb 3: The low annual limit for US H-1B work visa petitions is currently the main problem facing employers trying to secure foreign-born talent, according to a new research.

The H-1B visa denial rates have returned to low levels following the administration's losses in federal court during former President Donald Trump's last year in office, the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) said in a new study released Thursday.

In April 2022, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reported employers submitted over 483,000 H-1B registrations, almost 400,000 above the 85,000-annual limit for H-1B petitions.



The denial rate for (new) H-1B petitions for initial employment in FY 2022 was 2 per cent. The rate declined during the final year of the

Trump administration after judges declared many of its H-1B-related actions unlawful. This led to a legal settlement and changes to restrictive

immigration policies that resulted in the denial rate for new H-1B petitions for initial employment in FY 2021 dropping to 4 per cent - far lower than the denial rate of 24 per cent in FY 2018, 21 per cent in FY 2019 and 13 per cent in FY 2020.

The research, based on data from the USCIS H-1B Employer Data Hub, also found that Amazon had the most approved H-1B petitions for initial employment in FY 2022, with 6,396, followed by Infosys (3,151) and TCS (2,725).

The 85,000 new H-1B petitions allowed each year for companies represent only 0.05 per cent of the approximately 165 million people in the US labor force.

An H-1B petition is often the only practical way to hire a high-skilled foreign national, including

an international student. At US universities, more than 70 per cent of full-time graduate students in electrical engineering and computer and information sciences are international students. A 2022 NFAP study found 55 per cent of America's startup companies valued at \$1 billion or more have at least one immigrant founder, illustrating the importance and contributions of immigrants to the US economy.

"Despite the end of the Trump administration's restrictive immigration policies that made US companies less competitive in the global battle for talent, companies in America still must deal with the low annual limit on H-1B petitions and employment-based green cards," said Stuart Anderson, NFAP's executive director.

ASEAN foreign ministers meet

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jakarta, Feb 3: Southeast Asian foreign ministers met in Indonesia's capital Friday for talks overshadowed by the deteriorating situation in military-ruled Myanmar despite an agenda focused on food and energy security and cooperation in

finance and health. Myanmar belongs to the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, but the annual ministers' retreat is being held in Jakarta without its foreign minister, Wunna Maung Lwin. His forced absence is a result of Myanmar's lack of cooperation in implementing a five-step agreement made in 2021 between ASEAN leaders and Myanmar's military leader, Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing.

In the agreement, Myanmar's military leaders promised to allow a special ASEAN envoy to meet with jailed ousted leader Aung San

Suu Kyi and others to foster dialogue aimed at easing the crisis, set off by the military's seizure of power two years ago. Last year, when ASEAN was chaired by Cambodia, Min Aung Hlaing was not invited to the November meeting of ASEAN leaders after Myanmar declined to let an ASEAN envoy meet with Suu Kyi.

Analysts said the military takeover in Myanmar loomed large over the foreign ministers' meeting, even as Indonesia, the chair of ASEAN this year, seeks to dampen concerns that the issue will hold the bloc "hostage."

Kicking off the country's turn as chair of the regional bloc, Indonesian President Joko Widodo said late last month that ASEAN will continue contributing to making Indo-Pacific a peaceful and stable region and maintaining regional economic growth.

of the day quote

In a world where everyone has powerful phones and 5G, everyone will play. I am confident that gaming is the future of sports and more

ANIRUDH PANDITA | FOUNDER, LOCO

The country imported 62.44 lakh tonne of urea and 90.26 lakh tonne of phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilisers during April-December period of the current fiscal

BHAGWANT KHUBA | MINISTER OF STATE FOR CHEMICALS AND FERTILISERS

We are pleased to report another quarter of strong financial results with PAT (profit after tax) growing for the 13th consecutive quarter

PRAVEER SINHA | CEO & MD, TATA POWER

SHORT TAKES

SBI Q3 net profit rises 62 per cent

Mumbai: Country's largest lender State Bank of India Friday reported a 62 per cent growth in its net profit at Rs 15,477 crore during the quarter ended December 2022. On a standalone basis, the lender's net post-tax profit grew to Rs 14,205 crore during the October-December 2022 period, which was up from Rs 8,432 crore in the year-ago period and Rs 13,265 crore in the preceding July-September quarter. The public sector lender's total income grew to Rs 98,084 crore from Rs 78,351 crore in the year-ago period, while the operating expenses were up at Rs 24,317 crore from Rs 20,839 crore.

Coal production rises 13% in Jan

New Delhi: Domestic coal production rose 13 per cent to 89.96 million tonne during January 2023 against 79.65 million tonne in the corresponding period of last year. According to official data, during January 2023, Coal India Ltd (CIL) registered a growth of 11.44 per cent, while Singareni Collieries Company Ltd (SCCL) and captive mines recorded a growth of 13.93 per cent and 22.89 per cent, respectively. Of the top 37 coal producing mines, 28 mines produced more than 100 per cent of dry fuel and the output of three mines stood between 80 and 100 per cent during January 2023.

Amul hikes milk prices by ₹2/L

Mumbai: The Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which markets its dairy products under the brand name 'Amul', Friday increased the prices of milk by Rs 2 per litre for all markets except Gujarat. The new prices are effective from Friday morning, the GCMMF said. With the increase in prices, one litre pouch of Amul Taaza milk will now cost Rs 54, while one litre of Amul Gold will be sold at Rs 66, the statement said, adding that one litre pouch of cow milk will now cost Rs 56, while Amul A2 buffalo milk pouch will cost Rs 70 from Friday.

Pak's forex kitty hit 10-year low

Karachi: Pakistan's central bank said Friday that its foreign exchange reserves have dropped by 16.1 per cent to \$3.09 billion at the end of the last fiscal week, the lowest in nearly 10 years. The foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan would cover just around three weeks of imports. The central bank said the reserves had come down by \$592 million because of external debt payments.



India is not engaged with Taiwan for any help in the areas related to roll out of 5G services

ANUPRIYA PATEL | MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

BITCOIN SPRINGS BACK IN 2023

Bitcoin is on the charge in 2023, dragging the crypto market off the floor and electrifying bank, a new meme coin. The No 1 cryptocurrency has clocked a 26% gain in January, leaping 22% in the past week alone, breaking back above the \$20,000 level and putting in on course for its best month since October 2021 - just before the Big Crypto Crash



HIT HARD BY HINDENBURG

No respite in sight for Adani

AFTER A TUMULTUOUS PAST FEW DAYS THAT ALMOST HALVED VALUE OF THE ADANI GROUP, EMBATTLED TYCOON GAUTAM ADANI-LED CONGLOMERATE IS STUCK IN A HOST OF PROBLEMS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: S&P Dow Jones has said it will remove Adani Group's flagship firm Adani Enterprises from sustainability indices with effect from February 7 following a media and stakeholder analysis triggered by allegations of accounting fraud.

The move comes amid stock exchanges BSE and NSE putting three Adani Group companies - Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone and Ambuja Cements - under their short-term additional surveillance measure (ASM).

The parameters for shortlisting securities under ASM include high-low variation, client concentration, number of price band hits, close-to-close price variation and price-earning ratio.

Also S&P Global Ratings revised outlook on Adani Ports and Adani Electricity to negative from stable while affirming the rating.

"There is a risk that investor con-



cerns about the group's governance and disclosures are larger than we have currently factored into our ratings, or that new investigations and negative market sentiment may lead to increased cost of capital and reduce funding access for rated entities," S&P said.

Market experts believe that putting in additional surveillance mean intra-day trading would require a 100 per cent upfront margin. The exchanges move might curb speculation and short selling

ADANI ENTERPRISES TO BE DROPPED FROM DOW JONES SUSTAINABILITY INDICES

S&P GLOBAL RATINGS REVISES OUTLOOK ON ADANI PORTS, ADANI ELECTRICITY TO NEGATIVE

STOCK EXCHANGES PLACE THREE ADANI GROUP COMPANIES UNDER WATCH

ADANI FIRMS' VALUE AT \$107.5BN, VERSUS \$218BN BEFORE HINDENBURG'S REPORT

ADANI ENTERPRISES SEES WORST EVER FALL, ERODES 76% WEALTH SINCE DEC

GAUTAM ADANI HAS SLID TO 17TH IN FORBES RICH LIST, WHERE HE USED TO BE THIRD

in these stocks.

"Adani Enterprises will be removed from the Dow Jones sustainability indices following a media and stakeholder analysis triggered by allegations of accounting fraud," S&P Dow Jones Indices said in a statement. It will make the changes to the Dow Jones sustainability indices, effective prior to the opening February 7.

The 10 listed Adani Group firms have faced a combined erosion of over Rs 8.76 lakh crore in the past

EXPOSURE CONCERNS

Amid concerns over banks' exposure to the embattled Adani Group, the Reserve Bank Friday said India's banking sector is resilient and stable, and the central bank maintains constant vigil on the lenders

SBI, PNB, BoB: SBI's total exposure to the embattled Adani Group is 0.88 per cent of the book or about Rs 27,000 crore, and the country's largest lender does not envisage any setback on its bets, a top official said Friday. At a time when the share prices of the group are getting hammered, the government-owned lender said it has not extended any loans against shares to the ports-to-mining group. Meanwhile total exposure of the second biggest Punjab National Bank (PNB) is at Rs 7,000 crore. Another state-owned lender Bank of Baroda (BoB) has total exposure of Rs 7,000 crore, which is also fully secured.

LIC: Government-owned life insurance behemoth Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) has disclosed holdings of Rs 36,474.78 crore in Adani group's debt and equity. Shareholders and customers of state-run LIC should not be concerned about its exposure to Adani group, as the insurer is a diversified long-term investor in the market, a top government official said. "It has put out the information that their exposure in Adani Group companies should not be any concern for shareholders and policyholders," Department of Investment and Public Asset Management Tuhin Kanta Pandey said.

GOVT REACTION: Finance Secretary, when asked about the Adani Group companies' stock rout, said there was no cause for concern for depositors, policyholders or investors in any nationalised banks or insurance companies. The exposure of the State Bank of India and the Life Insurance Corporation of India in any company is far below the level where it should be a concern for investors, Finance Secretary TV Somanathan said.

On Thursday, the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSE said three companies - Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone and Ambuja Cements - companies have satisfied the criteria for inclusion in short-term ASM.

The exchanges also noted that the shortlisting of securities under ASM is purely on account of market surveillance, and it should not be construed as an adverse action against the concerned company or entity.

Adani Enterprises, Wednesday night, said it will not go ahead with its Rs 20,000-crore Follow-on Public Offer (FPO) and will return the proceeds to investors.

Adani Group stocks have taken a beating on the bourses after US-based Hindenburg Research made a litany of allegations in a report, including fraudulent transactions and share price manipulation at the Gautam Adani-led group. It has dismissed the charges as lies, saying it complies with all laws and disclosure requirements.

Moody's says stock plunge to hurt Adani's ability to raise funds; Fitch sees no impact

Moody's Investors Service Friday warned that the rout in Adani Group shares could hurt the conglomerate's ability to raise capital, while its peer Fitch saw no immediate impact on its ratings. Given the significant and rapid decline in the market equity values of the Adani Group companies following the recent release of a short-seller report highlighting governance concerns, our immediate focus is primarily on assessing the rated entities' overall financial flexibility, including their liquidity position and access to funding to support refinancing and ongoing growth initiatives, Moody's said in a statement. Moody's said its ratings for Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd, Adani Green Energy Ltd, and Adani Transmission Ltd are underpinned by their regulated infrastructure businesses with long-term sales contracts, or their strong operating cash flows and dominant market position. Nevertheless, these adverse developments are likely to reduce the group's ability to raise capital to fund committed capex or refinance maturing debt over the next 1-2 years, it added.

UPI transactions hit record in Jan

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 3: The Unified Payments Interface (UPI)-based transactions hit 8.03 billion in January, a substantial increase from the 7.82 billion transactions recorded in December 2022.

According to the data by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), the value of transactions hit nearly Rs 13 trillion in January. The volume of transactions was 7.8 billion, and value was Rs 12.8 trillion in December.

This milestone proves that the country is now firmly on the path to becoming a digital-first economy and is a testament to the growing acceptance of digital payments in India.

In a major relief for some third-party digital payments players, the NPCI last week said it is extending the UPI volume cap rules deadline till December 31, 2024.

Services growth eases slightly in Jan

The survey said the rise in total new business was centred on the domestic market, as international orders decreased



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: The Indian services sector growth rate moderated in January as output and sales rose at softer rates, while subdued level of confidence among service providers towards future outlook appeared to have stymied job creation, a monthly survey said Friday.

The seasonally adjusted S&P Global India Services PMI Business Activity Index fell from 58.5 in December to 57.2 in January.

Despite easing from December, the latest figure remained above its long-run average (53.5) and the upturn was associated with favourable demand conditions and ongoing

increase in new work.

For the 18th straight month, the headline figure was above the neutral 50 threshold. In Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

"Growth across the service sector lost some momentum at the start of the year," said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

On the price front, there were slower increase in both input costs and output charges.

"After re-accelerating in December, input cost inflation in

the service economy retreated to a two-year low in January, aiding a slower and only moderate upturn in selling prices," Lima said.

As per the survey, the overall level of positive sentiment fell to a six-month low as the vast majority of panellists (80 per cent) forecast no change in activity from current levels.

"The latest results highlighted some caution among service providers, partly evidenced from the vast majority of firms predicting no change in output from present levels. This somewhat subdued level of confidence towards the outlook appeared to have stymied job creation in January," Lima said.

Meanwhile, the S&P Global India Composite PMI Output Index - which measures combined services and manufacturing output - fell from December's near 11-year high of 59.4 to 57.5 in January, but remained above its long-run average (54.1).

Very bullish on India, says Apple CEO

DURING THE DECEMBER QUARTER, APPLE ACHIEVED A MAJOR MILESTONE AND NOW HAS MORE THAN TWO BILLION ACTIVE DEVICES AS PART OF ITS GROWING INSTALLED BASE

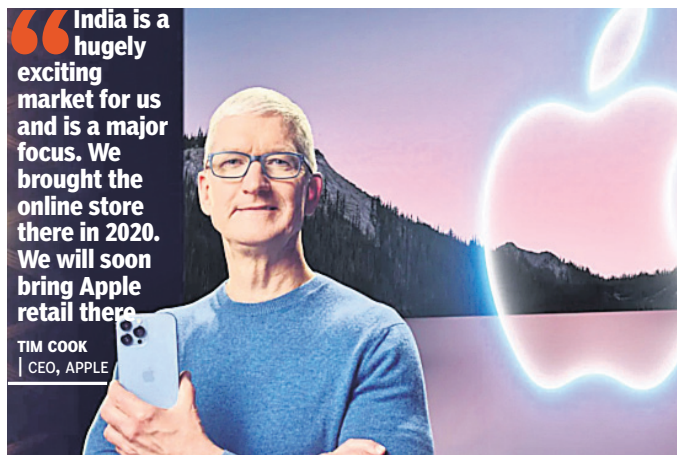
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, Feb 3: Apple CEO Tim Cook has said he is "very bullish on India" and described the country as a major focus and "hugely exciting market" where the technology giant is putting a "significant amount of energy" through investments, retail and online presence.

Apple Thursday reported revenue of \$117.2 billion for the December quarter and set "all-time revenue" records in a number of markets, including Canada, Indonesia, Mexico, Spain, Turkey and Vietnam, along with quarterly records in Brazil and India.

The \$117.2 billion revenue was down 5 per cent year-over-year, from nearly \$124 billion in December 2021 "as a result of a challenging environment."

"We actually did fairly well



through Covid in India. And I'm even more bullish now on the other side of it, or hopefully, on the other side of it. And that's the reason why we're investing there. We're bringing retail there and bringing the online store there and putting

a significant amount of energy there. I'm very bullish on India," Cook said at an earnings call after Apple reported financial results for its fiscal 2023 first quarter ended December 31, 2022.

Responding to another question

on Apple making strides in India, Cook said "looking at the business in India, we set a quarterly revenue record and grew very strong double digits year-over-year. And so we feel very good about how we performed, and that was - that's despite the headwinds that we've talked about," Cook said, adding that

Apple Chief Financial Officer and Senior Vice President Luca Maestri said that iPhone revenue was \$65.8 billion despite significant foreign exchange headwinds, supply constraints on iPhone 14 Pro and iPhone 14 Pro Max and a challenging macroeconomic environment.

"In spite of these circumstances, we set all-time iPhone revenue records in Canada, Italy and Spain, and saw strong growth in several emerging markets, including all-time iPhone revenue records for India and Vietnam," Maestri said.

MAJOR RELIEF

VI gets nod to convert govt dues into equity

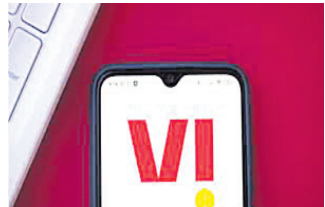
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: The government has approved conversion of over Rs 16,133 crore interest dues of debt-ridden Vodafone Idea (VI) into equity, the company said in a regulatory filing Friday.

Equity shares of face value of Rs 10 each will be issued to the government at the same price.

"Ministry of Communications...Passed an order today i.e. 3 February, 2023...Directing the Company to convert the NPV of the interest related to deferment of spectrum auction instalments and AGR Dues into equity shares to be issued to the Government of India," the filing said.

In 2021, the Indian government approved a rescue package for debt-strapped telecom companies, al-



lowing them to convert interest on deferred adjusted gross revenue owed to the government into equity.

"The total amount to be converted into equity shares is Rs 16133.18,48,990. The Company has been directed to issue 16133.31,84,899 equity shares of the face value of Rs 10 each at an issue price of Rs 10 each," the filing added.

Earlier, VIL had said that with conversion of dues into equity, the government will get around 33 per cent stake in the company.

India begin preparations

'Ashwin duplicate' for Australian team

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 3: The Indian Test side, led by opener Rohit Sharma, Friday began its preparations for the first Test against Australia starting from February 9 at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur.

Batters Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul and Suryakumar Yadav were among the first players pictured on social media accounts of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to have batting practice in the nets.

Ravindra Jadeja, who was deemed fit to feature in the series after playing a Ranji Trophy match for Saurashtra against Tamil Nadu, was also seen padding up and having a hit with the bat. "Team India have begun their preparations for the Border Gavaskar Trophy ahead of the 1st Test in Nagpur," said the caption from the BCCI's social media accounts.

Australia, on the other hand, are currently training at the KSCA Cricket Ground in Alur, on the outskirts of Bangalore, where they are practicing on custom-made wickets from Thursday, which they feel will be dished out for four matches in the series.

Australia and India, currently ranked number one and two respectively in both the MRF ICC Men's Test Team Rankings and the ongoing ICC World Test Championship 2023 cycle, will meet in a highly-anticipated four-match series to be held in Nagpur, New Delhi, Dharamshala and Ahmedabad.

India are the current holder of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, having won the last three series against Australia in 2017, 2018-19 and 2020-21. India have hosted Australia in 14 Test series and hold an 8-4 lead, with two of the series being drawn.

Eight of these Test series in India have been played for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, with the hosts holding a 7-1 series lead in that



Rohit Sharma bats at the nets during India's practice session, Friday

'AUSSIES WILL MISS ZAMPA'

Bangalore: Former Australia assistant coach Sridharan Sriram is disappointed that spinner Adam Zampa is not with the touring team for the four-match Test series against India beginning February 9. Sriram said that Zampa was someone who could "hold" his action for long periods of time like R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, something which Ashton Agar and Mitchell Swepson might find difficult in tough subcontinental conditions. Veteran tweaker Nathan Lyon, Agar, leg-spinner Swepson and young off-spinner Todd Murphy got the nod in the 18-member Australia squad with Zampa missing out. Sriram, who served the Australian team for six years, has seen Zampa evolve his game, and felt the 30-year-old wrist spinner's ability to zip the ball would be hugely missed by Pat Cummins' side. "I would have personally loved to see Zampa bowl here (in India), because he's got the pace, he's got that zip off the pitch," Sriram was quoted as saying by 'Sydney Morning Herald' Friday. "That's something I keep an eye out for, who has got the ability to beat you off the pitch, so I think that Zampa has got that," said Sriram.

time and a 16-5 win-loss ratio across the 25 Tests on their home soil, while Australia last won a Test series in India in 2004.

A 4-0 series win for India would help them attain a points percentage of 68.06, which is likely to be enough for a crucial top-two finish in the WTC standings, while Australia are well-placed to qualify for the final to be held in June regardless of the series result in India.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 3: Australia have roped in Mahesh Pithiya, a 21-year-old spinner with uncanny resemblance to Ravichandran Ashwin, to train on spin-friendly tracks as part of their preparation for the upcoming Test series against India.

Off-spinner Ashwin may prove to be a major threat for Australia, who haven't won a Test series in India since 2004. Expecting spin to play a major role in the four-Test series, the visitors have opted for tailor-made pitches and have availed the services of Pithiya to get accustomed to the action of Ashwin.

The four-Test series begins in Nagpur February 9. "Of all the stops Australia have pulled out to prepare for their trip to India, the most noticeable at their Test tour's first training session was the presence of a R Ashwin duplicate," a report in cricket.com.au said.

"With facing spin the major focus Thursday Pithiya was the standout among the local 'netties', bowling tirelessly and virtually without break through the day as he troubled the likes of Smith, Marnus Labuschagne and Travis Head, who all had long batting sessions."

Pithiya, interestingly, didn't see Ashwin bowl until the age of 11. Growing up in Junagadh, Gujarat he didn't have access to TV and when he finally watched the India ace in action against the West Indies in 2013, he started idolising him.

The youngster, who made his first-class debut in December for Baroda, was flown in for the four-day training camp at the KSCA Ground in nearby Alur by Australia after seeing his footages in social media.

It was Pritesh Joshi - one of the bowlers giving throw downs to the Australian batters with the 'side-



MAHESH PITHIYA

arm' aid - who first brought Pithiya to the attention of assistant coach Andre Borovec.

He also arranged for Mehrotra Shashank, a left-arm spinner who played first-class cricket for Hyderabad, to attend the camp.

"While no spinner in the world can perfectly mimic the challenge Ashwin will pose in this series, facing Pithiya over the coming days will at least help the Australians come to terms with the visual cues of the world's top-ranked Test spin bowler," the report said.

"The Aussie batters were also tested out by a self-described throw-down specialist Khaleel Shariff, who has worked with numerous Indian Premier League teams and was known to coach Andrew McDonald and Vettori from their time at Royal Challengers Bangalore."

The other Tests will be played in New Delhi (February 17-21), Dharamshala (March 1-5) and Ahmedabad (March 9-13).

Vini scores, escapes injury in Madrid win

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Feb 3: Vinicius Junior had more than his goal to celebrate in Real Madrid's 2-0 win over Valencia in the Spanish league.

Vinicius also was glad to escape serious injury after a vicious foul by Gabriel Paulista in the second half, which ignited a brawl and earned the Valencia defender a straight red card Thursday.

Paulista struck a hard kick at Vinicius' legs after the Brazil forward got past him with the ball in the 72nd minute, sending the Brazil forward hard to the ground. Vinicius quickly got up and went to confront Paulista, shoving him from behind as other players arrived to join the scuffle.

Madrid defender Eder Militao, who had been taken off earlier in the match, confronted Paulista as he made his way to the tunnel after being sent off.

Vinicius scored his goal after a long run on a breakaway in the 54th, two minutes after Marco Asensio had given the hosts the lead with a shot from outside the area.

Vinicius endured a tumultuous period last week after his effigy was hanged off a bridge in a hate attack before Madrid's game against city rival Atletico Madrid in the Copa del Rey.

"We have to protect Vinicius a bit," Thibaut Courtois said. "He is always dribbling and the defenders don't like that. He is always getting hit. They think he is provoking them, but it's his way of playing. We need this Vini to destabilize the opposing defense."

Thursday's win put Madrid back

within five points of league leader Barcelona at the halfway point of the season. The Catalan club won 2-1 at Real Betis Wednesday.

Both games were postponed from January because of the teams' participation in the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia, where Madrid beat Valencia in the semifinals after a penalty shootout before losing to Barcelona in the final.

Madrid, which hadn't won in two matches in all competitions, lost two of its key players because of injuries - Militao had to be replaced in the first half and Karim Benzema early in the second.

Madrid has one last league game - at Mallorca Sunday - before traveling to Morocco to play in FIFA's Club World Cup next week, when it will seek a record-extending eighth title.

It was Valencia's first game without coach Gennaro Gattuso, whose contract was terminated by mutual agreement amid the team's poor run. González, a club director who often acts as an interim manager, is expected to stay in charge until the end of the season.

Valencia has won only one of its last 11 league games and is one point from the relegation zone. Its only two wins this year came in the Copa del Rey, though it failed to get past the quarterfinals.

Defender Antonio Rüdiger thought he had put Madrid ahead with a header off a corner kick three minutes into first-half stoppage time, but the goal was disallowed after video review saw a foul by Benzema away from the ball. Madrid, the defending league champion, is six points in front of third-place Real Sociedad.



Vinicius Junior celebrates his goal against Valencia, Thursday

MESSI OPENS UP ON HIS PLANS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Buenos Aires, Feb 3: Lionel Messi may be in doubt as to whether he'll be still playing for Argentina at the 2026 World Cup but he's sure about one thing: he wants Lionel Scaloni to stay on as head coach until then, regardless.

The 35-year-old Messi led Argentina to the title in Qatar last December and wasn't entirely sure if his fifth trip to the World Cup would be his last. The next edition will take place in Mexico, Canada and the United States when Messi is 39.

Messi told newspaper Olé in an interview published Thursday that he'd regularly said his age would make it difficult to play another World Cup.

"I love playing soccer, I love what I do and while I am feeling well and feel I am fit and continue to enjoy it, I will do it. But it seems to be too much until the next World Cup," he told the newspaper. "I have to see where my career goes, what I will do. It depends on many things." In the near future, he suggested he wants to play in next year's Copa America in the US to help Argentina defend its title. "I will stay a little longer, I have to enjoy this," he said.

Scaloni is negotiating an extension of his contract with the Argentinian soccer federation and Messi thinks the coach should remain on the job. "He is very important for the national team,"



Messi said. "To continue with this process would be spectacular."

Asked what it was like returning to his club Paris Saint Germain after Argentina beat France on penalties to win the World Cup, Messi said he didn't have deep discussions about it with his teammate Kylian Mbappe,

the French striker.

"One doesn't want to speak and bring the topic of the final," Messi said, recalling his own experience after losing the 2014 World Cup final to Germany in Brazil. "I was also on the other side, I lost a World Cup final and I didn't want to talk

about it. Truth is there is no problem with Kylian, quite on the contrary," Messi said.

Messi is set to play for Argentina in friendlies to be scheduled in Buenos Aires in March to celebrate the team's third World Cup title with their fans.

Thailand Open: Praneeth loses in quarterfinals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, Feb 3: Indian shuttler B Sai Praneeth's impressive run came to an end after he went down fighting to China's World No.23 Li Shi Feng in the men's singles quarterfinals of the Thailand Open Super 300 badminton here Friday.

Praneeth, who had competed at the Tokyo Olympics, blew a substantial lead of 15-10 in the opening game to lose 17-21, 23-21, 18-21 to bring down curtains on India's campaign here.

On a comeback trail, Praneeth, who has been battling with fitness issues in a forgettable 2022, erased an early 2-4 deficit to jump to a healthy 11-7 advantage at the break.

The momentum shifted after the interval with the Chinese dominating the rallies to narrow the gap to 14-15. He reeled off five straight points to move ahead and then sealed the issue comfortably.

In the second game, Praneeth fought back from 3-6 to move to 9-9 but then Li zoomed to 16-10. The Indian then slowly started making a comeback and roared back into contest when his rival went to net.

In the decider, Li jumped to a six-point lead at 18-12 after an initial battle. Praneeth again dug deep to bring it down to 18-19 before a backhand return to net handed two match points to the Chinese, who sealed it with a smash.

India maul Bhutan in SAFF U-20 meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Feb 3: Three players scored a hat-trick each after coming in as substitutes as India mauled Bhutan 12-0 in their opening match of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship here Friday.

Neha (45+2, 55th and 90th), Anita Kumari (50th, 69th and 78th) and Lynda Kom (61st, 63rd and 75th) netted three goals each after coming off the bench, as India completed the demolition job. The other goals were scored by Apurna Narzary (29th and 36th) and Nitu Linda (43rd).

It, however, took them around 30 minutes to break the deadlock, but once that was done, the floodgates opened. Kajol D'souza drove her way into the Bhutan box and squared it for Apurna, who poked it past a hapless Bhutan keeper for India's first goal in the 29th minute.

Head coach Maymol Rocky made an early change, bringing on Neha in place of Sumati Kumari, and India soon doubled their lead.



India players, including Neha (No.12), Anita Kumari (No.11) and Lynda Kom (No.9) in a jolly mood after their victory Friday

Apurna was again in the thick of things as she beat Bhutan keeper Norbu Zangmo, and calmly put it into the back of the net.

Substitute Neha soon made her mark as sent in a low cross for Nitu Linda to tap it in. Neha turned scorer two minutes into the first half added time, as India took a four-goal

lead at the breather.

The Indians pumped in eight more goals in the second half to run over the Bhutaneese whose defence crumbled while facing waves of Indian attack.

India next play hosts Bangladesh Sunday in their second round-robin league match.

NEWS IN BRIEF

India rise to No.3 in IBA boxing rankings

NEW DELHI: India have jumped to third spot in the International Boxing Association's (IBA) latest world rankings. The Indian boxers have accumulated 36,300 ranking points, having surpassed top boxing powerhouses including USA and Cuba, which are ranked fourth and ninth respectively in the current standings. Kazakhstan (48,100) is the top-ranked nation followed by Uzbekistan (37,600). "This is a milestone moment for India, BFI, its boxers and all the fans out there. From the 44th position a few years ago to third, Indian boxing has taken a giant leap," BFI president Ajay Singh said in a media release.

Yuki loses tamely

Hillerod (Denmark): World No. 9 Holger Rune was in sizzling form as he trounced Yuki Bhambri 6-2, 6-2 to put Denmark 1-0 up in the Davis Cup World Group I Play-off tie against India here Friday. Yuki lost the match in just 58 minutes. The 19-year-old Rune broke Bhambri twice in each set. Rune converted four of the seven break chances while the Indian did not get a single chance to break his opponent. Sumit Nagal, India's No. 1 player, will now have to win the second singles against August Holmgren to keep his team in the hunt.

Haynes roped in

AHMEDABAD: Multiple-time World Cup winner Australian opener Rachel Haynes has been appointed head coach of the Gautam Adani-owned Women's Premier League (WPL) team Gujarat Giants while Nooshin Ali Khadeer, who guided India to U-19 team to World Cup triumph, will be bowling coach. Giants have already roped in former India captain Mithali Raj as their mentor and advisor. Former senior women's team coach Tushar Arothe will be the team's batting coach and Gavan Twining will look after fielding department.