



SID, KIARA GET HITCHED

Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani who were in a relationship, tie the nuptial knot at an intimate function in Jaisalmer

LEISURE P2



DEADLIEST DAY

Ukraine says the last 24 hours were the deadliest of the war so far with Russia intensifying the assault with thousands of troops

INTERNATIONAL P10



FINCH BIDS ADIEU

Aaron Finch announces retirement from international cricket, but will continue to play T20 leagues

SPORTS P12

Amrutanshu is state topper in JEE (Main)

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: SAI International School's Amrutanshu Mohanty emerged topper from the state in the JEE (Main), the results of which were announced late evening Monday. In fact students of SAI International performed excellently with 16 students getting more than 99 NTA score, 24 students finishing with NTA scores of above 95 and 31 students achieving scores between 90 and 95.

Amrutanshu achieved a score of 99.9749727 percentile with 99.7604534, 99.9678221 and 99.9499455 percentiles in Physics, Chemistry and Maths respectively. Amrutanshu had previously aced the Class X CBSE examinations in 2021 by being the school topper with 99.8% marks.

There were 20 candidates who scored a perfect 100 in engineering entrance exam JEE-Main's January edition, the National Testing Agency (NTA) said Tuesday in a release. The 20 toppers include 14 from the general category, four from the OBC category and one each from gen-EWS and SC category. While Md Sahil Akhtar is the PwD topper with 99.9848042 NTA score, the SC topper is Deshank Pratap Singh with 100 NTA score and ST topper is Dheeravath Thanuj with 99.99041.



FUN TIMES: Young participants of cluster-level sports meet flash the victory sign as they pose with dignitaries at the Dengimacha Government High School in Sambalpur, Tuesday OP PHOTO

Virginity test on accused unconstitutional: Delhi HC

The court made the observations while hearing a plea by sister Sephy convicted for the murder of sister Abhaya in 1992

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 7: The Delhi High Court said Tuesday that 'virginity test' conducted on a female detainee or accused is unconstitutional and in violation of Article 21 of the Constitution. The high court said that if such a test is conducted it interferes with the bodily integrity of the woman and also affects her mental health.

Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma said that virginity test brings forth the 'undesirable and abhorrent notion of differentiation on the basis of gender and stereotypes' and amounts not only to interference with bodily integrity of a woman but also her psychological well-being. "Virginity testing is a form of inhuman treatment and the same violates the principle of human dignity. The test, being violative of right to dignity of an individual, cannot be resorted to by the State and the same shall be in teeth of the scheme of Indian Constitution and the right to life enshrined under Article 21," Justice Sharma said. "Some fundamental rights cannot be suspended or infringed or abridged even when a person is in custody and right to dignity is one such fundamental right which falls within the ambit of Article 21," the judge observed.

Justice Sharma made the observations while passing the order in a case concerning the virginity test



conducted by the CBI on sister Sephy a nun who was convicted in the sister Abhaya murder case.

Sister Sephy was among those convicted by a special CBI Court in Kerala in 2020, for the murder of sister Abhaya in 1992. In the trial court verdict, the judge had concluded that sister Abhaya was killed after she witnessed a priest (also convicted in the case), Father Thomas Kottoor and sister Sephy in a compromising position.

The trial court was told sister Sephy had undergone a gynecological procedure to cover up the fact that she had engaged in sexual intercourse. The court noted that the procedure was done 'on the eve' of her arrest by the CBI.

In 2008, after her arrest in the case, sister Sephy accused the CBI of having conducted a virginity test on her without her consent.

The Delhi High Court, while stating that the virginity test conducted was unconstitutional, added that sister Sephy may avail legal remedies against the CBI for her alleged defamation. Justice Sharma also ordered that the information about the test being declared unconstitutional should be circulated to all investigating agencies through Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).

The bench directed the Delhi Judicial Academy to include this information in its curriculum and in the workshops for investigating officers, prosecutors and other stakeholders. "The Delhi Police Academy for Training shall also include the necessary information regarding this issue in its training curriculum. The Commissioner of Police, Delhi is also directed to ensure that the investigating officers are informed," the HC said.

Virginity testing is a form of inhuman treatment and the same violates the principle of human dignity and affects a woman mentally and psychologically

DELHI HC

Forest fire threat grows

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: Over 500 incidents of forest fires, 533 to be precise, have been reported from different parts of Odisha, a report released Tuesday by the Forest Survey of India (FSI), said. Among the total cases of forest fires reported, 23 are said to be major ones, officials informed here.

There could be a spurt in forest fire incidents in the state this summer following the prolonged dry spell across Odisha for over three months, an official stated.

"The long dry spell following last year's monsoon could lead to more number of forest fires this season," informed Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Head of Forest Force (HoFF) Debidutta Biswal. Around 643 forest fire points have been reported between January 30 and February

6 in Odisha, the highest in the country, the PCCF said.

Around 161 fire incidents were reported February 2 and 106 the next day. Similarly, 113 forest fires, including five large active ones, were reported February 4. Usually forest fires occur February 15 onwards. This time, however, a large number of forest fires were reported from Malkangiri and Nabarangpur in the first week of January. Most of those fire points appear to be deliberate fires lit by people that need to be brought under control, the senior official informed.

Fire management squads have been kept ready to tackle the situation with equipment including blowers and safety gears. Besides, the PCCF said awareness drives are continuing in villages for community involvement in preventing forest fires.

TURKEY, SYRIA QUAKE TOLL RISES TO 6,200

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Adana (Turkey), Feb 7: Rescuers raced Tuesday to find survivors in the rubble of thousands of buildings brought down by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake Monday and multiple aftershocks that struck eastern Turkey and neighbouring Syria, with the discovery of more bodies raising the death toll to 6,200. Turkey's vice-president Fuat Oktay said the total number injured people in the country stood at 20,534 and the condition of some of them were quite critical.



Countries around the world dispatched teams to assist in the rescue efforts, and Turkey's disaster management agency said more than 24,400 emergency personnel were now on the ground.

But with such a wide swath of territory hit by Monday's earthquake and nearly 6,000 buildings confirmed to have collapsed in Turkey alone, their efforts were spread thin. Attempts to reach survivors were also impeded by temperatures below freezing and close to 200 aftershocks, which made the search through unstable structures perilous.

Nurgul Atay told this agency that she could hear her mother's voice beneath the rubble of a collapsed building in the city of Antakya, the capital of Hatay province, but that her and others efforts to get into the ruins had been futile without any rescue crews and heavy equipment to help.

"If only we could lift the concrete slab we'd be able to reach her," she said. "My mother is 70-years-old, she won't be able to withstand this for long, added Atay.

In areas where teams worked, occasional cheers broke out through the night as survivors were brought out of the rubble. **Contd...P4**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Courts know nothing. It took them two years to declare you innocent. We knew it the day we arrested you

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	60286.04 ↓ 220.86
NIFTY	17721.50 ↓ 43.10
DOLLAR	82.49 ↑ ₹0.58
EURO	88.49 ↓ ₹0.28
GOLD	₹57,124 ↑ ₹169
SILVER	₹67,401 ↑ ₹2

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	34.4°C	32.4°C
TEMP MIN	15.5°C	16.5°C
Humidity	74%	69%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	MAINLY CLEAR SKY	

SHORT TAKES

Oil exploration near Konark to start soon

Puri: Oil India Limited has set up a rig at Kusupur in Gop block of this district to explore the possibilities of the presence of crude and natural gas. Officials of the company said Tuesday that the machinery and equipment required for operating the rig has reached the spot and the exploration process will start shortly. After Oil India found proof of crude oil in the Mahanadi Basin near Konark last year, the Centre-run PSU acquired eight acres of land from 37 owners in Kusupur on lease for three years to explore the quantity and quality of underground oil. An Oil India official said that drilling initially will be done till 22,000m and the process will take approximately 1-2 years before oil can be found.

60 prisoners to appear for Matric

Bhubaneswar: A total of 60 prisoners, lodged at various jails across the state will appear in the annual Matric examinations, conducted by Board of Secondary Education (BSE), this year. The prisoners are being allowed to appear for the exams under the prison reform programme in Odisha. They will appear in the exams at the Jharpada prison here. This year, the convicts and undertrial prisoners lodged at jails in Khurda, Bolangir, Angul, Nayagarh, Kujang, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur and Puri in various criminal cases will appear in the examination, said Jharpada prison's jailor Santoshini. The examinees will be brought to the Odisha capital amid tight security, she added.

Indian-American student Natasha is world's 'brightest'

In order to identify prodigies from around the world and provide a thorough understanding of their academic ability, CTY uses above grade-level testing

AGENCIES

Washington, Feb 7: Indian-American schoolgirl Natasha Perianayagam has topped the 'world's brightest' students list in a survey conducted by the US-based 'Johns Hopkins Centre for Talented Youth'. Over 15,000 students from 76 countries were featured in the survey and the tests

conducted by the John Hopkins Centre. This is the second time she has topped the list, her other success coming in 2021.

Perianayagam, 13, is a student at Florence M Gaudineer Middle School, in New Jersey. She also took the Johns Hopkins Centre for Talented Youth (CTY) test in the spring of 2021, when she was a Grade 5 student. Her results in the verbal and quantitative sections levelled with the 90th percentile of advanced Grade 8 performance, which catapulted her into the honours list that year. This year, she was honoured for her exceptional performance on the SAT, ACT, School and College Ability Tests, the university said in a press release Monday. Perianayagam, whose parents



hail from Chennai, said she loves doodling and reading JRR Tolkien's novels in her spare time. Talking about her achievement

Perianayagam said, "This motivates me to do more. I am certainly going to try new things and improve on my performances."

Perianayagam also stated that she reads voraciously. "It helps in accumulating knowledge and there are so many things to learn. If I don't learn something new every day, I somehow feel that the day has gone to waste."

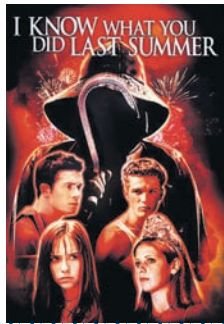
CTY used above grade-level testing to identify advanced students from around the world and provide a clear picture of their academic abilities. According to the university release, Perianayagam was among the 15,300 students who joined CTY in the '2022-23 Talent Search Year'. Less than 27 per cent of those participants qualified for

the CTY ceremony, receiving either high or grand honours based on their test scores.

In her latest attempt, Perianayagam scored the highest grades among all candidates. "This is not just recognition of our students' success in one test, but a salute to their love of discovery and learning, and all the knowledge they have accumulated in their young lives so far," said CTY's executive director Dr Amy Shelton.

"It is exciting to think about all the ways in which they will use that potential to discover their passions, engage in rewarding and enriching experiences, and achieve remarkable things - in their communities and in the world," Shelton added.

leisure



I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER SEQUEL IN WORKS

Sony Pictures is reviving its popular franchise *I Know What You Did Last Summer* with a sequel movie and lead stars Jennifer Love Hewitt and Freddie Prinze Jr are in talks to reprise their roles. According to reports, Jennifer Kaytin Robinson has been roped in to direct the film.

KALING MEETS STARS OF FABULOUS LIVES OF BOLLYWOOD WIVES

Mindy Kaling is in India with writer Dan Goor. The American actress took time to meet up with the actress and producer *Fabulous lives of Bollywood Wives* at Jodhpur. Maheep Kapoor, Bhavna Panday, Seema Sajdeh and Neelam Kothari Soni took to their social media handles to post photos with Mindy.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
You are likely to give in to the demands of your children today. Ganesh says it is for times like this that you labour so hard. You will finish the tasks that you have been postponing for a long time. It is a good day for people in the medical field and in the public sector.

TAURUS
Ganesh finds this an excellent day for managers and administrators. If you are one, the results you will achieve by the end of the day will far exceed the efforts you put in. This is mainly because your subordinates will be enthusiastic, compliant and cooperative. You will be focusing on the elements of leadership and team work and will use them resourcefully.

GEMINI
You will listen to your heart over your head, swept away as you will be in a flood of emotions today. This could mean that you will be unable to distinguish between good and bad. However, looking back upon your day in the evening, you are unlikely to regret any of the decisions you made, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will be involved in a team effort and associated with work like inspection and examination. You will base your opinions on your friends' choices. So select good friends, says Ganesh. You will spend time with close circle.

LEO
Your natural self-confidence and capability will help you attain a position of strength today. As a result, all your tasks will be completed easily and you will reap rewards greater than your expectations, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
You will be faced with serious financial problems today. You may even have to pay through your nose to get what you desire. Later in the evening, you might accomplish some short-term goals. Ganesh predicts that some vital business agreements will end your day in high spirits.

LIBRA
Ganesh says you will be able to improve your relations abroad. There will be good news coming from friends or relatives living abroad. Your working ability and efficiency will make you popular in the office today. In the day today you shall have a variety of good and bad experiences.

SCORPIO
An electric wire of 440 volts is apt to describe you today. According to Ganesh, you are in a belligerent mood today and can burst like a fireball. Meditation and yoga is likely to improve the situation. Remember, treat others the way you want to be treated by them.

SAGITTARIUS
Ganesh foresees a day full of promises. People in the creative field, especially artists are going to benefit more. Radio jockey and television anchors can make a note of this day in their diary, as it may serve as a memorable day, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
You have projected yourself as a confused individual. You may have a tendency to remain in a double mind. But, today you'll come up with a very specific plan that will surprise many of the people around you. Be clear about what you want to do in life, how you want your life to be and make sincere efforts to achieve it, guides Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
You are disappointed and you seek solace in spirituality. Don't run away from the problems; rather face them with strength and confidence, advises Ganesh, to bring your life back on track. With patience and belief in the Almighty, you will be sail through the storm.

PISCES
You will display kindness and generosity today and will do your best to help anyone in need. At work you will receive praise for the efforts that you've put in and your dedication will be validated. Even though you intend to give utmost importance to your family, this intention will trail in the shadow of pending work which will require long hours.



Raveena recalls being called 'arrogant'

Mumbai: Raveena Tandon, one of the most popular actors of 90s is known for her lead roles in hit movies like *Andaz Apna Apna*, *Dulhe Raja* and *Anari No. 1*.

In an exclusive interview Raveena revealed that she would say no to anything that she was uncomfortable doing in front of the camera. She would set conditions beforehand for doing these scenes. Her list included kissing scenes and wearing swimwear. However, she was termed 'arrogant' by filmmakers and she had to lose out on many films because of her conditions. She revealed that Karisma Kapoor's debut film *Prem Qaidi* was initially offered to her, but she turned it down because of a scene where the hero pulls down the zipper of the dress making the strap visible.

She said, "I used to be uncomfortable with a lot of things. For example, dance steps. If I was uncomfortable with something I would say listen, I am not comfortable with this step. I would not do the step. I didn't want to wear swimming costumes, and I didn't do kissing scenes. So I had my fundas. I was the only actress who had a couple of rape scenes with not even one tear in the dress. All my clothes used to be fully intact."

AGENCIES

Sidharth, Kiara get hitched

Mumbai: Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani tied the knot Tuesday at Suryagarh palace in Jaisalmer. While the news still feels like a dream to their fans, it's time to now believe it as the couple finally shared their first glimpses as man and wife.

Sidharth and Kiara's wedding was a grand yet intimate one. The couple had a royal, palatial wedding but only had their family and closest friends present. In an earlier interview, Kiara had said that she would only open up about a relationship to the world once she's married and that's what the actress did. So far, both the actors have remained tight-lipped about their relationship and also when the rumours of their wedding were at their peak.

The couple was seen together and loved immensely in *Shershaah*. The songs of the film also got popular and fans loved to see them together. Since then, there have been loyal fans of the couple who've waited for them to get married and see them as husband and wife. As reported earlier, love bloomed between Sidharth and Kiara on the sets of *Shershaah* in Chandigarh, so clearly, that film would remain special to them always. Though, Kiara had admitted on Karan Johar's show that she first met him at the wrap up party of *Lust Stories*.

AGENCIES



Aahana talks about her struggle as screenwriter

Mumbai: And it's back to struggle for Aahana Kumra, who's exploring writing.. After the struggles she went through when she began as an actor, Aahana is now busy knocking producers' doors once again this time to sell her scripts.

In her last interaction, the *India Lockdown* actress had mentioned that she's focusing on writing. She now says that her scripts, which she has co-written, being ready, she's now pitching them to filmmakers. "I have two different scripts. While one is a web series, the other is a film. I have realised that the pitching part is also very difficult. I have started pitching though, now let's see how it goes," she says.

Seen in films like *Lipstick Under My Burkha* and *The Accidental Prime Minister*, Aahana wanted

to explore the behind-the-screen side of film-making and shared that it was a discovery! "It is incredible when you understand what that world is all

about. Making a show is not as easy as you think it would be. Platforms are very difficult (to crack), producers are not easy to find, directors are not easy to nail down," she added.

AGENCIES



19TH DHAULI-KALINGA MAHOTSAV FROM FEBRUARY 10

Buddha Samman for eminent vocalist Shyamamani Devi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar: Dhauli-Kalinga Mahotsav had been organised by Orissa Dance Academy and Dept. of Tourism, Govt. of Odisha in association with Ministry of Culture & Art Vision. But this year, the event will be organised by Odia Language Literature & Culture Department, Govt. of Odisha & Orissa Dance Academy in collaboration with Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi(OSNA) and Art vision.

"The event is intended to permeate the gospel of peace through the concerts of classical and folk dances and music of India by integrating the quintessence of religions and faiths. It sends the message of peace through the martial arts being represented from across the country and abroad. Nearly 300 artistes from different disciplines will participate in the Mahotsav. We also aim to embrace many artistes into its cultural



fold for the promotion of international cultural amity and harmony," said Aruna Mohanty, secretary of Orissa Dance Academy and president of OSNA.

On the occasion, several awards will be given away that include Buddha Samman and Guru Gangadhar Pradhan Smruti Samman.

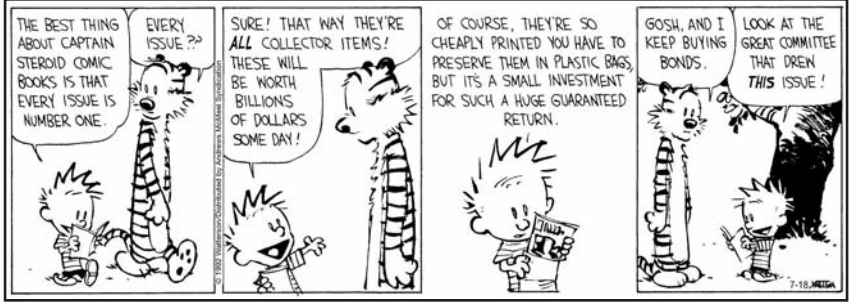
This year's Buddha Samman, which carries a citation, Angabastra and a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000, will be conferred on eminent vocalist and Padma Shri

awardee Shyamamani Devi. Four other experts in different fields - Guru Bankim Sethi, renowned music composer and singer; Guru Niranjan Rout, eminent Odissi dance Guru, Guru Satchidananda Das, renowned mardala exponent, Guru Sadasiba Pradhan, eminent Mayurbhanj Chhau exponent - will receive Guru Gangadhar Pradhan Smruti Samman. This prestigious award carries a citation, Angabastra and cash award of Rs. 25,000/-.

PEANUTS



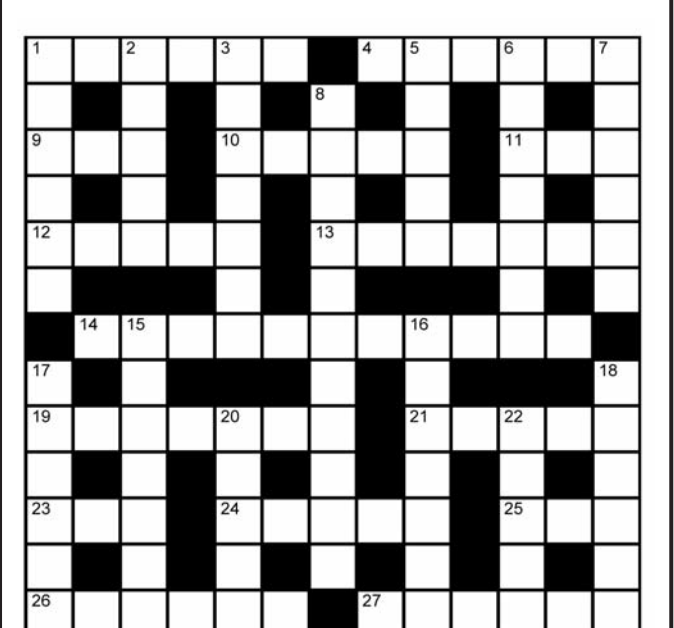
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



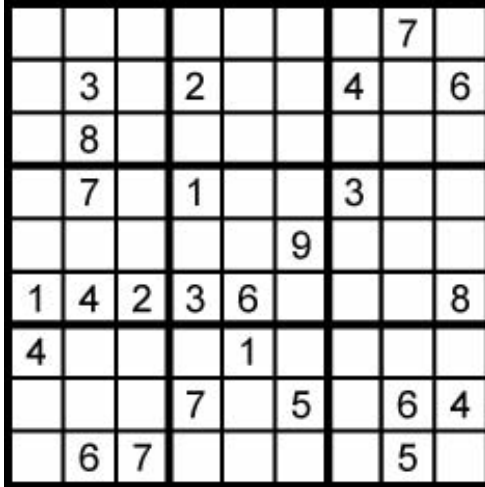
FUN post CROSSWORD



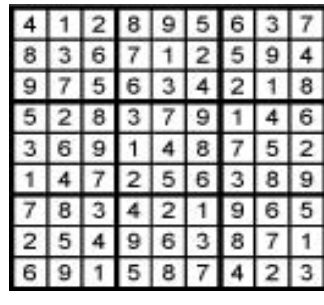
- Copyright ©2023 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Lentil, e.g.
 - 4 Empty, as a building lot
 - 9 Needle feature
 - 10 Results of ill-fitting shoes
 - 11 Flying saucer inits.
 - 12 Corpulent
 - 13 African flightless bird
 - 14 Intended diversions (3,8)
 - 19 Banqueted
 - 21 Cut off from a whole
 - 23 Self-importance
 - 24 Proverb
 - 25 Fisherman's tool
 - 26 Gnome or water nymph
 - 27 Thoroughfare
 - Down**
 - 1 Keep out of sight (3,3)
 - 2 Gaggle members
 - 3 Shakespeare offering
 - 5 Strong suit
 - 6 Comical
 - 7 Loving cup
 - 8 Valuables mover (8,3)
 - 15 Beguile
 - 16 Scrutinise
 - 17 Volunteers
 - 18 Lustrous
 - 20 Wedding salute
 - 22 Indistinct

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



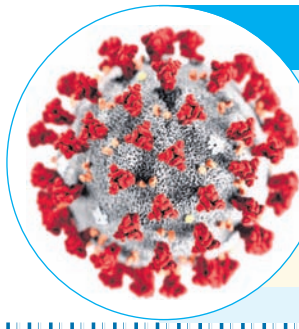
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



QUENCHING THIRST

Pigeons quench their thirst in Link Road area of Cuttack, Tuesday, as daytime temperature soars



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	67,65,00,802	64,89,93,460	67,73,753
India	4,46,83,543	4,41,51,027	5,30,745
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

Ensure early release of ₹14,249cr food subsidy, state urges Centre

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak has urged Union Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal to ensure expeditious release of Rs 14,249 crore food subsidy pending with the Centre.

According to sources, the Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation (OSCS) Limited, the nodal agency of the state, procures paddy at Minimum Support Price (MSP) from the farmers and undertakes distribution of food grains under the NFSA and other welfare schemes.

As per pact between the state government and Centre, there has to be zero financial liability on the procuring agencies as the cost would be borne by the Centre, Nayak said in his letter to the Union Minister.

The anticipated cost is required to be released in the form of advance subsidy at the rate of 90 per cent of admissible claim on quantity basis in the first month of every quarter, he said, adding that the Centre should also release a quarterly provisional subsidy to the state government (OSCS) after deduction of advance amount. "However, the release of advance



and provisional subsidy to Odisha is highly irregular," said Nayak.

The Centre is yet to release food subsidy of Rs 14,249.07 crore, which includes Rs 5,027.36 crore of provisional subsidy claim upto third quarter and Rs 1,469.78 crore of unpaid advance subsidy claim for the fourth quarter of the financial year 2022-23.

Similarly, he said, as per the standard operating procedure (SOP) issued by Food and Public Distribution department, there are provisions for replacement of stock by rice miller followed by certification by the joint team which is to be completed within six weeks.

"The certificate of replacement

is a mandatory document for release of subsidy to the state. However, the abnormal delay is being done for inspection by the Central officials. It subsequently causes hindrance for receipt of subsidy in respect of BRL rice stock," he added.

Nayak said the delay and short release of subsidy has put OSCS in tremendous financial hardship.

Nayak sought intervention of the Union Minister for release of the subsidy at the earliest.

Since all the resources, including the sanctioned limit of bank finance, have already been exhausted, further paddy procurement may be severely affected if the subsidy from the Centre is not received at the earliest, he said.

'NO COMPLETE PROPOSAL YET FOR HC BENCH'

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 7: The Centre is yet to receive a complete proposal from Odisha for setting up of additional Benches of Orissa High Court, Union Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijiju said.

He said the Union government has requested the Odisha government, time and again, to work out details of proposed Benches including its location in consultation with Orissa High Court, the recent one being vide letter dated April 7, 2022. However, no response has been received yet, the Union Law Minister said.

"At present, no complete proposal regarding setting up of Bench (es) of Orissa High Court is pending with the government," the Union Law Minister said.

He said that the state government along with the Orissa High Court needs to work

out details including provision of land. "Once the state communicates the proposal along with the consent of the High Court, the Union government will take further action in this regard," Rijiju said.

Once Odisha government communicates the proposal along with the consent of the High Court, the Union government will take further action in this regard

KIREN RIJIJU | UNION LAW MINISTER

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



BJD miffed as Women's Reservation Bill finds no mention in Prez address

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 7: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Tuesday expressed displeasure over the Women Reservation Bill finding no mention in President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint session of the Parliament January 31 this year.

Participating in the debate on the Motion of 'Thanks on the President's address, BJD MP Pinaki Misra said it was somewhat an untrustworthy document, and it suppressed several truths.

The address talked about women empowerment, but it did not mention the Women's Reservation Bill, which is pending for long, he said, adding, "We are deeply unhappy that Women Reservation Bill did not find mention in the address."

Sources said the Women's Reservation Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha in 2010. However, it could not be passed by the 15th Lok Sabha. The Constitution amendment bill lapsed as the term of the 15th Lok Sabha ended.

He also said the address talked about the poor, but in the Budget,



ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT

the government slashed allocation to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA). The Finance minister needs to reconsider this, he added.

The BJD member also said that some half-truths crept into the statement on medical colleges as well. Most colleges lack good infrastructure and equipment, he said. Misra, however, said that government policies on mines, minerals and air connectivity have worked well.

The BJD MPs demanded that the Union government take steps for inclusion of 169 tribal com-

munities of Odisha in the state ST list and also demanded allotment of 10 kg rice to the poor under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana.

Highlighting Odisha's contribution in the nation building and natural calamities being faced by the coastal state, BJD Rajya Sabha MP Sasmit Patra reiterated his party's demand for special focus status to Odisha. He requested the Centre that the fund sharing should be 90:10 (90 per cent by the Centre and 10 per cent by the state) for at least three years after a natural calamity.

Patra requested the Union government not to deprive seven lakh poor people of Odisha from the benefits of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and also requested for inclusion of Ho, Mundari and Bhumij tribal languages in the eighth schedule of the Constitution.

The BJD MP requested abolishment of 18 per cent GST on kendu leaf and also demanded that Food Corporation of India be asked to procure parboiled rice from Odisha.



INFRA BOOST: Guests and students at the newly-inaugurated auditorium on the premises of RD Women's University in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday. (Inset) Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, university's VC Aparajita Chowdhury and ST Secretary VK Pandian during the inauguration of the facility

NAVEEN INAUGURATES 1000-SEAT AUDITORIUM AT RD VARSITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated a 1,000-seat auditorium at

Rama Devi Women's University here, Tuesday.

The auditorium, with state-of-the-art facilities, has been built at Rs 18 crore under RUSA. Speaking

on the occasion, Higher Education Minister Rohit Pujari said that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has always prioritised the development of education in the state.

Among others, BMC Mayor Sulochana Das was also present.

According to varsity vice-chancellor Aparajita Chaudhary, history will remember the day.

Notably, rose day (February 7) celebration coincides with the beginning of the valentine's week.

Week of love starts with roses

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: The Valentine's week celebration kicked started Tuesday with lovers of the City buying roses for their beloveds on the Rose Day. City parks witnessed a buzz and flower vendors saw an obvious rise in the sale of flowers.

"Sale is usually little more today due to the rose day. The number of single roses I've sold is more compared to that I sell on the other days," said Biswajeet Jena, a flower shop owner, while also informing that a single rose sells for Rs 15-20 and a bundle sells for more than Rs 500. "Keeping the trend in view, we have delivered many roses at people's homes today," he added.

Notably, rose day (February 7) celebration coincides with the beginning of the valentine's week. Propose day, chocolate day, teddy day, promise day, hug day and kiss day follow the rose day before the Valentine's Day, which marks the end of the week.

Sruti Mishra, a student, said, "I celebrate the occasion with my family members and give them roses. It's my way of showing them that they are precious to me."

Actress Sindura Rout said, "Roses are presented as a token of love. It is the day when you send roses to everyone you love to let them know how much you love them. But at the same time I believe if you love someone you shouldn't show the person you love them on one specific day, love should be shown and celebrated every day."

COURT DENIES BAIL TO NAG ASSOCIATE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: A local court here Tuesday denied bail to Khageswar Patra, the business partner and close associate of Archana Nag in connection with the money laundering case filed by the Enforcement Directorate. On other hand, Nag's associate Shradhanjali Behera again failed to appear before the court.

Behera's lawyer sought another 15 days for her appearance due to illness.

Meanwhile, Nag's lawyers and her husband Jagabandhu Chand moved the court seeking bail in the same case.

Notably the ED has been investigating illegal money transactions of the lady blackmailer, Nag, Jagabandhu, Shradhanjali and Khageswar. Nag and others were reportedly involved in amassing property worth crores through extortion by honey-trapping high profile persons. They used to secretly make inappropriate videos of the victims and later blackmail them threatening to lodge false police cases and making viral of their inappropriate videos on social media.

City ATM catches fire

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: Fire broke out at an ATM kiosk at Brahmeswarpatna in the Lingaraj police station area here during the wee hours Tuesday. Following initial enquiry, the fire services personnel found out that short circuit of electric wires inside the ATM machine had caused the fire.

Some locals who spotted smoke belching out of the kiosk immediately informed the fire department through emergency number 112. After being informed, the fire services personnel, along with one fire tender, reached the spot to put out the flame.

NASA's Webb detects smallest main belt asteroid by chance

An asteroid roughly the size of Rome's Colosseum, between 300 and 650 feet, or 100 and 200 metres, in length, has been detected by scientists using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope, according to a new research.

The object, detected by the international team of European astronomers, is likely the smallest observed to date by Webb, the research said.

It may also be an example of an object measuring under 0.6 miles, or 1 kilometre, one of the smallest in length within the main asteroid belt located between Mars and Jupiter, the research said.

The team's project used data from the calibration of the Mid-Infrared Instrument (MIRI), in which the team serendipitously detected an interloping asteroid, the research published in the journal Astronomy and Astrophysics said.

Calibration is the act of checking or adjusting the accuracy of a measuring instrument by com-

parison with a standard. More observations are needed to better characterize this object's nature and properties, the research said.

"We - completely unexpectedly - detected a small asteroid in publicly available MIRI calibration observations," explained Thomas Mueller, an astronomer at the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics in Germany.

"The measurements are some of the first MIRI measurements targeting the ecliptic plane and our work suggests that many new objects will be detected with this instrument," said Mueller.

According to the research, these Webb observations, were not designed to hunt for new asteroids - in fact, they were calibration images of the main belt asteroid (10920) 1998 BC1, which astronomers discovered in 1998.

The Webb observations were conducted to test the performance of some of MIRI's filters, but the calibration team considered them



Observing the universe with James Webb Space Telescope (NASA/ESA/CSA/STScI)

to have failed for technical reasons due to the brightness of the target and an offset telescope pointing. Despite this, the data on asteroid 10920 were used by the team to establish and test a new technique to constrain an object's orbit and to estimate its size, the research said.

The validity of the method was demonstrated for asteroid 10920 using the MIRI observations com-

pared with data from ground-based telescopes and ESA's Gaia mission. In the course of the analysis of the MIRI data, the team found the smaller interloper in the same field of view, the research said.

The team's results suggested that the object measured 100-200 metres, occupied a very low-inclination orbit, and was located in the inner main-belt region at the

time of the Webb observations. "Our results show that even 'failed' Webb observations can be scientifically useful, if you have the right mindset and a little bit of luck," elaborated Mueller.

"Our detection lies in the main asteroid belt, but Webb's incredible sensitivity made it possible to see this roughly 100-metre object at a distance of more than 100 million kilometres," said Mueller.

If confirmed as a new asteroid discovery, the detection of this asteroid would have important implications for our understanding of the formation and evolution of the solar system, the research said.

According to the research, current models predict the occurrence of asteroids down to very small sizes, but small asteroids have been studied in less detail than their larger counterparts owing to the difficulty of observing these objects.

Future dedicated Webb observations will allow astronomers to study asteroids smaller than 1 kilometre in size, it said.

This result also suggested that Webb will also be able to serendipitously contribute to the detection of new asteroids. The team suspects that even short MIRI observations close to the plane of the solar system will always include a few asteroids, most of which will be unknown objects, the research said.

In order to confirm that the object detected is a newly discovered asteroid, more position data relative to background stars is required from follow-up studies to constrain the object's orbit, the research said.

"This is a fantastic result which highlights the capabilities of MIRI to serendipitously detect a previously undetectable size of asteroid in the main belt," concluded Bryan Holler, Webb support scientist at the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, Maryland.

"Repeats of these observations are in the process of being scheduled, and we are fully expecting new asteroid interlopers in those images," said Holler.



RAZING DOWN: An excavator engaged by BDA pulling down an illegally constructed house at Nayapalli in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

BJP raises question on court-monitored probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: Continuing its attack on the state government over murder of Minister Naba Das, state BJP Tuesday questioned appointment of a retired judge to monitor the crime branch probe in the case.

As the state government and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik do not have faith on the crime branch investigation, they have reportedly requested the Orissa High Court to monitor the investigation, BJP leader and advocate Pitambar Acharya said.

"The BJD's claim that it is a court-monitored investigation is totally false. The Orissa High Court has not issued a judicial order for monitoring of the crime branch probe," he claimed.

Notably, the state government says that Justice JP Das has been judicially appointed to supervise a statutorily-conducted police investigation.

Acharya dared the state government to produce the request letter sent to Orissa High Court for the appointment of a judge/retired judge to monitor the probe and the Orissa HC order on the appointment of Justice Das.

"Which order/writ petition or judicial proceedings has allowed appointment of a retired judge to supervise the probe? Let the BJD leaders make the proceedings public," he told the BJD leaders.

The appointment of Justice JP



Pitambar Acharya

The BJP spokesperson also questioned the legality of Justice Das' appointment and demanded that the case should be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation

Das is neither a judicial proceeding nor a consultation under the Commission of Inquiry Act, Acharya said.

He urged the state government not to misuse the name of the High Court and uphold its dignity as people have faith in the constitutional institute.

The BJP spokesperson also questioned the legality of retired judge Justice Das and demanded that the case should be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

"When the Chief Minister failed to protect his own Cabinet colleague, how can the people of the

state repose their faith?" asked Acharya adding a conspiracy at the top level, which can only be unravelled by the CBI.

Senior BJD leader and government chief whip Prasanta Muduli said the investigation is heading in the right direction and no one should question the probe when it is being monitored by a retired judge. "The Opposition has a habit of making comments on every issue. The Crime Branch is investigating the matter impartially while the judiciary is also keeping an eye. The society and democracy will not survive if they don't have faith in the judiciary" said Muduli.

Turkey, Syria quake...

Continued from P1

Sebastien Gay, the head of mission in Syria for 'Doctors Without Borders', said health facilities in northern Syria were overwhelmed with medical personnel working around 'around the clock to respond to the huge numbers of wounded'.

Turkey has large numbers of troops in the border region with Syria and has tasked the military to aid in the rescue efforts, including setting up tents for the homeless and a field hospital in Hatay province. Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said a humanitarian aid brigade based in Ankara and eight military search and rescue teams had also been deployed.

More than 7,800 people have so far been rescued across 10 provinces, according to Orhan Tatar, an official with Turkey's disaster management authority. The region sits on top of major fault lines and is frequently shaken by earthquakes. Some 18,000 were killed in similarly powerful earthquakes that hit northwest Turkey in 1999. Authorities fear that the death toll will keep climbing as the rescuers look for survivors among tangles of metal and concrete spread across the devastated areas.

Ailing Pintu Nanda leaves for Delhi hosp

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: Odia actor Pintu Nanda Tuesday left for New Delhi to undergo a liver transplant at the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS).

Nanda, who has been suffering from liver ailments for the past few months, was recently admitted to a private hospital after his health deteriorated. As the treatment required some ₹50 lakh, Nanda and his family members sought financial help from his fans and well-wishers.

Fellow Odia actor Ardhendu Sahu Tuesday donated ₹10 lakh towards the actor's treatment.

"So far, we have collected 25 per cent of the entire treatment cost. We have to collect the rest 75 per cent," said Mitu Mithun, an Odia actor familiar with the situation, while requesting the Odia people and other Odia actors to extend help.

The family informed that Nanda



has lost weight and is unable to speak properly. "We are praying for his wellbeing. And we are trying to collect funds for the same," said a family member.

As many industry people are sending goodwill messages and help for the actor, the Odisha Cine Artist Association held a meeting to discuss means to help him, starting fundraising on social media platforms.

At the airport Pintu Said that fans love and support is there with me, I will return to reunite with them.

ECoR GM inspects new railway station

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: East Coast Railway (ECoR) general manager Manoj Sharma along with other senior officials inspected the new railway station here Tuesday while also reviewing the existing developmental works.

"The GM reviewed the stocks to be used for the developmental activities related to passenger facilities and train operations and advised officials coordinate with all agencies, including local administrators, for smooth functioning of the ongoing works," said an ECoR official.



Earlier, while inspecting railway stations at Bhubaneswar and Puri, Sharma had inquired about the stocks of amenities provided in the train coaches. He had advised the appointed officials to maintain proper cleanliness and hygiene in all coaches.

"While inspecting the Pit Line, the GM emphasised on maintenance of the coaches including cleaning, charging and water facilities along with other necessary facilities including Catwalk of Pit Line for easy access to coaches to form the rake which helps in cleaning of the carriages," added the official.

Pit Lines are major infrastructure facilities which help in primary maintenance of passenger coaches. The station at Bhubaneswar will include aesthetic station buildings and other facilities, as per sources.

2nd phase Pani Panchayat Pakhya starts from today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: After the observance of the first phase of Pani Panchayat Pakhya in 117 Divisions from February 1, the districts are now all set to observe the second phase from Wednesday, across the state.

Pani Panchayat Pakhya is observed to acknowledge the importance of Pani Panchayats in water governance and to enhance participatory irrigation management.

The Pani Panchayat Raths, carrying 'Information Education Communication/ Social Behavioural Change Communication (IEC/SBCC)' materials and audio visuals, will return to the district headquarters after covering the identified locations from February 1 to 7.

Districts to conduct Pani Panchayat Samabasha from today, which includes exhibitions and dis-



tract level mela on farm mechanization. Also, the winners of various competitions such as debate, essay, painting and quiz, which were held February 6, will be awarded, said a department official.

Message of the Chief Minister has been circulated to sensitize the Pani Panchayat members including farmers and other important stakeholders of various initiatives taken by the

government and to acknowledge their contributions in water governance and participatory irrigation management. Banners, brochures, logo, slogan, tagline, anthem and oath have also been shared to make the Pakhya more interesting.

Jala Prabharis of the department of Water Resources have also been asked to monitor the activities to be conducted.

Less than 25% of workspaces in India have facilities for PwD

Majority of the Indian private and public sector companies lack effectiveness and policy-oriented actions when it comes to people with disabilities, as less than 25 per cent of workspaces in India have adequate facilities to accommodate them, says a report.

According to Randstad India's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Study, less than 25 per cent of workspaces in the country provide accommodation necessities to people with disabilities such as accessible toilets, technical aids, and appropriate seating arrangement.

The study focused on understanding the inclusion of people with disabilities in Indian workplaces through studying the experiences and attitudes of employers, employees, allies and policy-makers. For the quantitative survey, Randstad interviewed 206 business leaders

across levels and sectors. "Creating a diverse workforce is a crucial step in achieving inclusivity in the workplace. However, true inclusivity goes beyond just diversity and encompasses the acceptance and integration of individuals from all backgrounds, including those of different abilities, genders, ethnicities, and sexual orientations," Viswanath PS, MD & CEO of Randstad India, said.

According to the study titled 'Embracing All Abilities', 67 per cent of the business leaders from Indian public sector companies and 55 per cent from private sector companies said inclusion is present, but not mandated in their goals.

"While many companies in India are still working towards creating inclusive workplaces, we believe that by fostering positive role models, investing in necessary infrastructure & accommodation facilities, and implementing effective



policies and legal frameworks, we could fast-track significant progress in this area," Viswanath added. The study further noted that only a very small percentage (17 per

cent) of the business leaders from the public sector companies mentioned that their goals are aligned with inclusion. On the other hand, 53 per cent of MNC leaders have

aligned inclusion with their business goals. The study also revealed that when it comes to conscious PwD hiring, most of these happen at the junior (29.84 per cent) and middle level (23.27 per cent). Their presence in the organisational structure of the company decreases as we move towards senior and management roles in the hierarchy.

According to the quantitative

survey, 27.2 per cent of business leaders say that their organisations are collaborating with external groups to improve their inclusion of people with disabilities (PwD).

"It is encouraging to see some companies actively stressing on PwD inclusion by collaborating with external experts to bring diverse perspectives to the table. However, we still have a long way to go," Viswanath said.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Soumendra Kumar Sahu, R/o "D1/06, 1st floor, Block -D, Palm Avenues, Near KIIT Jagannath Temple, Patia, P.S. - Infocity, Bhubaneswar- 751024, District- Khurda" have changed my minor son's name from *PRACHETAS* to **PRACHETAS SOUMENDRA** with immediate effect for all purposes vide affidavit dated 07.02.2023 sworn before Executive Magistrate, Bhubaneswar. For all future purposes.

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Stubborn NHAI blamed for 200 fatalities in 11 months

The Union government had announced to undertake four-laning of 133-km long Chandikhole-Talcher highway four years back but the work is going on at snail's pace



Mangled vehicles following a mishap on NH-53 near Chandikhole

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, Feb 7: Alleged callousness of National Highways Authority of India (NHA) and construction errors have resulted in 200 deaths in 528 road mishaps in between January and November last year. Altogether 315 people have been injured in these mishaps, said sources.

As per the sources, two persons including a former legislator died and seven people sustained injuries in three road mishaps recently.

Binjharpur's former MLA Arjun Das and his associate Anant Mohanty died after being hit by a sand-laden Hyva on Kharasrota bridge on National Highway-20, Saturday. Similarly, six persons in an ambulance sustained critical injuries after being hit by a dumper at Akhuapada on NH-16, Sunday.

The Union government had announced to undertake four-laning of 133-km long Chandikhole-Talcher highway four years back but the work is going on at snail's pace, lo-

■ Errors in construction and bad shape of national highways are stated to be the major reasons behind these rising road accidents

■ The state government has repeatedly urged the NHA to fix these problems but the latter is yet to address them

calls alleged. Several plans and efforts are being made to check the increasing road mishaps but all have fallen flat due to lack of proper coordination between the district administration and NHAI.

Errors in construction and bad shape of national highways are stated to be the major reasons behind these rising road accidents. The state government has repeatedly urged the NHA to fix these problems but the latter is yet to address them.

As a result, Jajpur district has become one of the most accident prone districts. The district administration has time and again requested the NHA authorities to attend the meeting held on road

safety but the latter continues to skip them. Even the resolutions adopted in the meetings are not being implemented properly for which road fatalities are rising.

Further, the ongoing expansion work on NH-53 connecting Chandikhole and Duburi has turned the stretch into a deathtrap. The state Commerce and Transport department has repeatedly requested the NHA for early completion of work but to no avail.

The alleged callous attitude of NHAI authorities, its non-cooperation with the district administration and substandard construction work are stated to be the main reasons behind the rising road mishaps and subsequent deaths. Various stakeholders attending the meetings on road safety have expressed their concern over the issues.

Reports said NHAI divisions in Balasore and Dhenkanal look after the issues pertaining to NHs-16, 20 and 53 passing through Jajpur district. Although the highway authority claims that the work on NH-16 has been completed, the reality is different as some works are still in progress.

The condition of NH-53 and 20 is worse than that of a village road. The road space is getting shrunk and large potholes have come up on the highway making it difficult for the commuters to travel on the highways.

The district administration is empowered to file case in the court of the sub-collector under Section-133 of IPC against the consultancy agency and the contractor for causing harm to the commuters but the former is not taking any action against them. This is only emboldening the NHA authorities and the consultancy agency to remain recalcitrant, the report added.



FOR A BUMPER HARVEST: Women farmhands transplanting paddy seedlings for Rabi season in Hirakud command area of Sambalpur, Tuesday

3 critical in Badamba custodial torture

POST NEWS NETWORK

Badamba, Feb 7: The death of a villager in the custody of forest officials over alleged poaching of a tusker in Hinpinda jungle has opened up a can of worms with three other villagers were also found to have been brutally assaulted by the forest officials during their detention here in Cuttack district.

The injured villagers were identified as Raj Kishore Pradhan, 58, of Shyamsundarpur village, Biranchi Jani, 60, of Soruan vil-

lage and Rajiv Swain, 36, of Gopapur village under Badamba police limits in Cuttack district. The three injured villagers after being brutally assaulted were released from detention by the forest officials, Athagarh SDPO Bijay Kumar Bisi said.

Rajkishore and Biranchi sustained critical injuries and have been admitted to Badamba community health centre for treatment. Both the critically injured require advanced treatment but shifting them to any other hospitals is be-

coming difficult due to lack of money, family members said.

Sources said forest officials recovered the carcass of a tusker with its tusks trimmed from Hipinda jungle bordering Badamba in Cuttack district and Hindol in Dhenkanal district.

They conducted a post-mortem of the carcass but failed to ascertain as to when the tusker was killed and who might be responsible behind the death of the animal.

They picked up four persons on suspicion of their involvement in

the killing of the tusker four days back. They detained them in their custody and brutally assaulted them to elicit the truth about the animal death. A villager Dhaneswar Behera of Satagochhia village under the Badamba police limits succumbed to the brutality and a complaint was lodged at the local police station.

Senior police officials and Athagarh Sub-Collector conducted a probe into the incident.

Later, seven forest officials including the Badamba ranger were detained, Tuesday.

PADDY PROCUREMENT

Centre forgot Swaminathan recommendations: Acharya



CENTRE'S DECISION TO DRASTICALLY REDUCE FOOD GRAIN PROCUREMENT FROM ODISHA HAS COME IN FOR SHARP CRITICISM FROM THE BJD

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: The Biju Janata Dal Tuesday said measures must be taken by the Centre to ensure that the farmers of Odisha get the proper minimum support price (MSP) for their agricultural produce. Rajya Sabha MP and BJD vice-president Prasanna Acharya while addressing a press conference at Bargarh alleged that the BJP-led Central government has reduced ₹20,000 crore in paddy procurement in the recent budget which will affect the farmers in Odisha.

"The government has clearly forgotten about Swaminathan Commission recommendations. This slashing of ₹20,000 crore in the budget, will virtually ensure that the farmers are unable to even get their MSP and paddy procurement will drastically go down," Acharya said.

"Now, with reduced budgetary allocation for procurement, the Centre cannot increase the MSP. We demand the farmers should get ₹2,930 as MSP for one quintal of paddy as per a resolution passed in the Odisha Assembly," Acharya asserted.

The BJD leader also criticised the Centre for slashing the food grain procurement target of Odisha. "From 18 lakh metric tonne (MT) rice which used to be lifted from Odisha by Food Corporation of India (FCI) annually, now for 2022-23 the Centre has reduced it by 80 per cent to only 4 lakh MT," Acharya said.

"Bargarh district of Odisha alone produces 4 lakh MT of rice. So what will happen to the remaining 29 districts of Odisha?"

'RELEASE FOOD SUBSIDY DUES'

Bhubaneswar: For smooth continuation of paddy procurement, the state government has urged Centre to release pending food subsidy dues of ₹14,249 crore. Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak has written a letter to Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Piyush Goyal in this regard. Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation (OSCS), the nodal agency of the state procures paddy at minimum support price (MSP) from the farmers and undertakes distribution of food grains under NFSAI and other welfare schemes. Further, the Centre should release a quarterly provisional subsidy to the state government (OSCS) after deduction of advance amount. But, the release advance and provisional subsidy to Odisha is highly irregular, Nayak pointed out in the letter.

Where will the farmers of the other 29 districts sell their paddy," Acharya asked and added that the Centre is completely silent about it.

"We demand that every single surplus foodgrain must be lifted from Odisha through paddy procurement by the Centre in the interests of farmers of mainly Western Odisha and the farmers of Odisha must not be deprived of their MSP at any cost by the Centre," Acharya said.

Facelift for 13 hosps in Ganjam district



₹78 CRORE TO BE SPENT ON MODERNISATION OF HEALTH FACILITIES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, Feb 7: A total of 13 hospitals in Ganjam district will undergo facelift in the first phase as part of 5T initiative, officials said here Monday. Plans have been finalised in this regard and one hospital each in 13 Assembly segments of the district will undergo facelift. The total cost is expected to be close to ₹78 crore. The hospitals that will undergo changes are Berhampur City Hospital and those at Chhatrapur, Bhanjanagar, Aska, Hinjili, Kodala, Polsara, Khallikote, Keluapalli, Adapada, Chikiti, Sorada. The Digapahandi community health centre (CHC) will also be modernised.

An action plan prepared in this regard has been sent by District Collector Dibyajyoti Parida to the Commissioner-cum-Principal Secretary of the state Health department seeking his approval.

The help of architects has been sought for the transformation of these hospitals and they will submit their report by February 7.

According to available information, ₹11.24 crore will be spent on the Berhampur City Hospital, ₹6.12 crore on the Bhanjanagar sub-divisional hospital, ₹8.27 crore for Chhatrapur hospital, ₹5.53 crore for Hinjili hospital, ₹7.62 crore for Aska hospital, ₹4.07 crore for Polsara CHC, ₹4.09 crore for Kodala hospital, ₹4.23 crore for Khallikote hospital, ₹4.77 crore for Keluapalli hospital, ₹6.26 crore for Adapada health centre, ₹5.45 crore for Chikiti hospital, ₹4.71 crore for Sorada hospital and ₹5.06 crore for Digapahandi CHC.

These hospital are undergoing transformation under the 5T initiative to provide quality healthcare to patients so that they will return back home with a sense of satisfaction. The infrastructure of these hospitals will be upgraded and the posts of doctors, nurse, pharmacists and other staff will also be increased. This apart, the toilets, drinking water facilities, sanitation and waste management services will also be upgraded for the benefit of patients.

Curbs on fishing for DRDO weapon tests

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paradip, Feb 7: Restrictions have been clamped on fishing in sea for three days starting February 8 for testing of war weapons by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), a report said.

According to a notification issued by the DRDO, the restrictions will be in force from 9am till 4pm during these three days for a stretch of 30 km off the coast.

The district Collectors of Bhadrak, Balasore, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur have been asked to ensure that no fishermen or fishing boats from their respective districts venture into the sea for fishing during this period.

On being informed, the boat owners and fishermen have been asked to return back to shore with their fishing boats and not to venture into the sea during this period, Arabinda Swain, secretary of Odisha Marine Fish Producers Association (OMFPA) said.

College girl run over by truck

Remuna: A girl student of FM (Autonomous) College was crushed under the wheels of a truck near Sergarh overbridge under Khantapada police limits in Balasore district, Tuesday evening. The deceased was identified as Jayashree Barik, a Commerce student of the college and a native of Bardhanpur under Sadar police limits of the district. She was on her way home on a bike with one of her relatives when a truck coming from Andhra Pradesh hit the bike from the rear. Jayashree was flung to the right and crushed under the wheels of the truck.

Gene-edited babies living happily: Scientist

The controversial Chinese scientist, who created world's first gene-edited babies in 2018 and 2019 and was jailed for three years, has come out in the open, saying the genetically-edited children are living happily with their parents.

In an interview with The South China Morning Post, He Jiankui said they have a normal, peaceful, and undisturbed life.

"This is their wish and we should respect them. The happiness of the children and their families should come first," Hu was quoted as saying in the report.

Asked if he is worried about the children's future, the scientist said: "You will have high expectations of them, but you also have huge unease."

In December 2019, a Chinese



court sentenced Jiankui to three years in prison for violating medical regulations by using a gene-editing tool called 'CRISPR-Cas9'. In 2018, Hu stunned the world when he announced that he had

created two genetically modified twin girls, nicknamed Lulu and Nana.

A third child, Amy, was born the following year, also in China.

He used the gene-editing tool

● IN 2018, HU STUNNED THE WORLD WHEN HE ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAD CREATED TWO GENETICALLY MODIFIED TWIN GIRLS, NICKNAMED LULU AND NANA

● HE USED THE GENE-EDITING TOOL CRISPR-CAS9 TO REWRITE THE CCR5 GENE, WHICH IS KNOWN TO CONFER RESISTANCE TO HIV BECAUSE OF A GENETIC MUTATION

● HE HAS SET UP A NEW LABORATORY IN BEIJING TO WORK ON AFFORDABLE GENE THERAPIES FOR RARE GENETIC DISEASES

CRISPR-Cas9 to rewrite the CCR5 gene, which is known to confer resistance to HIV because of a genetic mutation.

"After the age of 18, the children will decide whether to do med-

ical follow-ups for their individual needs. We committed to doing this for their lifetimes," the scientist told the publication.

He now wants to set up a charitable foundation to raise money and cover health-related expenses for the three children.

The scientist has been invited to visit the University of Oxford next month to give talks about the use of CRISPR gene-editing technology in reproductive medicine.

He has set up a new laboratory in Beijing to work on affordable gene therapies for rare genetic diseases, said the report.

His experiments, which were carried out on seven embryos in late 2018, had sent shockwaves through the medical and scientific world.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. M-82:
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (C), DIRECTORATE OF FISHERIES, ODISHA, CUTTACK
E-MAIL :- eefedcuttack@gmail.com
Bid Identification No. 207 / Dt. 06.02.2023

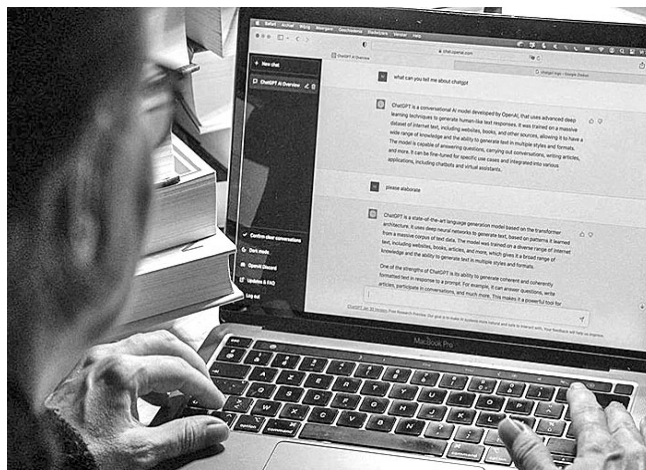
- No. of Works : 01 (ONE) Number of survey & investigation works.
- Type of Works : Survey, Investigation & Preparation of D.P.R works.
- Approximate Estimated Cost : Rs. 17.36 Lakhs
- Class of Contractor : Registered Consultancy Firms/ Consultants.
- Period of Completion : 01 [ONE] Calendar month.
- Date of Sale & Receipt : Dt. 15.02.2023 to 2.00 PM of Dt.23.02.2023 (Working days only)
- Date of Opening : Dt. 24.02.2023. at 11:00 AM.
- Name of Office inviting Bid : Executive Engineer (C), Directorate of Fisheries, Odisha, Cuttack.

Further details can be seen in the bidding documents & can be down loaded from the Government of Odisha website (http://www.odisha.gov.in). Authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd./ Executive Engineer (C)
Directorate of Fisheries, Odisha, Cuttack
OIPR-06030/11/0017/2223

FOCUS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

WHAT'S WRONG WITH CHATGPT?



Taking advantage of easy access to finance over the past decade, companies and venture-capital funds invested billions in an AI arms race, resulting in a technology that can now be used to replace humans across a wider range of tasks. This could be a disaster not only for workers, but also for consumers and even investors

efficient assembly line. Yes, these new technologies brought some amount of automation, as centralised electricity sources enabled machines to perform more tasks more efficiently. But the reorganisation of the factory that accompanied electrification also created new tasks for workers and thousands of new jobs with higher wages, bolstering shared prosperity. Ford led the way in demonstrating that creating human-complementary technology is good business.

Today, AI offers an opportunity to do likewise. AI-powered digital tools can be used to help nurses, teachers, and customer-service representatives understand what they are dealing with and what would help improve outcomes for patients, students, and consumers. The predictive power of algorithms could be harnessed to help people, rather than to replace them. If AIs are used to offer recommendations for human consideration, the ability to use such recommendations wisely will be recognised as a valuable human skill. Other AI applications can facilitate better allocation of workers to tasks, or even create completely new markets (think of Airbnb or rideshare apps).

Unfortunately, these opportunities are being neglected, because most US tech leaders continue to spend heavily to develop software that can do what humans already do just fine. They know that they can cash out easily by selling their products to corporations that have developed tunnel vision. Everyone is focused on leveraging AI to cut labour costs, with little concern not only for the immediate customer experience but also for the future of American spending power.

Ford understood that it made no sense to mass-produce cars if the masses couldn't afford to buy them. Today's corporate titans, by contrast, are using the new technologies in ways that will ruin our collective future.

Daron Acemoglu is Professor of Economics at MIT. Simon Johnson, a former Chief Economist at the International Monetary Fund, is a professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Microsoft is reportedly delighted with OpenAI's ChatGPT, a natural-language artificial-intelligence programme capable of generating text that reads as if a human wrote it. Taking advantage of easy access to finance over the past decade, companies and venture-capital funds invested billions in an AI arms race, resulting in a technology that can now be used to replace humans across a wider range of tasks. This could be a disaster not only for workers, but also for consumers and even investors.

The problem for workers is obvious: there will be fewer jobs requiring strong communication skills, and thus fewer positions that pay well. Cleaners, drivers, and some other manual workers will keep their jobs, but everyone else should be afraid. Consider customer service. Instead of hiring people to interact with customers, companies will increasingly rely on generative AIs like ChatGPT to placate angry callers with clever and soothing words. Fewer entry-level jobs will mean fewer opportunities to start a career – continuing a trend established by earlier digital technologies.

Consumers, too, will suffer. Chatbots may be fine for handling entirely routine questions, but it is not routine questions that generally lead people to call customer service. When there is a real issue – like an airline grinding to a halt or a pipe bursting in your basement – you want to talk to a well-qualified, empathetic professional with the ability to marshal resources and organise timely solutions. You do not want to be put on hold for eight hours, but nor do you want to speak immediately to an eloquent but ultimately useless chatbot.

Of course, in an ideal world, new companies offering better customer service would emerge and seize market share. But in the real world, many barriers to entry make it difficult for new firms to expand quickly. You may love your local bakery or a friendly airline representative or a particular doctor, but think of what it takes to create a new grocery store chain, a new airline, or a new hospital. Existing firms have big advantages, including important forms of market power that allow them

to choose which available technologies to adopt and to use them however they want.

More fundamentally, new companies offering better products and services generally require new technologies, such as digital tools that can make workers more effective and help create better customised services for the company's clientele. But, since AI investments are putting automation first, these kinds of tools are not even being created.

Investors in publicly traded companies will also lose out in the age of ChatGPT. These companies could be improving the services they offer to consumers by investing in new technologies to make their workforces more productive and capable of performing new tasks, and by providing plenty of training for upgrading employees' skills. But they are not doing so. Many executives remain obsessed with a strategy that ultimately will come to be remembered as self-defeating: paring back employment and keeping wages as low as possible. Executives pursue these cuts because it is what the smart kids (analysts, consultants, finance professors, other executives) say they should do, and because Wall

Street judges their performance relative to other companies that are also squeezing workers as hard as they can.

AI is also poised to amplify the deleterious social effects of private equity. Already, vast fortunes can be made by buying up companies, loading them with debt while going private, and then hollowing out their workforces – all while paying high dividends to the new owners. Now, ChatGPT and other AI technologies will make it even easier to squeeze workers as much as possible through workplace surveillance, tougher working conditions, zero-hours contracts, and so forth.

These trends all have dire implications for Americans' spending power – the engine of the US economy. But as we explain in our forthcoming book, *Power in Progress: Our Thousand-Year Struggle Over Technology and Prosperity*, a sputtering economic engine need not lie in our future. After all, the introduction of new machinery and technological breakthroughs has had very different consequences in the past.

Over a century ago, Henry Ford revolutionised car production by investing heavily in new electrical machinery and developing a more



Daron Acemoglu & Simon Johnson

THE PREDICTIVE POWER OF ALGORITHMS COULD BE HARNESSSED TO HELP PEOPLE, RATHER THAN TO REPLACE THEM

Before getting angry for the mistakes of others one should always remember one's own mistakes.



THE MOTHER

Democratic Dictator

There is no halfway, either in democracy or in dictatorship. In other words, a hybrid democracy is a dangerous commodity and a recipe for disaster for both the country where it is practised and the person or persons who implement it. One has to go the whole hog, no matter whether one wants to be a dictator or a democrat. This is the lesson offered by the life and legacy of Pakistan's General Pervez Musharraf who died February 5 at the age of 79 at a hospital in Dubai.

Musharraf was the last military leader to have ruled Pakistan from 1999 to 2008, following a bloodless coup. That coup that had brought him to power was unique in some ways. As the Chief of the Army, Musharraf was away on a visit to Beijing when junior field commanders revolted and carried out the change of power. Then they called the General and asked him to cut short his China visit and return home immediately. At that time, Pakistani planes were barred from over flying India. That forced Musharraf to fly from China through Sri Lanka back to Islamabad. When he landed, he was welcomed as the Chief of the country, not just the army.

His story is a reflection of Pakistan itself, a country tormented since its creation in 1947 by unrest, assassinations, leaders going into exile to save their lives, fratricidal battles between rival dynasties, economic crises, natural disasters of massive proportions and games played by Western powers. Perhaps, the most remarkable feature of the country's tryst with democracy and dictatorship is that no Prime Minister could ever complete a term.

Musharraf was the most charismatic leader of Pakistan who was credited with attracting foreign investment to the country that saw the strongest economic growth in nearly 30 years during his rule. It was he who gave a new lease of life to an independent media and sought to free the country from the shackles of bigoted, religious fanatics and extremists.

However, the irony of history is that his decade-long rule was also marred by a heavy-handed approach to dissent, arrest of rivals who included top political leaders of the country. What is even worse is he imposed a nearly six-week-long state of emergency in which he suspended the constitution and censored the media. In fact, he failed to build on his early popularity to carry out sustainable economic and political reforms. On the contrary, he turned into a military dictator and pursued vested interests after his short flirtation with democracy.

It could be his background of being a graduate from a Christian high school that shaped his liberal outlook and he was keen on Pakistan embracing liberal Islam. This very approach endeared him to the West. Subsequently, he joined what Washington called its "war on terror" and gave ground and air access to US armed forces launching attacks on al-Qaeda militants operating in Afghanistan.

However, this decision reversed Pakistan's long-standing policy of supporting the Taliban, which at that point controlled Afghanistan. As a result, domestic militant groups bayed for his blood and he survived at least four assassination attempts. No wonder the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, an umbrella group of Pakistani militant organisations formed after Musharraf's crackdown on extremists, celebrated his death. In a statement it said, "This was the infamous army chief who sold off the country's honour and respect." Pakistan's lawmakers and lawyers are also divided on the question of whether respect should be paid to the departed leader since he had targeted both the judiciary and politicians. He was accused of aiding and abetting the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, killed while on campaign for national elections.

The assessment by Fawad Chaudhury, a former aide of Musharraf and currently a senior leader of former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party, best describes the former ruler of Pakistan: "He is called a military dictator, but there has never been a stronger democratic system than that under him."

In the ultimate analysis, Musharraf could be said to be a bundle of contradictions that ultimately sealed his fate. He tried to be a democrat, but ended up becoming a dictator. He sought to stamp out religious extremists, as was evident in his operation at the Lal Masjid in Islamabad, but gave shelter to Osama bin Laden when the US, his ally, was frantically trying to hound him out. The policy of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds does not pay in the long run. Musharraf's life best demonstrates this truth while also showing that dual policy did a lot of good for him. He survived long enough and died a normal death as opposed to the tortuous end he had put some others to.

WISDOM CORNER

The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark. MICHELANGELO

We all want to be famous people, and the moment we want to be something we are no longer free. JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

Think in the morning. Act in the noon. Eat in the evening. Sleep in the night. WILLIAM BLAKE

WORDSWORTH

Freegan

The idea behind freeganism is that you get as much of your food as you can from stuff that has been thrown out by supermarkets, restaurants and street markets. Though the practice is also known as voluntary simplicity and monetary minimalism it's only partly about living cheaply. It's more a political philosophy, a statement of defiance against what freegans regard as the wasteful consumerist culture of the developed world, which is why it has also been called ethical eating and the ultimate boycott. The name is usually said to be a blend of free and vegan, since early practitioners were either vegetarian or vegan (not least because it is much more dangerous to eat discarded meat or fish than vegetables and grains). But it has also been argued from a political perspective that it's short for free gain. The evidence is that some normally vegan freegans will take animal products, since there's another term, meagan, for vegans who will eat meat if they can get it for nothing. The culture lives on the edge of illegality, since many firms regard taking food from skips or dumpsters as theft. Some extreme freegan practices would be considered unacceptable by most people, such as table diving, in which freegans hover in a restaurant and grab discarded food from diners' plates after they leave.

Frick and Frack

Frick and Frack remains a fairly common one in North America for any two people who are closely linked in some way, especially through a work partnership. The Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang cites it as being Black English, but it certainly has a much wider circulation than that. For example, this appeared in The Atlanta Journal and Constitution in April 2005: "And where had all his old friends gone? You know, he and Woods used to be as close as Frick and Frack." Or this from the Palm Beach Post in August the previous year: "Goss called himself and Graham the 'Frick and Frack' of congressional intelligence and won high marks for helping shepherd the contentious inquiry in the face of White House resistance." So it's reasonable enough that Brian and Nick of the Back Street Boys should use the nicknames Frick and Frack for each other. The origin is ultimately and undoubtedly in a famous partnership of Swiss comedy ice skaters, Werner Groebli and Hans Mauch, whose stage names these were. They came to public fame in the later years of a series of skating spectacles called Ice Follies, promoted by Eddie Shipstad and his brother Roy, which began in 1936 and ran for almost 50 years.

IN JEST THIS

Don't let dirty socks get in way of happy life



Melvin Durai

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO HANDLE DIRTY SOCKS ON THE SOFA

Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner, recently wrote a tweet about domestic life that went viral: "Found socks on sofa, asked @MalikAsser if they were his, he said the socks were dirty and I can put them away. So I took them and put them in the (rubbish) bin."

The socks that she discarded belonged to her husband, Asser Malik, a manager for the Pakistan Cricket Board. Many women tweeted their approval of Malala's actions, with messages along the lines of "That'll teach him," "Way to sock it to him," and "Dirty socks is why I filed for divorce."

But throwing her husband's socks in the trash bin is one of the last things you'd expect from someone who won a prize for peace. It wouldn't shock me to learn that some members of the Nobel selection committee are wondering if they gave her the

prize too early in life, allowing her to get a little too complacent about promoting peace.

Let's just ask other Nobel Peace Prize winners how they would deal with socks on the sofa:

The 14th Dalai Lama (1999 winner): "Someone else's action should not determine your response. If I find dirty socks on my sofa, I wash them and dry them like they are mine. Then I return them with a smile."

Muhammad Yunus, Bangladeshi economist (2006): "We have a list of human rights that we all believe in, such as the right to food, the right to shelter, and the right to leave dirty socks on your sofa. Who does the sofa belong to? Was it purchased with microfinance? These are questions that also must be asked."

Al Gore, US politician and environmentalist (2007): "It's scary to picture a world in which everyone throws dirty

socks found on sofas in the trash. What would that do to our planet? Our landfills would be full of dirty socks. Can you imagine the smell coming from our landfills? As this terrible smell enters the atmosphere, it would cause the ozone layer to shift sideways uncomfortably, resulting in even more global warming."

Barack Obama, former US President (2009): "If I found a pair of Michelle's dirty socks on the sofa, the first thing I would do is rush her to a hospital to find out if anything is wrong with her. Michelle would never leave dirty socks on the sofa. But in a hypothetical scenario where Michelle has left her dirty socks on the sofa, I would say, in my most loving tone, 'Michelle, sweetheart, I don't mind your dirty socks being on the sofa next to me, but I would much prefer if you were in them.'"

There are many ways to handle dirty socks on the sofa, of

course. In my household, where I am largely responsible for the laundry (my wife does most of the cooking), any socks found on the sofa usually belong to two family members, whose identities I shall withhold, in case my socks mysteriously disappear.

I try my best to ignore the socks on the sofa until laundry day, when I walk around picking up socks from various locations around our house. I usually find a few pairs on the sofa, a few more inside the sofa, and a few more under the sofa.

I do not throw any socks in the trash bin for three reasons: (1) We already have enough problems with missing socks; (2) when it comes to not-so-clean things on the sofa, socks are easy to ignore compared to our dog (who thankfully does not wear socks); and (3) unlike Malala, I do not want to be responsible for starting World War III.

Aid to Turkey

Sir, The series of earthquakes in Turkey and Syria were devastating. The calamity has already killed more than five thousand people and injured many. Many people have lost their homes. The two nations are in a state of crisis. Many experts have termed this the most destructive natural disaster in the region's history. India is among the very first countries to announce relief for Turkey. India sent two teams of National Disaster Response Force of 100 personnel with specialised dog squads for rescue and medical assistance. India has also made preparations to send doctors and paramedics. Essential medicines, ventilators, oxygen generator plants, and medical facilities have also been sent to Turkey. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed his grief and assured all possible help for the people of Turkey. This spontaneous response from the Indian government in sending aid to Turkey shows India's responsibility towards the global community. This step will also help in normalising the bitter ties between India and Turkey. The immediate help from India in spite of bitter relations has been appreciated by many. This humanitarian action will also build India's image as a global leader.

Deba Prasad Nayak, CUTTACK

MNREGA funds cut

Sir, The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) scheme was considered a huge game changer in providing socioeconomic security to women of rural India. Though it has lost some of its sheen over the years, the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre did well not to dilute its utility value. Therefore, the Rs 13,000 crore cut in allocation to MNREGA in the latest Union budget turned heads. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has explained that the scheme is "demand driven," and the states can always ask for more. It means the revised estimate (RE) is always higher than the budget estimate (BE), and it's reasonable. However, the Centre should tie the loose ends affecting the scheme. Prompt wage payment, making mandatory that all payments should be done within fifteen days of closure of the muster roll, streamlining Aadhar-based payments, strengthening internet banking in rural areas, looking into loopholes in the issue of payment of daily unemployment allowance to a worker whose employment request is not honoured, are all crucial.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
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of the day quote

First chief minister of Jharkhand, Babulal Marandi, was removed before completing three years. Later, Arjun Munda was also not allowed to remain in the post for more than three years. But, at the same time, a Chhattisgarhi was made chief minister and allowed to complete a full five-year term

HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM

Sometimes discussions are held in the country on some matters and in a democracy everyone has the right to express their opinion. But people sitting in responsible positions have to think before saying anything, whether it will benefit the country or not

KIREN RIJU | UNION LAW MINISTER

The 'Look East' policy of the Congress was so hollow that it never touched the ground realities. It was Prime Minister Modi who actually brought a transformation by replacing that policy with an action-oriented 'Act East' policy. His model of 'HIRA' will ensure further prosperity in Tripura

SARBANANDA SONOWAL | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Man dies in police custody

Kathua/Jammu: A 38-year-old man allegedly died under mysterious circumstances in a police lockup in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, officials said Tuesday. The family of the deceased has alleged that he was tortured in the custody. According to officials, Sonu Kumar was arrested after police recovered 7 grams of heroin from his possession in the Goond area of Kathua. He was sent to a police lockup at Nagari post on Saturday.

SC junks Rana Ayyub's plea

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Tuesday dismissed journalist Rana Ayyub's plea challenging summons by the Ghaziabad special court in a money laundering case, leaving it open for her to raise the issues before the trial court. A bench of Justices V Ramasubramanian and J B Pardiwala allowed Ayyub to raise the issue of jurisdiction before the trial court, saying it is a question of evidence. Justice V Ramasubramanian, who pronounced the verdict on behalf of the bench referred to section 3 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and said Navi Mumbai, where the account is, is said to be the place where the proceeds of crime have reached.

7-yr-old boy killed

Patna: A seven-year-old boy was killed during celebratory firing in Bihar's Nalanda district, an official said Tuesday. The celebratory firing took place during the birthday party of a minor girl in Parmanand Bigha village on Monday night. An FIR has been registered against the girl's father Naresh Yadav and six others in Nour Sarai police station.

Two injured

Ludhiana: Two people suffered bullet injuries following a clash between as many groups outside the Ludhiana court complex in Punjab on Tuesday, police said. Old rivalry between the groups is suspected to be the reason behind the clash. Gurcharan Singh along with his friend Himanshu were going to the court for a case hearing.



Democracy has taken a backseat in Tripura under the BJP rule, as parties are not allowed to organise political meetings and journalists have lost their right to gather news

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

'CYBER SURAKSHA' CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

Delhi police Tuesday launched the 'Cyber Suraksha' campaign in partnership with Meta with the aim to spread awareness about cyber safety and prevent people from falling prey to prevailing online frauds



Magic happened after 2014: Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: Leading the Opposition attack over the Adani-Hindenburg issue in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi Tuesday linked Gautam Adani's meteoric rise to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's coming to power and said "magic" happened after 2014 that propelled the businessman from the 609th to the second spot on the global rich list.

The Congress leader's remarks drew a sharp response from the treasury benches, with Law Minister Kiren Rijju asking him not to level "wild allegations" and furnish proof of his claims. Speaker Om Birla disapproved of the Congress leader displaying two pictures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi - one in which he can be seen with Adani inside a plane and the other in which he is getting down from a plane which has an Adani logo on it - to highlight their alleged proximity.

"If you show posters, they (BJP) will show posters of the Rajasthan chief minister (with Adani). Parliament is not for these things," Birla said. Participating in the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the



President's Address in Lok Sabha as the first Opposition speaker, Rahul Gandhi made a barrage of allegations including that Modi helped Adani bag overseas contracts in various sectors.

Posing questions for the prime minister, Rahul Gandhi asked how many times has he travelled together on a foreign trip with Adani. "How many times did Adani ji join you later on a visit? How many times Adani ji travelled to a country immediately after you visited the country? How many times has Adani ji bagged a contract in a foreign country after your visit there?" Rahul Gandhi said.

He asked how much money

Adani has given to the BJP in the last 20 years, including through electoral bonds.

Speaker Birla asked Rahul Gandhi to focus on the President's address. "There should be a case study on Adani by business schools such as Harvard, on how the relationship between business and politics works, India is a case study.. PM Narendra Modi should get a gold medal in this" Rahul Gandhi said.

Rahul Gandhi also hit out at Modi for slamming the Opposition over its criticism of the Rafale deal by allegedly overlooking the capabilities of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). "Yesterday the prime minister said at HAL that we hurled

wrong allegations. But in reality, HAL's contract of 126 aircraft went to Anil Ambani, who then went bankrupt," Rahul Gandhi said.

Rahul Gandhi, who just completed his over 4,000 km Bharat Jodo Yatra, said people asked him how Adani got into so many businesses and succeeded, as well as what is the nature of his relationship with the prime minister.

"From Tamil Nadu, Kerala to Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir, we have been listening one name everywhere 'Adani'. Across the entire country, it's just 'Adani', 'Adani', 'Adani'...", Rahul Gandhi said. He said that during the yatra people also asked him how Adani's net worth increased from USD 8 billion to 140 billion between 2014 and 2022.

"The (Adani-Modi) relationship began many years ago when Narendra Modi was Gujarat CM. When most of India was asking questions of the prime minister, was against the PM (then CM Narendra Modi), one man stood shoulder to shoulder with PM Modi, he was loyal to the prime minister and helped Mr Modi construct the idea of a resurgent Gujarat," Rahul Gandhi said.

Aaftab dated other women: Chargesheet



Giving a chilling account of the gory crime, the police alleged that Walkar was 'already living in constant fear of getting killed' even before the accused decided to get rid of her in a barbaric and brutal manner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: Aaftab Amin Poonawala was dating several women through an app and even brought one to his residence while the body parts of his live-in partner Shradha Walkar were still lying there and used to remove them from the fridge during her visits, the Delhi police have claimed in its chargesheet.

Giving a chilling account of the gory crime, the police alleged that Walkar was "already living in constant fear of getting killed" even before the accused decided to get rid of her in a barbaric and brutal manner.

Poonawala had earlier tried to mislead police by giving a false statement that after murdering Walkar, he had burnt her body pieces and after grinding the bones with a stone grinder, blown or thrown away the powder, the charge sheet said.

According to excerpts from the 6,629-page-long chargesheet, accessed by PTI, soon after the murder of Walkar, the accused again came in contact with several girls through 'Bumble', a dating app

through which he came to know Walkar.

"He came in contact with one such girl... who is a psychologist and called (her)... To his flat. However, when she used to visit his flat, Aaftab used to clean the fridge and used to put the body parts of Shradha on the upper shelf and at times on the lower shelf of the kitchen," the chargesheet said.

Poonawala, 28, allegedly strangled his live-in partner Walkar on May 18 last year and sawed her body into several pieces which he kept in a fridge for almost three weeks at his residence in South Delhi's Chattarpur locality. He later disposed of the body parts across the city over several days.

The accused claimed that he became friends with Walkar in 2018-19 through the 'Bumble' app itself and later the couple "fell in love", it said. According to Poonawala's disclosure statement, he made physical relations with Walkar for the first time on May 17, 2019. Walkar's family, however, found a pregnancy test kit and raised objections to their relationship, following which Poonawala took Walkar to a rented accommodation in Mumbai in October 2019, the chargesheet said.

The couple's relationship soured when Walkar found out that Poonawala was talking to other women on the App, the chargesheet said.

Poonawala's motive was to get rid of Walkar as she fought with him and abused him, the chargesheet said.

A Delhi court on Tuesday took cognisance of the chargesheet filed by Delhi police.

CRISIS IN MAHA CONGRESS

THORAT QUILTS AS CLP LEADER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 7: Maharashtra Congress leader Balasaheb Thorat Tuesday resigned as the state legislature party head, a day after his letter to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge over friction with state unit chief Nana Patole came out, party sources said.



Patole, however, said he was not aware of any such move by Thorat and claimed that his predecessor doesn't speak "with us", while the BJP said its doors are open if the Congress leader wishes to switch sides. Thorat, who represents the Sangamner constituency in Ahmednagar district, has sent his resignation to the party high command, said the sources.

The Congress leader is the maternal uncle of Satyajit Tambe who recently won the Legislative Council election from the Nashik division graduates constituency as an independent candidate. An aide of Thorat had earlier said that the Congress leader had written to the Congress central leadership citing his inability to work with Patole due to the latter's "anger" towards him. Thorat also said he was not being consulted before decisions were being taken, the aide added.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday here, Patole said, "I have not received any resignation letter from Thorat. He has not been speaking to us for the past few days. Maybe he is talking to the media." "If I receive his letter, I will comment on it," said the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee president.

MAN DRAGGED UNDER CAR FOR 10 KM IN UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mathura (UP), Feb 7: Weeks after the Kanjhawala case in Delhi, a man was killed in a road accident and his body dragged under a car for nearly 10 kilometres on the Yamuna Expressway here, police said.

The driver of the Maruti Suzuki Swift only detected the body after a toll plaza employee alerted him early on Tuesday morning and the police were informed. "The driver has been taken into custody and his car impounded," Superintendent of Police (Mathura Rural) Trigun Bishen said.

The driver has been identified as Virendra Singh, a resident of Sangam Vihar in Delhi. He was

The driver has been identified as Virendra Singh, a resident of Sangam Vihar in Delhi

The driver told the police that he was not aware that the body was stuck under the car and attributed it to poor visibility caused by dense fog

returning from Agra with four family members after attending a wedding. A detailed investigation was initiated after the toll plaza employee informed the police, Bishen said.

Bloodstains have been found at the kilometre 106 marker in the Jamuna Paar area. It appears that the accident took place there and

the body later got stuck under the car passing the point, the senior police official added.

The driver told the police that he was not aware that the body was stuck under the car and attributed it to poor visibility caused by dense fog. Efforts are on to identify the victim, aged around 35, the police said, adding that the body was sent for post mortem.

Other details are being worked out using CCTV footage, the police added. The incident follows a similar case in Delhi where a 20-year-old woman was killed in the early hours of New Year after her two-wheeler was hit by a car, which dragged her body for 12 kilometres from Sultanpuri to Kanjhawala.



BJP leaders and workers attempt to cross barricades during a protest over the delay in MCD Mayor's election, near AAP office in New Delhi

Victoria Gowri sworn in as SC dismisses challenge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 7: Lekshmana Chandra Victoria Gowri took oath as additional judge of the Madras High Court Tuesday minutes before the Supreme Court rejected the petition challenging her appointment over her alleged hate speech against minorities.

Gowri, in her address, after being sworn in as additional judge by Acting Chief Justice, T Raja asserted that she would dispense justice in realising the dreams of the makers of the Constitution. She was administered the oath of office at around 10.45 AM while the top court was hearing arguments on

why Gowri should not be elevated.

While the Supreme Court refused to entertain the plea seeking to restrain Gowri from taking oath as additional judge, sources close to the petitioners said that the apex court's ruling signalled the end of the matter and there appeared to be no scope to take the legal fight forward.

The sources said that the petitioners are not activists and taking up the matter to SC to oppose Gowri's appointment was an act of duty to safeguard, preserve and protect the independence of judiciary and the values of the Constitution.

The petitioner-lawyers are Anna



While the Supreme Court refused to entertain the plea seeking to restrain Gowri from taking oath as additional judge, sources close to the petitioners said that the Apex court's ruling signalled the end of the matter and there appeared to be no scope to take the legal fight forward

Mathew, Sudha Ramalingam and D Nagasaila who in their plea referred to the alleged hate speeches made by Gowri against Muslims and Christians. Gowri, in her

Gowri, in her address, after being sworn in as additional judge by Acting Chief Justice, T Raja asserted that she would dispense justice in realising the dreams of the makers of the Constitution

'unheard and the oppressed voices of the poorest of the poor; to liberate the marginalised, 'scuttled' inequalities of society and nurture fraternity in the diverse country. "With all humility, I undertake to dispense justice in realising the dreams of the makers of our Constitution. Thank You. Jai Hind."

She expressed gratitude and thanked former Chief Justice of Madras High Court, Justice Munishwar Nath Bhandari, former Acting Chief Justice, Justice M Duraiswami (Retired) and Acting Chief Justice, T Raja for reposing faith in her and for recommending her name for the post of judge. She thanked the Supreme

Court judges including the Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud. Gowri said she hailed from a very remote village (West Neyyur) in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu and is a first generation lawyer from a 'very ordinary family'.

She thanked all her senior advocates, including Maniraj and Jacob Fletcher. She is an alumna of Madurai Law College. "I bow to the noble feet of all the elder brother and sister judges who are on the dais and who are watching from my beloved Madurai Bench," she said.

She also thanked members of the Bar and sought their blessings.



Fresh row over Mhadei diversion

GOA AND KARNATAKA ARE CURRENTLY BATTLING A DISPUTE OVER THE 'KALASA-BHANDURI' DAM PROJECT ACROSS THE WATER OF THE MHADEI RIVER AT A CENTRAL TRIBUNAL

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, Feb 7: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement to a grant of Rs 5,300 crore for the Upper Bhadra irrigation project in Karnataka has stirred up a fresh controversy over Mhadei diversion issue in Goa.

Opposition in the coastal state has alleged that the particular announcement furthers the cause of (Karnataka) stealing water from neighbouring states and also BJP eyeing to win maximum seats in Karnataka during the Lok Sabha election.

BJP had also invited wrath from the politicians and people from all walks of life after Union Home Minister Amit Shah during a rally in Belagavi January 28 had said: "Sonia Gandhi during a speech in Goa in 2007 had said that the Congress government will not allow Mhadei water diversion to Karnataka. In 2022, Congress in their manifesto stated that Karnataka will not get a single drop of water from Mhadei. Today, I am here to tell you that the BJP at the Centre has resolved the long dispute between Goa and Karnataka over Mhadei and allowed the diversion of Mhadei to Karnataka to satisfy the thirst of farmers of many districts."

Referring to these remarks, Goa Forward Party MLA Vijai Sardesai had said, "Amit Shah's remarks on Mhadei diversion is like a 'bomb explosion' on the people of the state."

The Opposition in Goa has been attacking the BJP government since the Central Water Commission granted permission for the Detailed Project Report (DPR) of Karnataka for the dis-



puted Kalasa-Bhanduri dam.

Criticising the Central government's announcement in the Budget 2023-24 of Rs 5,300 crore assistance to Karnataka for irrigation purposes, Sardesai has said "it furthers the cause of (Karnataka) stealing water from neighbouring states."

"Presenting the budget, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a grant of Rs 5,300 crore for the 'Upper Bhadra' irrigation project in Karnataka. Such financial outlays made for the state are furthering the cause of Karnataka stealing water from neighbouring states including from Krishna basin and Mhadei basin and using it for sugarcane production. I condemn this... it is a gimmick to garner votes," Sardesai, former deputy Chief Minister of Goa, said, referring to the upcom-

ing Assembly elections in the neighbouring state.

"This was done to win (Lok Sabha) seats in Karnataka. The BJP will suffer in Goa for this attitude," he added.

All India Congress Committee (AICC) in-charge of Goa, Manickam Tagore, in his first press conference in the coastal state lambasted on BJP and RSS over the Mhadei issue.

"The BJP and the RSS are playing with sentiments of Goa and Karnataka (on the Mhadei issue). Chief Minister Pramod Sawant should show courage to condemn remarks of Union Home Minister Amit Shah," he said.

"The BJP and the RSS are not sensitive towards Goa's rights, for them what is important is to win elections. They are playing politics with Karnataka and Goa,"

Tagore asserted.

"Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant should show courage to condemn remarks of Amit Shah, who has taken away the rights of people. Congress stands for Goa's welfare and will be with the people. We will fight for the rights of the people," he said.

Goa and Karnataka are currently battling a dispute over the 'Kalasa-Bhanduri' dam project across the water of the Mhadei river at a central tribunal.

Mhadei originates in Karnataka and meets the Arabian Sea in Panaji. While the river traverses 288 km in Karnataka, it is 81.2 km in length in Goa.

Karnataka plans to construct dams on the river, aimed at diverting the water into its water-starved Malaprabha basin in the northern region.

Kerala mulls Singapore-model biz hub around Vizhinjam Port

Finance Minister KN Balagopal says Vizhinjam can become one of the largest transshipment container ports in the world as it is located on a busy sea route where 70 per cent of cargo transportation takes place



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 7:

The Kerala government is planning to develop a major business hub based on the model of those in Singapore or Shanghai, in the areas around Vizhinjam International Port, one of the largest transshipment container ports in the world, being constructed by Adani group.

Noting that Vizhinjam port is the most important gateway for the transshipment of cargo for our country and neighbouring countries, state Finance Minister KN Balagopal said here Tuesday the most important cities and industrial centres in the world have been developed adjacent to such ports. Highlighting the Pinarayi Vijayan-led government's plan, Balagopal told PTT, "examples of port-cities including Dubai, Singapore and Shanghai are before us" and the areas around Vizhinjam port could also be developed like that.

He said in the budget presented for the Year 2023-24 a vision about the development plans, comprising government, private entrepreneurs and property owners, has been unveiled. In his budget speech, the Finance Minister had said that the Vizhinjam International Port is the most important chapter in the

developmental horizon of Kerala and by utilising the possibilities of Vizhinjam, the government prepares for massive development projects modelled on major international ports. Balagopal said Vizhinjam can become one of the largest transshipment container ports in the world as it is located on a busy sea route where 70 per cent of cargo transportation takes place. The Finance Minister further said it has been decided to construct a Ring Road consisting the 63 km long reach from Vizhinjam to Navaikulam via Thekkada in NH 66 and 12 km from Thekkada to Mangalapuram, as part of development of the surrounding areas of Vizhinjam Harbour into an extensive centre of industry and commerce.

"This will become the most important industrial corridor of the state. A Township chain of Industrial Institutions, Commercial Centres and extensive accommodation facilities will emerge," Balagopal said. He said an amount of Rs 1000 crore is earmarked through KIIFFB for land acquisition of this industrial corridor with an estimate of Rs 5000 crore.

The state government will take initiatives to develop industrial parks, logistics centres and residential areas with the involvement of the people living on either side of the Industrial Corridor. In the budget, it has been said that development plans worth Rs 60,000 crore are expected to be implemented in the first phase by making use of land pooling system and PPP development methods.

The government unveiled its plans for Vizhinjam months after the area witnessed nearly five month long protest by fisherfolk against the under-construction port, alleging unscientific construction, affecting their livelihood. The Latin Church-led protest was called in the first week of December after discussions between the leaders of the stir and Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. They had alleged that the unscientific construction of groynes, the artificial sea walls as part of the upcoming port, was one of the reasons for the increasing coastal erosion. The protesters had attacked Vizhinjam police station on the night of November 27, injuring several policemen.

AI-powered robots to monitor beaches in Goa

Aurus is a self-driving robot developed to assist lifesavers by patrolling extensive non-swim zones and alerting tourists during high tide

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Panaji, Feb 7: Drishti Marine, a Goa government-appointed life-guard organisation, has introduced camera-based artificial intelligence (AI) robots - 'Aurus' and 'Triton', to monitor the surroundings, assess and detect risks at the beaches, and share real-time information with the on-duty lifeguards.

In a statement, Drishti Marine said that in the past two years, it has witnessed over 1,000 rescue incidents along the coastal belt.

It said "both the AI-monitored camera-based systems can monitor the surroundings, assess and detect risks, share real-time information with on-duty lifeguards so they may respond faster to avoid tragic incidents."

"The main reason is to incorporate new technology under the banner of lifesaving to help to mit-



igate risks while assisting the manpower to be more effective in ensuring the safety and security of individuals on the beaches. The inclusion of AI highlights the progress made in the department of life-saving," Navin Awasthi, Operations Head of Drishti Marine, said.

Developed by Drishti Works, a division of Drishti, Aurus mans the state's expansive coastal stretch.

The new addition will aid in increased surveillance and crowd management of beaches. Aurus is a self-driving robot developed to assist lifesavers by patrolling extensive non-swim zones and alerting tourists during high tide. Aurus employs artificial intelligence to assist lifeguards with

a variety of duties at the beach. It will work alongside lifesavers in emergency circumstances, from patrolling to providing multilingual notifications.

Along with the Aurus, the Triton AI system's primary focus is to provide completely AI-based monitoring of non-swim zones, thereby alerting tourists of the danger and notifying the nearest lifesaver.

It will work in tandem with Aurus to provide comprehensive coverage of the beaches. Triton will patrol non-swim zones, identify and transfer information to lifesavers and help them identify tourists entering the water during high tide and in danger-prone areas.

Kerala fuel cess: Cong marches turn violent

AGITATORS ALLEGEDLY PELTED STONES AND PLASTIC WATER BOTTLES AT THE POLICE IN MANY PLACES DURING MINOR SCUFFLE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 7: Protest marches taken out by the Opposition Congress activists against the Kerala government's budget proposal to impose fuel cess turned violent in many places, forcing police to use water cannons and teargas shells to disperse agitators.

A large number of party workers, under the aegis of District Congress Committees, marched to the Collectorate in 13 districts seeking the rollback of the proposal to impose 'social security cess' on the sale of petrol and diesel.

In Thiruvananthapuram, the march was taken out to the Secretariat, the administrative hub. Angry protesters raised slogans against the Left government and tried to jump the barricade in Ernakulam, Thrissur and Kottayam, following which the police had to use water cannons. Party workers pushed down police barricades in Kollam district.



Agitators allegedly pelted stones and plastic water bottles at the police in many places during minor scuffle.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly VD Satheesan who inaugurated the march in the state capital, rejected the government's argument that the cess is imposed to ensure uninterrupted distribution of monthly social security pension of the weaker sections in the state.

"Giving pension and salary is the responsibility of a government...And common people can't be burdened to find ways for that. It is nothing but tax terrorism and looting of commoners," he

said addressing the party workers. Later in the Assembly, Satheesan said the budget, presented by Finance Minister KN Balagopal last week, was the 'worst budget' in the history of the southern state.

Stating that the budget turned out to be another disaster like the COVID pandemic and the deluge which had fallen upon people of the state, he also said an additional liability of Rs 4,000 crore has been imposed upon them by the government through this.

Unscientific tax proposals would derail the state's economy and affect the lives of common people, the LoP added.

Meanwhile, the sit-in protest at the entrance of the state Assembly, being carried out by four Congress-UDF MLAs Shafi Parambil, Mathew Kuzhalnadan, Najeeb Kanthapuram and CR Mahesh entered the second day.

Presenting the budget, the Finance Minister had said Friday it was proposed to levy a Social Security Cess on Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) and on the sale of petrol and diesel as the commitment to continue protecting the decent lives of vulnerable sections of society. The budget has proposed a Social Security Cess on sale of petrol and diesel at the rate of Rs 2 per litre.

Kerala welcomes record 1.88cr domestic tourists in 2022: Min

AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 7: (PTI) The COVID-19 outbreak had put the tourism sector on ventilator, but Kerala has made a remarkable comeback by welcoming 1.88 crore domestic tourists in 2022, which is an all-time record in the state's history, Tourism Minister PA Mohammed Riyas said Tuesday.

The pandemic was severe when the second Pinarayi Vijayan government came to power in 2021

but it had waited with detailed plans and programmes to implement in the sector as soon as the cases showed a decline, he said. If travel was not possible, there won't be any tourism and the sector was actually on a ventilator during the COVID-19 period, he told the state Assembly. Domestic tourism was given prominence in the programmes prepared to be implemented in the post-COVID period and the government achieved its target through coordinated efforts.

"As a result, by the end of 2022, it had become the year which Kerala witnessed the most number of domestic tourists after its formation. A total of 1.88 crore domestic tourists arrived in the state in that year," Riyas noted. A growth of 2.63 per cent was achieved in the tourism sector during the period. Till then, 1,83,84,233 was the highest number of domestic tourists arrived in the southern state in its history, the minister told the Assembly during the Question Hour session. Six districts - Pathanamthitta, Wayanad, Idukki, Alappuzha, Malappuram and Thiruvananthapuram - displayed good performance in welcoming domestic holidayers. Compared to the COVID period, the number of foreign tourists also registered a growth in the state, he added.



UK woman 'extorted': Notice to airport director

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panaji, Feb 7: The Goa State Commission for Persons with Disabilities Tuesday issued a notice to the director of Dabolim airport after a British national alleged that two airport staffers extorted Rs 4,000 from her to provide wheelchair service to her.

As per a copy of the notice, the Commission, a quasi-judicial body, has asked the airport director to submit an action taken report by February 13.

Katherine Frances Wolfe (62), who has mobility issues, had filed a complaint with the airport director, the director-general of Goa police and the Commission, narrating her ordeal January 29 when she was travelling from the coastal state to Gatwick airport in London.

When she arrived at Dabolim airport, the manager assigned two men to assist her with her wheel-

RUSSIAN GROUP ACCUSED OF 'BLACK MAGIC'

PANAJI: Locals stopped a drama enacted by some Russians in Goa alleging they were performing black magic, a charge denied by the foreigners who Tuesday claimed they were misunderstood and that they were only staging a drama based on the life of king Vikramaditya. The incident took place January 30 in Pernem taluka of North Goa district when a group of locals stopped the performance. Tuesday, Russian Federation citizen Olga Makhnovetsky and Belarusian citizen Mikola Dranich, who introduced himself as a theatre actor/director and graduate from the Russian State Institute of Performing Arts, spoke to reporters in Panaji about the incident and said they had informed about their performance to the local panchayat in advance. "We want to clear the misunderstanding which arose during our performance in the form of a rumour about black magic. We want to make it absolutely clear that we are not ministers of any cult or ardent supporters of any religious outfit," Makhnovetsky said. She introduced herself as the "daughter of Yuri Marin", a celebrated Russian filmmaker who is known for the movie "Window to Paris". She said her colleague Dranich is a theatre director and actor and specialises in puppet shows. Speaking about the Pernem incident, she said "We are just performers. The story of our performance belongs to an Indian epic about king Vikramaditya and his seven-year-ordeal with the planet Saturn," she said.

chair and baggage, said the complaint filed by one Mikhail Vasant on her behalf.

But the two stopped Wolfe in a random space in the airport and threatened to leave her there if she

didn't pay up. She was then made to cough up Rs 4,000 for the wheelchair service, said her complaint.

The commission stated in its notice that the act is clearly in violation of the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities Act, 2016. It said the state should ensure "non-discrimination and decent treatment of people with disabilities and women with disabilities respectively."

of the day **quote**

The BJP will not compromise with Tripura's territorial integrity even if it fails to form the next government in the state

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

Yes, I have heard about it. His (Adani's) business model has been called into question. Now that things have come to light, the matter should be looked into

NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CM

The Hemant Soren government is the most corrupt in the country. Resources are being looted using railway wagons and tractors. People will unseat this government from power in the state as it failed to fulfill the 'aspirations of development' for which the separate state was created

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Case filed against Mohan Bhagwat

Patna: A case has been filed against RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat in a court in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district over his remark that "pundits divided society for their own benefits". Sudhir Kumar Ojha, a senior lawyer of Muzaffarpur, said: "The statement of Mohan Bhagwat has hurt the sentiments of Pundits. Hence, I have filed a case under various sections of IPC demanding action against him. The next hearing of the case is scheduled on February 20."

Man lynched

Guwahati: A man was lynched to death in Assam's Sivasagar district on suspicion of cow theft, officials said Tuesday, adding that 14 people have been arrested so far. Superintendent of Police of Sivasagar, Shuvrajyoti Borah said: "The incident took place in Bamunpukhuri tea garden area on Sunday night. A group of people had beaten a man identified as Naju Ali on the suspicion of cow stealing there. After that he was taken to a local hospital and later shifted to the Jayasagar civil hospital." However, the man succumbed to the injuries.

ADJ dies

Mainpuri (UP): Additional District Judge (POCSO) Poonam Tyagi, posted at Mainpuri, died in an accident on Tuesday when her car rammed into a truck on the Agra-Lucknow expressway in Shikohabad in Firozabad. The ADJ and her driver were critically injured. As soon as the information was received, the station in-charge reached the spot and took the injured persons to the PGI in Saifai where doctors declared the ADJ brought dead. The driver is undergoing treatment. ADJ Poonam Tyagi was returning to Mainpuri in her car after two days of leave.



Inculcating new techniques in Assisted Reproductive Technology have vastly benefitted patients and raised awareness about the cause and treatment of infertility

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

MEDICAL COLLEGES HAVE INCREASED

There has been a 69-per cent increase in the number of medical colleges in the country, from 387 before 2014 to 654 as of now, the government informed Parliament Tuesday



SC panel frowns on tiger safaris in wildlife parks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: A Supreme Court-constituted panel has asked the Union Environment Ministry to amend or withdraw guidelines related to setting up zoos and safaris within tiger reserves and wildlife sanctuaries to discourage the use of wildlife habitats for tourism activities which are non-site specific.

In its report submitted to the apex court last month, the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) also said that approvals given for setting up zoos and safaris within tiger reserves and protected areas should be withdrawn forthwith.

It said tiger safaris being "non-site specific" should also be discouraged within forest areas since the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2002 discourage diversion of forest land for non-site specific activities under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

The SC panel's observation came on an issue involving the establishment of a tiger safari in the buffer area of Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand. According to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines issued in 2012 and amended in 2016 and 2019, tiger safaris can be established in buffer and fringe areas of tiger reserves to "reduce pressure of tourism on core and critical tiger habitats and to foster awareness for eliciting public support".

Also, the ministry had said in June last year that the establishment of zoos on forest areas



IN ITS REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE APEX COURT LAST MONTH, THE CENTRAL EMPOWERED COMMITTEE SAID THAT APPROVALS GIVEN FOR SETTING UP ZOOS AND SAFARIS WITHIN TIGER RESERVES AND PROTECTED AREAS SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN FORTHWITH

THE SC PANEL'S OBSERVATION CAME ON AN ISSUE INVOLVING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TIGER SAFARI IN THE BUFFER AREA OF CORBETT TIGER RESERVE IN UTTARAKHAND

of tiger reserves originates from the guidelines issued by the NTCA in 2012... Subsequently, the NTCA issued guidelines on establishment of tiger safaris within tiger reserves in the year 2016 and 2019. It is therefore imperative that the guidelines issued in 2012, 2016 and 2019 in this regard are amended/withdrawn," the CEC report read.

The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) should also not consider and approve the establishment of zoos and safaris within tiger reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, along animal corridors and animal dispersal routes, the panel said.

The panel said the NTCA should make it mandatory that tiger safaris be established "only outside the notified tiger reserves and the natural habitat of tigers". "The tiger corridors and tiger dispersal routes shall always be avoided so as to ensure that the tiger habitat is not sacrificed for the development of tourism," it said.

should not be considered a non-forest activity, doing away with the need for approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Only in exceptional cases, the fringes of the buffer zone of protected areas may be considered for the construction of a zoo on forest land, it had said.

"The mandate to locate tiger safaris within buffer and fringe areas

Cops move HC against order discharging Sharjeel, 10 others

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 7: Delhi Police Tuesday moved the High Court against the Saket court's order dated February 4, discharging former JNU student and activist Sharjeel Imam, co-accused Asif Iqbal Tanha and nine others in a case related to the incidents of violence at Jamia Millia Islamia in December 2019.

The police are likely to seek an urgent hearing from the HC on February 8. While discharging, Additional Sessions Judge of Saket Court Complex, Arul Verma had said that the police were unable to apprehend the actual perpetrators behind the commission of the offence, but surely managed to rope in the above-mentioned accused as 'scapegoats'.

The violence had erupted after a clash between the police and people protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in December 2019. Judge Verma had said that the protesters were surely there in large numbers and it cannot be denied that some anti-social elements within the crowd created an environment of disruption.



BJP leader 'glorified Sati', alleges Oppn



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: Lok Sabha was adjourned briefly on Tuesday due to protests by opposition members who alleged that BJP member C P Joshi had glorified 'Sati' in his speech. Joshi, however, clarified that he did not support the banned practice and that his remarks were on the tradition of 'Jauhar'.

He said he did not mention 'Sati' and perhaps due to an error in translation from Hindi, the word was mixed with his reference to 'Satitva' (chastity). Joshi, a BJP member from Chittorgarh in Rajasthan, had initiated the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address when he referred to Padmavati, the queen of Mewar who is believed to have self-immolated when invader Alauddin Khilji laid a siege at the Chittor fort.

Opposition members Supriya Sule (NCP), Kanimozhi, Dayanidhi Maran, A Raja (DMK), K Muraleedharan (Congress) and Imtiaz Jaleel (AIMIM) were on their feet claiming that Joshi had glorified the practice of 'Sati'.

Joshi asserted that he had not made any reference to the practice of 'Sati', but mentioned that Padmavati had performed 'Jauhar' (self-immolation) to protect her honour: "I stand by my words," Joshi said, as opposition members raised slogans in the Well of the House.

As protests continued, Speaker Om Birla adjourned the proceedings for 20 minutes. When the House reassembled, Birla assured the House that objectionable references will be examined and expunged. Joshi sought to further explain his comments and said he was mentioning 'Jauhar', a practice of mass self-immolation by women.

"Neither I nor my party has ever supported Sati... Perhaps due to an error of translation 'Satitva' was mixed with 'Sati'... My government keeps nation above politics," he said. "She (Queen

Opposition members Supriya Sule (NCP), Kanimozhi, Dayanidhi Maran, A Raja (DMK), K Muraleedharan (Congress) and Imtiaz Jaleel (AIMIM) were on their feet claiming that BJP member C P Joshi had glorified the practice of 'Sati'

Padmavati) sacrificed her life to protect her 'Satitva' (chastity)..." Joshi said, inviting fresh protests from the Opposition benches.

"It was Jauhar... Perhaps you don't understand Hindi," he added as protests continued. As the ruckus continued, the Speaker again assured members that objectionable comments will be expunged and urged members to maintain the decorum of the House.

DMK leader A Raja said even as they wanted to abide by the rulings of the Chair, the reference made by the BJP MP was "completely against the society" and "anti-human".

Participating in the debate later, DMK's Kanimozhi said her head was hanging in shame due to the reference made in the House, even as she did not name the MP. "Every country when it talks about its past has different narrations... Whose past are we talking about? We talk about the greatness of the nation, valour, art, temples, and philosophy.

"But we can't forget the people who found no place in history - the untouchables, the unseeable and women who were pushed in the fire in the name of honour," she said. "Today we celebrate that and I stand on the floor of the House hanging my head in shame because we had to listen to something like that," she said.

Man thrashed, forced to drink urine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jodhpur, Feb 7: A group of villagers in Rajasthan's Jalore district allegedly caught a man who had come to visit a girl, tied him to a tree, thrashed him and poured urine into his mouth, police said on Tuesday.

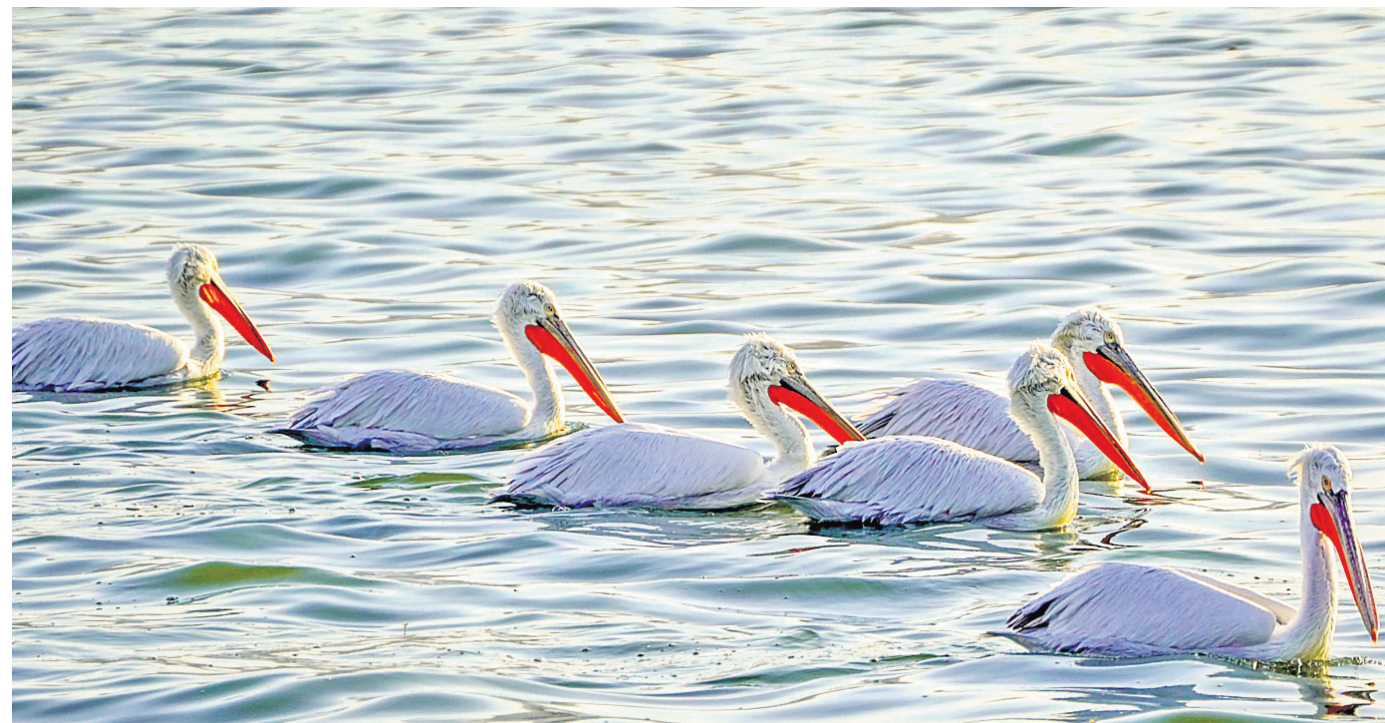
They have detained six people after a video of the assault surfaced on social media. They also slapped a case against the man under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

According to the police, the victim had allegedly come to meet a girl in a nearby village on Sunday night. He was caught and beaten up brutally after being tied to a tree by the villagers and family members of the girl.

On receiving information, the family members of the man also reached the spot and pleaded the mob to spare him. But the villagers poured urine into his mouth before letting him off with a warning, they said.

SP (Jalore) Harshvardhan Agarwalla said a video of the incident went viral on Monday. "Though nobody came forward to file an FIR, we have identified and contacted the victim and took an FIR from him," said Agarwalla.

Six persons in connection with the incident have been detained, he said.



Great White Pelicans swim during a cold winter day in Ajmer

PTI PHOTO

INDIA SENDS 4 AIRCRAFT TO QUAKE-HIT TURKIYE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: India Tuesday sent to Turkiye relief materials, a mobile hospital and specialised search and rescue teams in four C-17 Globemaster military transport aircraft to support the country's rescue efforts following the massive earthquake that has killed over 5000 people in the region.

India is also expected to send by Wednesday morning relief materials

onboard a C-130J aircraft of the Indian Air Force to Syria which was also hit by the earthquake, people familiar with the matter said.

Several countries around the world have extended help to both countries in their rescue and recovery efforts. "India expresses its solidarity at this challenging moment," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar tweeted. In another tweet, Jaishankar said he contacted his Syrian counterpart Faisal



Mekdad to express solidarity and convey India's support. Defence Minister

Rajnath Singh too said India stands in solidarity with the people of Turkiye in this "difficult time." India sent rescue teams and equipment to Turkiye as rescuers in quake-hit areas have been racing against time to save people trapped under the rubble of thousands of buildings.

The first C-17 transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force, carrying a group of search and rescue personnel, specially trained dog squads, drilling machines, relief materials

and medicines landed in Adana in the quake-hit country in the morning. A second IAF plane with similar consignments was sent to Turkiye around noon. Both have landed in that country. "First Indian C17 flight with more than 50 @NDRFHQ Search & Rescue personnel, specially trained dog squads, drilling machines, relief material, medicines and other necessary utilities & equipment reaches Adana, Turkiye," Jaishankar said on Twitter.

The more things change, the more they stay the same

Dashed hopes, crashed dreams. Nine and a half lakh youth converge on examination centres state-wide competing for 1,181 posts of junior clerks only to be turned back disappointed. On January 29, the recruitment examination for junior clerks in the panchayats of Gujarat was postponed due to a question paper leak. "There have been 15 such leaks of question papers of competitive examinations within the last 12 years in Gujarat and going by the record of the government, this may not be the last one either," says Dr Manish Doshi, Gujarat Congress

spokesperson and an educationist himself.

The exams were being conducted by the Gujarat Panchayat Services Selection Board (GPSSB). The postponement came mere hours before the examination was due to be held. There was chaos and mayhem at the examination centres state-wide as disappointment turned to anger leading to noisy protests. Fearing an incendiary situation the Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation under directions from the Gujarat government pulled back 1,800 buses from its fleet to send back 88,000 of them back home for free.



The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) investigating the case arrested 19 persons describing it as the handiwork of a well-oiled inter-state network. AAP leader Manish Sisodia took to Twitter to castigate the BJP-led government while Congress

Legislature Party leader Amit Chavda charged the ruling party with destroying the future of the youth.

Justice M.B. Shah, former judge of the Supreme Court and chairman of the Gujarat State Law Commission had in its 34th report submitted on July 1, 2022 recommended introduction of a special law against paper leak in recruitment exams conducted by the state government through appropriate authority/board. However with elections on its mind, the state government failed to act. It is only after the latest leak that Minister Rushikesh Patel

said that a strict law will be introduced and passed in the ensuing budget session to curb the menace.

The Commission report takes the government to task for its failure to curb the leaks stating that questions must be raised on the state government's intention in conducting impartial and clean recruitment through competitive exams. "It may be corruption due to the involvement of influential people in the state government but unfortunately they are never caught," it said.

The Commission has recommended bringing a law similar

to the Haryana Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act 2021 and making amendments in the Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Act. Exam paper leaks have been a recurring factor in Gujarat. In 2018 about 8.75 lakh students were similarly left to rue their fate following postponement of the written examination for recruitment of 9,713 policemen. The postponement came just an hour before the written test was to commence on December 2, 2018 at 2440 centres statewide, after it came to light that the exam paper had been leaked.

international



Some 4.2 million girls are at risk of being subjected to this act of gender-based violence during 2023 alone. We need urgent investments and action to reach the Sustainable Development Goals target of eliminating female genital mutilation by 2030

ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

PAK TO UNBLOCK WIKIPEDIA

Pakistan Tuesday lifted its ban on Wikipedia, two days after the country's media regulator suspended the services of the online encyclopedia for hurting Muslim sentiments by not removing purportedly blasphemous content from the site



of the day quote

India stands in solidarity with the people of Syria and Turkiye, and is ready to offer all possible assistance to cope with this tragedy

RAJESH PARIHAR | INDIA'S PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UN

Any attack on Iran from our enemies, including Israel, will see a response from our many air force bases including Eagle 44

MOHAMMAD BAGHERI | IRAN'S ARMED FORCES' CHIEF OF STAFF

All international actors, including Russia, should exert their pressure on the Syrian regime to ensure humanitarian help for victims can arrive

ANNALENA BAERBOCK | GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Chhatrapati Shivaji statue goes missing

New York: A statue of Maratha ruler Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj has been reported missing from a park in San Jose, California. The statue at the Guadalupe River Park was a gift from Pune, San Jose's sister city, and it was the only statue of Shivaji Maharaj in North America. "We regret to inform our community that the Shri Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue at Guadalupe River Park is missing," The San Jose Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighbourhood Services tweeted February 3. Park officials did not say when the statue was taken.

25 killed in Pak mishap

Islamabad: At least 25 people were killed and several others injured when a passenger bus collided with a car in Pakistan's northern Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region, government officials and police said Tuesday. The accident occurred after the over-speeding bus collided with a car near the Shatial checkpoint in the Kohistan district of the region, Information Minister of the GB province, Fatehullah Khan told media. The passenger bus and the car fell into the ravine after the accident. At least 45 passengers were onboard the bus when the incident took place.

Central Oz: Alcohol bans reinstated

Canberra: Alcohol bans will be reinstated for indigenous communities in central Australia in response to a crime wave. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Chief Minister of the Northern Territory (NT) Natasha Fyles confirmed that dry zones will be reinstated for indigenous town camps and communities near Alice Springs, reports said. It comes less than 12 months after intervention-era alcohol bans in the NT ended in July 2022, making alcohol legal in some areas for the first time in 15 years.

N Korea calls for war preparedness

Seoul: North Korea has convened a meeting of the ruling party's central military commission to discuss ways to expand operational combat drills and "more strictly perfect" its readiness posture for war, Pyongyang's state media reported Tuesday. Kim Jong-un presided over an enlarged meeting of the Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) Monday, according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). Participants "discussed in depth the major military and political tasks for 2023 and the long-term issues concerning the orientation for army building", as per reports.

Why was Turkey-Syria quake so bad?

AGENCIES

London, Feb 6: The magnitude 7.8 earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria Monday is likely to be one of the deadliest this decade, seismologists said, with a more than 100 km (62 miles) rupture between the Anatolian and Arabian plates.

Here is what scientists said happened beneath the earth's surface and what to expect in the aftermath:

WHAT TYPE OF EARTHQUAKE WAS THIS?

Researchers said the earthquake was a strike-slip quake, where two tectonic plates slide past each other horizontally. The Earth is divided up into different pieces, "kind of like a jigsaw puzzle", said Eric Sandvol, a seismologist at the University of Missouri. Those pieces meet at fault lines, where the plates usually grind against each other slowly. But once enough tension builds up, they can snap past each other quickly, releasing a large amount of energy. In this case, one plate moved west while the other moved east — jerking past each other to create the quake, said Alex Hatem, a USGS research geologist.

ARE EARTHQUAKES COMMON IN THIS AREA?

The quake occurred in a seismically active area known as the East Anatolian fault zone, which has produced damaging earthquakes in the past. "Almost all of Turkey is really seismically active," Eric Sandvol, a seismologist at the University of Missouri said.

Turkey was struck by another major earthquake in January 2020 — a magnitude 6.7 that caused significant damage in the eastern part of the country. In 1999, a 7.4 magnitude quake struck near



Istanbul and killed an estimated 18,000 people.

WHY WAS THIS EARTHQUAKE SO DEVASTATING?

The earthquake was powerful — especially for a quake that hit on land. Typically, very strong earthquakes occur underwater, Margarita Segou, a seismologist with the British Geological Survey said in an email. On top of that, the quake hit near heavily populated areas. The epicentre was near Gaziantep, a major city and provincial capital in Turkey. The affected regions were also home to vulnerable buildings, said Kishor Jaiswal, a USGS structural engineer.

While new buildings in cities like Istanbul were designed with modern earthquake standards in mind, this area of southern Turkey has many older high-rise buildings, Jaiswal said. Rapid construction in Syria — plus years of war — may have also left structures vulnerable, researchers said.

Officials reported thousands of buildings collapsed in the wake of the earthquake. They included

"pancake" collapses, where upper floors of a building fall straight down onto the lower floors — a sign that the buildings couldn't absorb the shaking, Jaiswal said. Rescue efforts have been hampered by freezing temperatures and traffic jams from residents trying to leave quake-stricken areas.

WHAT KIND OF AFTERSHOCKS CAN BE EXPECTED?

Eleven minutes after the initial quake, the region was hit by a 6.7-magnitude aftershock. A 7.5-magnitude quake came hours later, followed by another 6.0 spasm in the afternoon.

"What we are seeing now is the activity is spreading to neighbouring faults," said Roger Musson, an honorary research associate at

Erdogan declares state of emergency
Bad weather hampers search efforts
Thousands of children may have been killed - UNICEF
Nearly 6,000 buildings destroyed in Turkey



Erdogan declares state of emergency

Antakya: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan Tuesday declared a state of emergency in 10 provinces devastated by two earthquakes. A day after the quakes hit, rescuers working in harsh conditions were struggling to dig people out of the rubble of collapsed buildings in a "race against time". As the scale of the disaster became ever more apparent, the death toll looked likely to rise considerably. One United Nations official said it was feared thousands of children may have been killed. Thousands of buildings were toppled, hospitals and schools wrecked and tens of thousands of people were injured or left homeless in several Turkish and Syrian cities by the magnitude 7.8 quake - the deadliest in Turkey since 1999 - and a second one hours later. Bitter winter weather hampered rescue efforts and the delivery of aid, and made the plight of the homeless even more miserable. Some areas were without fuel and electricity. Aid officials voiced particular concern about the situation in Syria, already afflicted by a humanitarian crisis after nearly 12 years of civil war.

20 ISIS terrorists escape prison

Prisoners mutinied in a northwestern Syria prison following a deadly earthquake, with at least 20 escaping the jail holding mostly Islamic State group members, a source at the facility told AFP. The military police prison in the town of Rajo near the Turkish border holds about 2,000 inmates, with about 1,300 of them suspected to be IS fighters, said the source. The prison also holds fighters from Kurdish-led forces. The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said it could not verify whether prisoners had escaped, but confirmed there was a mutiny.

the British Geological Survey. Earthquakes of similar magni-

tudes in populated areas have killed thousands of people.

MUSHARRAF LAID TO REST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, Feb 7: Pakistan's former military ruler General Pervez Musharraf was Tuesday laid to rest with full military honours in an army graveyard here in the presence of his relatives and several retired and serving military officers.

The 79-year-old former President's funeral prayers were held at the Gulmohar Polo Ground in Malir Cantonment in the afternoon in a low key ceremony which was neither attended by President Arif Alvi, nor Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

However, Joint Chiefs of Staff General Sahir Shamshad Mirza and former army chiefs - Qamar



Javed Bajwa, Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and Aslam Beg - attended the funeral.

Former ISI chiefs - General (ret'd) Shuja Pasha and General (ret'd) Zaheerul Islam - and several serving and retired military officers also attended the funeral prayers.

Politicians including Muttahida Qaumi Movement (Pakistan) leaders Khalid Maqbool Siddiqi, Dr Farooq Sattar, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Amir Muqam, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader and former Sindh governor Imran Ismail, former federal information minister Javed Jabbar, were also in attendance.

Deadliest day for Russians so far

THE UKRAINIAN MILITARY INCREASED ITS RUNNING TALLY OF RUSSIAN MILITARY DEAD BY 1,030 OVERNIGHT TO 1,33,190, AND DESCRIBED THE INCREASE AS THE HIGHEST OF THE WAR SO FAR

REUTERS

Kyiv, Feb 7: Ukraine said Tuesday the last 24 hours were the deadliest of the war so far for Russian troops, as Moscow pressed on with an intensifying winter assault in the east bringing tens of thousands of freshly mobilised troops to the battlefield.

The Ukrainian military increased its running tally of Russian military dead by 1,030 overnight to 1,33,190, and described the increase as the highest of the war so far. For its part, Russia said it had inflicted 6,500 Ukrainian casualties in the month of January.

The Ukrainian claim could not be independently verified and Russia has also claimed to have killed large numbers of Ukrainian troops in recent weeks.

Tallies of enemy casualties from either side have typically been seen as unreliable, and Kyiv offered few details of the latest battles. But the assertion that the fighting was the deadliest so far fits descriptions from both sides of an escalating campaign of close contact trench warfare, which has left



- RUSSIA SAYS IT INFLICTED 6,500 UKRAINIAN CASUALTIES IN JANUARY
- FIGURES CANNOT BE VERIFIED
- BOTH SIDES REPORT RELENTLESS FIGHTING IN EAST
- MOSCOW SAYS WESTERN WEAPONS PROLONG THE WAR

snow-covered battlefields of eastern Ukraine littered with corpses. The war is soon entering its second year at a pivotal juncture, with Moscow attempting to regain the initiative while Kyiv holds out for Western tanks to mount a counter-offensive later in 2023.

After Russia failed to capture the Ukrainian capital last year and lost ground in the second half of 2022, Moscow is now making full use of hundreds of thousands of troops it called up in its first mobilisation since World War Two.

Kyiv and the West say Russia has been pouring troops and mercenaries into eastern Ukraine in recent weeks in hopes of being able to claim new gains around the time of the first anniversary of its full-scale invasion later this month.

The last few weeks have seen Russia boast its first gains for half a year. But the progress has still been incremental, with Moscow yet to capture a single major population centre in its winter campaign despite thousands of dead.

Fighting has focused for months around the Ukrainian-held Bakhmut in eastern Donetsk province, a city with a pre-war population of around 75,000. Russia has made clear progress towards encircling it from both the north and south, but Kyiv says its garrison is holding fast.

Moscow has also launched an assault further south against Vuhledar, a Ukrainian-held bastion on high ground at the strategic intersection between the eastern and southern front lines.

Pentagon rules out returning balloon debris to China

The US military has intensified its efforts to collect the remnants of the high-altitude surveillance balloon from China that floated over the United States over several days last week from Montana to South Carolina

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington/Beijing, Feb 7: The United States has ruled out returning to China the debris of a surveillance balloon carrying a regional airliner-sized payload which was shot down by a US fighter jet in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of South Carolina.

Initial information gathered from the balloon, the White House

said on Monday with confidence, that it is a surveillance balloon. It violated international law and its sovereignty, officials said.

"I know of no such intention or plans to return it," said National Security Council spokesman John Kirby, adding that the US military have recovered some remnants off the surface of the sea and they are still in the process of collecting them from under waters.



Before it was being shot down by a fighter jet Saturday, Kirby said they had gathered enough vital information about the balloon. "We're still analysing the information that

we were able to collect off of the balloon before we shot it out of the sky and now we're going to recover it and I suspect we may learn even more," he said. The balloon, he

told reporters, was not merely drifting but had propellers and steering to give a measure of control, even as it was swept along in high altitude jet stream winds.

"It is true that this balloon had the ability to maneuver itself - to speed up, to slow down and to turn. So it had propellers, it had a rudder, if you will, to allow it to change direction," Kirby said. According to General Glen VanHerck,

This balloon is not American. The Chinese government will continue to defend its legitimate rights and interests
MAO NING | CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON

Commander of Northern Command, the balloon was up to 200 feet in height. It carried a payload weighing several thousand pounds, roughly the size of a regional jet aircraft, he said.

"China's, we believe, irresponsible action was visible for the American and the world to see. Not only that at the same time a second PRC surveillance balloon was seen traversing Latin America," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters at her daily news conference.

Meanwhile, UK Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch stays in her job while taking additional charge of business and industry in a new combined department

London, Feb 7: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak Tuesday announced the creation of four new or repurposed ministries to create an energy-focused department as he undertook a mini reshuffle of his Cabinet.

The new Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is tasked with securing long-term energy supply for the UK, bringing down household bills and halving inflation. A new dedicated Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, merging of the business and trade departments to create a combined Department for Business and Trade and a "re-focused" Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) are among the other changes in his government.

It came as Sunak replaced Nadhim Zahawi, sacked as a Cabinet minister without portfolio and Conservative Party chair for breach of the ministerial code, with former trade minister and ally Greg Hands. Grant Shapps has been appointed as the new UK Secretary for Energy Security and Net Zero. Michelle Donelan takes charge of Science, Innovation and Technology and Lucy Frazer becomes Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport in a new streamlined DCMS.

business

of the day quote

India's proposal for a biofuels alliance to promote cleaner fuel has attracted interest from a number of countries, including Russia and Brazil

HARDEEP SINGH PURI | OIL MINISTER

The relationship between India and OPEC is solid and it is forging ahead into other dimensions such as investments

HAITHAM AL GHAISS | SECRETARY GENERAL, OPEC

Asia and the Pacific's remarkable growth has lifted millions of people out of poverty, but this has come at an environmental cost

ALBERT PARK | CHIEF ECONOMIST, ADB

SHORT TAKES

Airtel Q3 profit surges 91.5%

New Delhi: Telecom operator Bharti Airtel Tuesday reported a 91.5 per cent year-on-year rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 1,588 crore for the October-December quarter of 2022-23. Total revenue rose nearly 20 per cent year-on-year to Rs 35,804 crore in the December quarter (Q3FY23) "backed by strong and consistent performance delivery across the portfolio", the company said in a statement. Its consolidated net income (after exceptional items) stood at Rs 1,588 crore for the just ended quarter, translating into an increase of 91.5 per cent year-on-year. The consolidated net income (before exceptional items) at Rs 1,994 crore, was up by 147 per cent year-on-year, it added.

ONGC to reverse output decline

Bangalore: India's largest oil and gas producer ONGC will this year reverse years of decline in production and gradually raise output thereafter, as it invests billions of dollars to produce from newer discoveries, a top company official said. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) in fiscal 2021-22 produced 21.707 million tonne of crude oil, which is refined to produce petroleum products like petrol and diesel, and 21.68 billion cubic metre (bcm) of natural gas, which is used to produce electricity, manufacture fertiliser and as CNG in automobiles. In the current fiscal year (2022-23), crude oil production is slated to rise to 22.823 million tonne and gas to 22.099 bcm.



You don't have a recession when you have 500,000 jobs and the lowest unemployment rate in more than 50 years

JANET YELLEN | TREASURY SECRETARY, US

BOEING'S MAKE-IN-INDIA INITIATIVE

US aerospace major Boeing said it will showcase at the upcoming Aero India its focus on boosting local services, investments and partnerships in complimenting India's ambitious goal of achieving self-reliance in defence manufacturing. The 14th edition of 'Aero India', known as Asia's largest aerospace exhibition, will be held in Bangalore from February 13 to 17



Record-breaking '22 for NK crypto theft: UN

A cybersecurity firm assessed that North Korean cybercrime yielded cybercurrencies worth more than \$1 billion

REUTERS

United Nations, Feb 7: North Korea stole more cryptocurrency assets in 2022 than in any other year and targeted the networks of foreign aerospace and defense companies, according to a currently confidential United Nations report. "(North Korea) used increasingly sophisticated cyber techniques both to gain access to digital networks involved in cyber finance, and to steal information of potential value, including to its weapons programmes," independent sanctions monitors reported to a UN Security Council committee. The monitors have previously ac-

cused North Korea of using cyber attacks to help fund its nuclear and missile programs.

"A higher value of cryptocurrency assets was stolen by DPRK actors in 2022 than in any previous year," the monitors wrote in their report - submitted to the 15-member council's North Korea sanctions committee Friday - citing information from UN member states and cybersecurity firms.

The sanctions monitors said South Korea estimated that North Korean-linked hackers stole virtual assets worth \$630 million in 2022, while a cybersecurity firm assessed that North Korean cybercrime yielded cybercurrencies worth more than \$1 billion.

"The variation in USD value of cryptocurrency in recent months is likely to have affected these estimates, but both show that 2022 was a record-breaking year for DPRK (North Korea) virtual asset theft," the UN report said.



The UN report noted: "The techniques used by cyberthreat actors have become more sophisticated, thus making tracking stolen funds more difficult."

EXTORTION

The monitors said most cyber attacks were carried out by groups controlled by North Korea's primary intelligence bureau - the Reconnaissance General Bureau. It said those groups included hacking teams tracked by the cybersecurity industry under the names Kimsuky, Lazarus Group

and Andariel.

"These actors continued illicitly to target victims to generate revenue and solicit information of value to the DPRK including its weapons programmes," the UN report said.

The sanctions monitors said the groups deployed malware through various methods including phishing. One such campaign targeted employees in organizations across various countries.

"Initial contacts with individuals were made via LinkedIn, and once a level of trust with the targets was established, malicious payloads were delivered through continued communications over WhatsApp," the UN report said.

In 2019, the UN sanctions monitors reported that North Korea had generated an estimated \$2 billion over several years for its weapons of mass destruction programs using widespread and increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks.

HURT BY HINDENBURG

Adani Group mulls independent review

The crisis is one of the biggest challenges for the firm, whose fortunes surged in recent years along with his stock prices, before the Hindenburg jolt

REUTERS

Bangalore, Feb 7: Adani Group is considering independent evaluation of issues relating to legal compliance, related party transactions and internal controls following a US short-seller's critical report on its businesses, disclosures showed Tuesday.

The group, led by billionaire Gautam Adani, has been roiled by days of market turmoil after Hindenburg Research January 24 alleged it had engaged in stock manipulation and used tax havens. It also said the group had unsustainable debt.

Adani Group has denied the allegations, saying it complies with all laws and has made necessary disclosures over time. Nonetheless, investors dumped its shares as concerns of financial contagion grew.

The quarterly earnings disclosures of three Adani units - Adani Green Energy (ADNA.NS), Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSE.NS) and Ambuja Cements (ABUJ.NS) - noted that a short seller had alleged "certain issues against some" Adani group entities, saying for the first time they may be looked into.

"The management of Adani group entities are evaluating an independent assessment, basis the requisite corporate approvals, to look into the issues and compliance of applicable laws and regulations, transaction specific issues," Adani Green said in its quarterly earnings filing, without describing the issues.

While Ambuja's filing was similar, Adani Ports said it would evaluate an independent assessment on the matter, if required.

The disclosure comes as shares of Adani Group rallied Tuesday, a day after it prepaid some loans, bringing relief to investors that have seen \$113.6 billion wiped off the conglomerate's market value since the Hindenburg Research report two weeks ago.

In a major setback for the billionaire, the market rout also forced him to shelve a key \$2.5 billion



share sale last week. On Monday, Adani Group said it would pre-pay \$1.11 billion of loans on shares. Separately, JPMorgan Tuesday said the group companies were still eligible for inclusion in the bank's bond indexes.

The group's flagship company Adani Enterprises Ltd closed up 14.6% Tuesday, still around half the level seen before the Hindenburg report was released.

The cumulative losses of Adani group's seven listed companies still stand at \$109 billion despite Adani Ports also gaining 1.4% Tuesday and Adani Wilmar adding 5%. Adani Green, Adani Total Gas Ltd and Adani Power, all however ended 5% lower.

No credit risk for banks: Rating agencies

Global rating agencies Fitch and Moody's Tuesday said banks' exposure to Adani group is not large enough to affect their credit quality, and bank ratings are driven by expectations that they would receive 'extraordinary' sovereign support, if needed. "Fitch Ratings believes that Indian banks' exposure to the Adani group is insufficient in itself to present a substantial risk to the banks' standalone credit profiles," the rating agency said in a note. Moody's stated that although the exposures to Adani group are larger for public sector banks than for private sector banks, they are smaller than 1 per cent of total loans for most banks. "Risks for banks can increase if Adani becomes more reliant on bank loans," Moody's said.

AI BATTLE INTENSIFIES

Bard: Google's reply to ChatGPT

ChatGPT, an AI chatbot from OpenAI Inc, took the internet by storm after it was launched in November last year. The chatbot became the fastest online platform to reach 100 million active monthly users, a milestone it touched in January, just two months after its launch

REUTERS

Washington, Feb 7: Google owner Alphabet Inc Monday said it will launch a chatbot service and more artificial intelligence for its search engine as well as developers, an answer to Microsoft Corp in their rivalry to lead a new wave of computing. Microsoft, meanwhile, said it planned its own AI reveal soon.

The cascade of news reflects how Silicon Valley is anticipating massive change from so-called generative AI, technology that can create prose or other content on command and free up white-collar workers' time.

The ascent of ChatGPT, a chatbot from Microsoft-backed OpenAI that could disrupt how consumers search for information, has been one of the biggest challenges to Google in recent memory.

In a blog post, Alphabet Chief Executive Sundar Pichai said his company is opening a conversational AI service called Bard to test users for feedback, followed by a public release in the coming weeks.

He also said Google plans to add AI features to its search engine that synthesize material for com-



GOOGLE LAUNCHES AI SEARCH PLANS IN BATTLE WITH MICROSOFT

MICROSOFT ALSO PLANS TO REVEAL ITS AI VERSION SOON

plex queries, like whether learning guitar or piano is easier. Currently, Google presents text that exists elsewhere on the Web for questions where the answer is clear.

Google's update for search, the timing of which it did not disclose, reflects how the company is bolstering its service while Microsoft is doing the same for Bing, embedding OpenAI's capabilities in it.

Microsoft has said it plans to imbue AI into its all its products and plans to brief news outlets on developments it did not specify, with its CEO Satya Nadella, according to an invitation seen by Reuters. Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, tweeted that he would also attend the event.

How Google aims to differentiate Bard from OpenAI's ChatGPT was unclear. Pichai said the new service draws on information from the internet; ChatGPT's knowledge is up to date as of 2021.

"Bard seeks to combine the

breadth of the world's knowledge with the power, intelligence and creativity of our" AI, Pichai said.

Behind the new chatbot is LaMDA, Google's AI that generated text with such skill that a company engineer last year called it sentient, a claim the technology giant and scientists widely dismissed.

In a demo of the service, Bard like its rival chatbot invites users to give it a prompt while warning its response may be inappropriate or inaccurate. It then bulleted three answers to a query about a space telescope's discoveries, the demo showed.

"Google is relying on a version of LaMDA that requires less computing power so it can serve more users and improve with their feedback," Pichai said.

ChatGPT at times has turned away users because of explosive growth, with UBS analysts reporting it had 57 million unique visitors in December outpacing potentially TikTok in adoption.

Google also plans to give technology tools, first powered by LaMDA and later by other AI, to creators and enterprises starting next month, Pichai said.

IN A FIRST

PhonePe launches cross-border UPI payments service

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: Fintech firm PhonePe Tuesday said its users will now be able to pay to international merchant outlets in five countries, including the UAE, Nepal, and Singapore, using Unified Payments Interface system.

PhonePe Users will be able to make payments in the foreign currency directly from their Indian bank - just like they do with international debit cards, the company said in a statement.

"The current launch supports all international merchant outlets in the UAE, Singapore, Mauritius, Nepal and Bhutan that have a local QR code," the statement said, adding that PhonePe is the first fintech app to launch this feature in India.

The company has over 43.5 crore registered users.

Indian customers need to use a foreign currency, or their credit or forex cards to pay at international merchant outlets but with 'UPI international' payments feature, PhonePe can now use their Indian Bank accounts to pay using UPI.



BIZ BUZZ

SBI organises Pensioners' Meet

Bhubaneswar: State Bank of India, Bhubaneswar Circle has organised SBI Pensioner's Meet February 7 at Rail Auditorium, Bhubaneswar. More than 800 pensioners participated in the meeting. Chief General Manager of SBI Bhubaneswar Circle Chandershekar Sharma graced the occasion in presence of CDO Manoj Kumar Singh; Sanjay Kumar Jha, DGM Bhubaneswar Zone; office bearers of SBIOA, SBISA, SBI Pensioners' Association and SEWA. In his interaction Sharma requested all pensioners to continue being ambassadors of SBI and spread the positivity in the society. He urged for feedback and suggestions for improving business operations and customer service to increase market share of SBI in Odisha from 37% to 40%. The Health Assist Scheme for retired pensioner was presented by AnandRathi& Co. Sharma felicitated pensioners of 75 years and above with shawl.

'Move away from hypocrisy': Global South demands energy justice

TOP GLOBAL LENDERS - UNDER PRESSURE FROM INVESTORS, WESTERN GOVERNMENTS AND CAMPAIGNERS - HAVE SQUEEZED CREDIT LINES THAT FINANCE PROJECTS BASED ON FOSSIL FUELS IN A BID TO ACHIEVE NET-ZERO EMISSIONS

REUTERS

Bangalore, Feb 7: Rich countries should stop throwing up roadblocks to poorer ones trying to secure energy supplies and do more to help them make the green transition, officials from Global South nations told the India Energy Week conference Tuesday.

The criticism highlights the gaping political fault lines in the battle against climate change and underscores the challenges in drafting effective decarbonisation strategies.

Tanzania's energy minister January Makamba called for "a move away from hypocrisy" by wealthy nations refusing to finance gas projects, while a senior official from Bangladesh said its energy security was compromised by the higher gas prices caused by Western sanctions on Russia.

Makamba said Japan rejected a proposal last week to finance a gas-fired power plant in southern Tanzania because it was no longer



interested in funding such projects. "Japan is one of the largest importers of LNG (liquefied natural gas). So if gas is good for you to run an economy but it's bad for me to generate power, there's a problem," Makamba told the conference in Bangalore.

Japan also stopped financing two coal power plant projects in Indonesia and Bangladesh in June, responding to global criticism over

its continued support for the polluting fuel.

Government officials in some countries and industry officials call this discriminatory.

PRICED OUT

Bir Bikram Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, the energy adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, said a surge in gas prices after sweeping sanctions on Russia following the invasion of Ukraine

Global South, where almost 800 million people have no electricity, should be empowered in an inclusive energy transition. The energy transition has the potential to generate the greatest leap in economic prosperity since the first industrial revolution. But it must be fair

SULTAN AL-JABER | CLIMATE ENVOY, UAE

made LNG inaccessible for the south Asian country.

"There were ships floating around Western Europe carrying gas, and other countries were not able to buy because of the price," he told Reuters on the sidelines of the conference.

Bangladesh, which counts on natural gas for over two-thirds of its power generation, was one of the worst hit by the surge in LNG prices. Major cities in Bangladesh were forced to resort to hours of

power cuts during the second half of 2022, disrupting commercial and industrial activity.

"Western countries literally priced us out of market," Chowdhury said.

Zimbabwe, where electricity shortages were among the key reasons for slower economic growth in 2022, is still far from transition

from traditional sources of power, its deputy energy minister Magna Mudyiywa said.

"We are a growing economy, plenty of mining is going on, plenty of agriculture is going on. We still need some more electricity in Zimbabwe. And then we can talk about transitioning from what we have to green energy," she said.

'No unified global energy market'

There is no unified global energy market and energy security is no longer global, Russia's powerful oil executive Igor Sechin said amid talk for countries coming together to check volatility in prices and ensure smooth transition to net zero. Speaking at the India Energy Week here, Sechin, chief executive of Rosneft, said all principles of market trading have been destroyed and market pricing and contract law abolished. Russia was slapped with sanctions by some Western countries following the war in Ukraine. Some countries in Europe stopped buying contracted natural gas. Russian crude oil was shunned, leading to it being traded at a discount to international rates. This meant that while all major benchmark crude oil moved in a particular fashion, Russian crude was traded at discounts as high as \$40 per barrel. "There is no unified global energy market, and energy security is no longer global," he said.

Govt gets 33.44% stake in VI post equity allocation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: Debt-ridden telecom operator Vodafone Idea Tuesday said its board has approved the allotment of equity shares worth Rs 16,133 crore to the government, which post-allocation holds a 33.44 per cent stake in the company.

The shares have been allocated to the government in lieu of conversion of interest dues arising from deferment of adjusted gross revenue and spectrum auction payments, the company said in a regulatory filing.

The government cleared conversion of Rs 16,133 crore interest dues of debt-ridden Vodafone Idea into equity after receiving a firm commitment from Aditya Birla Group to run the company and bring necessary investment.

The paid-up share capital of the company stands increased to Rs 482,520,327,840 comprising of 48,252,032,784 equity shares of the face and paid-up value of Rs 10/- each.

FINAL XI CALL ON MATCH DAY

There's temptation to play three spinners but you never know with Nagpur pitch, says Rahul

Gill gets sweep tips from Dravid at nets



KL Rahul bats at the nets ahead of first Test against Australia, starting Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Feb 7: India's Test vice-captain KL Rahul feels it's never easy to predict the nature of a track but there is a "temptation" to play three spinners in the first Test against Australia, beginning here Thursday.

With less than 48 hours left for the Border Gavaskar Trophy to begin, Rahul didn't provide any definitive answers about three key slots in the team - the wicketkeeper, the third spinner and the No.5 in the batting order.

Asked if Shubman Gill will bat in the middle-order, Rahul said: "We still haven't decided on the final XI. It's going to be a tough decision to make. There are guys who have performed exceedingly well and there are a few spots open so there are a few discussions going on and the players are being spoken to."

The VCA track is expected to assist spinners from day one itself but Rahul doesn't want to be a soothsayer when it comes to reading the 22-yard strip.

"Yes, we did see it (the pitch), but it's still too early to really know what the pitch is going to do. We need to come here on the day of the match to know how it's really going to play," he told reporters.

"We can only look at it and assume it's going to play a certain way, but you never know with pitches. Yes, there is the temptation to play three spinners because we're playing in India. We'll take that call on the day of the game or the day before the game," the stylish right-hander said.

With skipper Rohit Sharma back in the mix, Rahul was asked if he would like to bat in the middle-order where he had started his Test career back in 2014. "If it arises, then I'm more than happy to do that. Whatever little cricket I've played for the country, I've always done that."

"Whatever the team has asked me to do, I try and prepare that way and try and do my best for the team, and if that is something that the team wants me to do here, I'll be more than happy to do it," Rahul said, although it is unlikely that he would come down the order.

So does he find it unique that there is no straightforward choice for picking the playing eleven this time around? "I don't know if it has happened before but, yes, this time is going to be tough. Tough decision to select an eleven. All the 15 guys in the side are top quality, and that's why they're here. Anyone of them on any given day can be a match winner..."

"The playing XI, we always try and make a decision based on what's best for the team and for that particular Test match. We have done that over the last two years," that was his response to a PTI query.

Rahul didn't forget to remind the media that he is still pretty sour about the backlash that he got for dropping Kuldeep Yadav for the second Test against Bangladesh after his match-winning performance in the series opener.

"There have been questions about why a certain player has played... even in Bangladesh, I re-

member, Kuldeep (Yadav) got the man of the match and did not play the next Test.

"Obviously, the only reason, or the only thinking, behind such decisions is which player fits the role for that particular condition. You said, I have played for 10 years, but even if I have played for 20-30 years, and even after retirement, there is nobody who can look at the pitch and say accurately that 'this is how it is going to play'."

"It's really based on some experience and a little bit of history of that place. Even in this series, that's something we will continue to do," he said.

Whether it is Suryakumar Yadav or Kuldeep Yadav, whoever gets dropped needs to take that on chin. "Everyone is very clear about why they're playing, why they aren't playing, their roles in the team. That's a good thing, and the atmosphere in the team is very good."

Rahul feels with the quality in the Australian bowling line-up, reverse swing in the dry and abrasive conditions can play a huge role. "It always plays a huge role in India. We have seen that historically as well. Any team that has quality fast bowlers who can exploit reverse swing will be dangerous on pitches like these. That's something that we have tried to prepare for over the last week, 10 days."

"We all know the Australian team has always produced high-quality fast bowlers, and we know the threat they can pose. That's the beauty of playing against Australia, that's what excites you and something we are kicked about."

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Feb 7: There is every possibility that the strategy to prepare rank turners for demolishing Australia could backfire and that is the reason most of the Indian batters committed themselves to doubles shift in the nets against slow bowlers ahead of the series-opener.

Steve O'Keefe, the forgotten man of Australian cricket, had one good show against India in Pune six summers back when a snake pit of a 22-yard boomeranged badly on the hosts, giving the left-arm spinner 12 of his 35 Test wickets in a single game.

If that wasn't enough, Lyon asked a lot of questions in next Test in Bengaluru. Tuesday, the Indian team had as many nine specialist spinners - four in main squad and five from domestic and India A fringes helping the batters out.

While R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav would like to conserve energies for the big five days, there were off-spinners Pulkit Narang and Jayant Yadav along with leg-spinner Rahul Chahar and left-arm orthodox R Sai Kishore and Saurabh Kumar who did bulk of the



Shubman Gill and Virat Kohli at the nets

job. The paucity of good off-break bowlers in domestic cricket is pretty evident that Narang and India international Jayant, both of whom aren't even in top 10 domestic wicket-takers, being called for simulation. While Lalaj Saxena continues being ignored, Jayant's presence shows that Lyon is very much in India's head.

"The things that, obviously, we have worked on is playing spin, and we know the pitches are going

to play here in India and what to expect. Keeping that in mind, we have practiced playing spin," vice captain KL Rahul gave a sneak peek into team's preparation in the lead up.

While Shubman Gill and Virat Kohli did play the sweep shot, Cheteshwar Pujara was more intent on negating the off-breaks with a big forward stride.

"Each person has his own individual plans. Everybody wants to play a certain way, or everyone has

their own set way which has been discussed with the coaches. We have discussed this as a batting group in an attempt to try and play spin better," said the Indian vice captain.

In fact, head coach Rahul Dravid devoted considerable amount of time with Gill and was explaining the various methods to keep the sweep down with some shadow batting. He was seen showing Gill as to how he can avoid offering catch to forward short leg or leg gully if there is big turn on offer.

Gill was later seen himself standing at forward short leg with fielding coach T Dileep giving him close in catching practice. The team combination isn't being spelt out but it seems that Gill, who is in the midst of a purple patch, will have to make way for Rahul at the top.

However with a dry patch on one side of the track, the ball will do its bit from day one itself and a good wicketkeeper will be need of the hour.

KS Bharath, who had once shown admirable skills keeping upto Ashwin on a low bounce Green Park track in Kanpur is likely to get his maiden Test cap although Ishan Kishan remains an exciting left-hand option.

DUMINY BACKS AUSSIES TO WIN TEST SERIES 2-1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 7: Playing at home, India will go into the Border-Gavaskar Trophy as favourites but former South African JP Duminy says Australia could trump the hosts 2-1 in the much anticipated Test rubber.

India will be without two of its key players in Rishabh Pant and Jasprit Bumrah, but premier all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja will be back to the action after a knee surgery. The Test series will begin Thursday in Nagpur.

"I see it as a very close series, but I genuinely think that Australia stand a good chance. They certainly have been the team to beat," Duminy said during a virtual interaction, facilitated by SA T20, where he coaches Paarl Royals team.

"I feel it would be 2-1 to Australia and for me the Player-of-the-Series would be Usman Khawaja," he said of the Australian left-hander, who hit a career-best unbeaten 195 against South Africa in Sydney Test in January.

Duminy was quick to add that one can never "write off" India in their home conditions. "You think about (Ravichandran) Ashwin who has a prolific Test record in India, he's probably going to be the key for them."

"When it comes to Test cricket, you have got to utilise your resources. Guys like (Cheteshwar) Pujara, Virat Kohli who are prolific in Test cricket. They churn out runs after runs. It's an opportunity for those guys to step up.

Mahesh opens up on his meet with Ashwin



Mahesh Pithiya

Nagpur, Feb 7: Mahesh Pithiya doesn't mind the attention he is getting and his quiet and unassuming presence is certainly endearing.

One could easily miss him among the plethora of net bowlers who sweat it out at any touring team's nets before the uncanny resemblance with R Ashwin's action surprises you.

He is only four first-class matches old but the Australian team has made him a travelling net bowler and he is lapping up every bit of attention he is getting.

"Maine pahle din hi Steve Smith ko 5 se 6 baar out kiya thaa nets mein (I had got Smith out at least six times in the nets on first day)," a smiling Mahesh told PTI as he stood in one corner watching his idol Ashwin go about his job in the nets.

Talk about Ashwin, the 21-year-old started beaming. Mahesh has generated curiosity among India

players as well. "Today I got blessings from my idol. I have always wanted to bowl like him. When I am met him as he was entering the nets, I touched his feet and sought his blessings. He hugged me and then asked what exactly am I bowling to the Australians," he said.

"Virat Kohli also smiled at me and gestured thumbs up and wished me luck," you couldn't miss the pride in his voice.

He has just started his journey in senior cricket for Baroda and that is what he focuses on at the moment. "I have started my journey in Ranji Trophy and I want to focus on my red ball game. I want to cement my place in the Baroda side. I am not thinking about IPL now," said Mahesh, who had worked in a tea stall few years ago.

So what exactly does he bowl? Does he have a carrom ball or a slider like Ashwin? "No, I don't bowl carrom ball or doosra. My stock ball is off break and another ball that I have myself developed is one that has a bit of backspin in

it. But I bowl that in white-ball cricket," said the man who lives with his parents, elder brother and sister in law.

Bowling to Smith and Labuschagne has been a life changing experience for him. "It has been amazing to work with this Australian side. My job is to mainly bowl to Smith at Australia nets. He didn't ask me to bowl anything specific."

Mahesh feels lucky that he is able to interact a lot with Nathan Lyon who has given him some invaluable tips on the off of spin. "Lyon first asked me to show my grip and explain what I do while rolling my fingers. He then explained how I can get more revs (rotation) on the ball and also how my front leg (left) should land. He told me to have confidence in my ability."

The Australian team be using Mahesh's services till the start of the second Test in Delhi. "I am there with the team till February 17. It has been a life changer for me," said the young man.



Steve Smith (L) and David Warner inspect the pitch in Nagpur, Tuesday

409 players to go under hammer at WPL auction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 7: A total of 409 cricketers will go under the hammer at the inaugural Women's Premier League auction with the likes of Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana, Alyssa Healy and Sophie Ecclestone keeping themselves in the highest base price bracket of Rs 50 lakh.

IPL chairman Arun Dhimal had told PTI on Monday that the entire 22 matches of the league will be held in Mumbai from March 4-26. The auction will be held in Mumbai February 13.

Out of 409 players, 246 are Indians and 163 are overseas of which eight are from the associate nations. The total capped players are 202, while 199 are uncapped and eight are from the associate nations.

A maximum of 90 slots are available with the five teams of which 30 are for overseas players. Twenty four players have put themselves in the Rs 50 lakh base price category. Thirty players are in the auction list with a base price of Rs 40 lakh.

Besides India captain Harmanpreet, Mandhana and Australian star Healy and number one England spinner Ecclestone, the others in the highest base price bracket include U-19 World Cup winning captain Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Sneha Rana, Jemimah Rodrigues, England's Nat Sciver, Australia captain Meg Lanning among others.

India's U-19 stars, who won the World Cup in South Africa, will also be part of the action. They include uncapped Parshvi Chopra, Archana Devi, Titas Sadhu, Shweta Sehrawat and Mannat Kashyap (Rs 10 lakh base price for all).

"The WPL Player Auction list is out with a total of 409 cricketers set to go under the hammer at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai on February 13, 2023," said the BCCI in a release.

"A total of 1525 players registered for the inaugural Women's Premier League Player Auction & the final list was pruned to 409 players."

Finch hangs up his international gloves

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, Feb 7: Australia's most successful T20I batter and captain Aaron Finch, who led the country to its maiden shortest format World Cup triumph in 2021, announced his retirement from international cricket Tuesday.

The 36-year-old will, however, continue to play for the Renegades in the Big Bash League and would consider domestic T20 opportunities in other countries.

"Our World Cup winning, longest serving men's T20I captain has called time on a remarkable career. Thanks for everything @AaronFinch5," Cricket Australia (CA) said on its official Twitter handle.

Finch's retirement from international cricket was on expected lines. He played just five Tests, the last one being in 2018, and retired from the ODIs last year after a much-publicised struggle for form as captain of the Australian team.

He captained the team to their first T20 World Cup title when they defeated New Zealand in Dubai in 2021 and is one of only four male Australians to captain a World Cup



Aaron Finch

winning side. But, the Australian team under him failed to qualify for the semi-finals T20 World Cup at home last year. His last international match came in the T20 showcase when he top-scored with 63 as Australia beat Ireland by 42 runs.

"Realising that I won't be playing on until the next T20 World Cup in 2024, now is the right moment to step down and give the team time to plan and build to-

Eves go down against Nepal at SAFF event

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Feb 7: India were staring at an early elimination from the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship after suffering a 1-3 defeat against Nepal at the Mostafa Kamal Stadium here Tuesday.

Apurna Narzary handed India lead with her 21st-minute stroke but Nepal bounced back with a goal each from Anjali Chand (48th), Preeti Rai (69th, penalty) and Amisha Karki (89th) and secured their final berth.

India now have four points from three games after the group stage, while Nepal have six. Hosts Bangladesh just (four points) need to draw against Bhutan later in the day to seal their spot in the final.

"It's quite sad that we started well, but we went slower and slower. Nepal got a penalty, which was of course not good for us, and then the girls started slowing down," India head coach Maymol Rocky said.

debut in a T20I in January 2011. Finch amassed 8,804 runs in all formats which includes 17 ODI centuries and two T20I tons.

Finch led Australia in a world record 76 men's T20Is, as well as in 55 ODIs, before his retirement. He is Australia's most prolific T20I batter with 3120 runs from 103 matches at an average of 34.28, with two hundreds and 19 fifties, and a strike-rate of 142.53.

He also holds the record for the highest score in a T20I when blasting 172 runs from just 76 balls against Zimbabwe in Harare in 2018, an incredible knock that included 10 sixes and 16 fours. Finch was also a part of the Australia team that won the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in 2015.

"Team success is what you play the game for and the maiden T20 World Cup win in 2021 and lifting the ODI World Cup on home soil in 2015 will be the two memories I cherish the most," Finch said.

"To be able to represent Australia for 12 years and play with and against some of the greatest players of all time has been an incredible honour."