



BACK IN BUSINESS

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu is slowly regaining fitness with regular workouts and is also being active on social media

LEISURE | P2



NORTH'S NUKE MANIA

North Korea showcases its missile strength with IBMs during a military parade in presence of supreme leader Kim Jong-un

INTERNATIONAL | P10



AMAZING COMEBACK

Ravindra Jadeja bags a five-wicket haul to help India take control in the first Test of the 4-match series against Australia

SPORTS | P12

SHORT TAKES

Jumbo carcass sans tusks found in SNP

Baripada: Elephant deaths continue unabated in the state as forest officials recovered yet another decomposed tusker carcass with its tusk and trunk severed from the head in Gopinathpur forest beat area in Pithabata forest range under south division of Similipal National Park (SNP) in Mayurbhanj district, in the wee hours of Thursday. Preliminary inquiries indicated that the tusker aged within seven to eight years might have been killed three to four days back. **P5**

Pujahari appointed new OHRC chief

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government appointed Thursday retired judge of the Orissa High Court, Justice Satrugana Pujahari as the chairperson of Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC). Pujahari was elevated as an Additional Judge of the Orissa High Court in November 2013 and became a permanent Judge in October 2014. He also served as a judge of the Madras High Court. He will replace Justice Bijoy Krishna Patel who completed his tenure as OHRC chairman January 23, 2023. In another development, the state government has reappointed Asim Amitabh Dash as member of the OHRC. Similarly, the Odisha government has appointed senior journalist Sushant Kumar Mohanty as the State Information Commissioner, said a release issued by the I & PR department. Mohanty has retired recently as the executive editor of a reputed Odia daily.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



For me, every day is Valentine's Day. I have three cows

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	60806.22	↑ 142.43
NIFTY	17893.45	↑ 21.75
DOLLAR	82.75	↑ ₹0.11
EURO	88.94	↑ ₹0.43
GOLD	₹57,150	↓ ₹65
SILVER	₹67,460	↓ ₹173

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	32.9°C	31.4°C
TEMP MIN	18.2°C	18.0°C
Humidity	93%	86%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	



BALANCING ACT: A squirrel balances itself on flowers as it looks for food in West Bengal's Nadia district, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

Andhra Pradesh 'invades' Kotia panchayat again

Both Odisha and Andhra Pradesh are engaged in a five-decade long tussle over the ownership of Kotia panchayat of villages since early 1960s

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, Feb 9: After a brief lull, Andhra Pradesh has again stirred controversy by trying to claim parts of Kotia panchayat as its own territory. The matter came to the fore as Andhra Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister Peedika Rajanna Dora visited Dhulipadar village in the panchayat Thursday and explained to the villagers about various welfare schemes being implemented by his government. However, Pottangi block officials were not aware of the visit of the deputy chief minister.

This development has come at a time when both the Odisha and Andhra Pradesh governments are at loggerheads over possession of Kotia panchayat. However, the frequent visits by senior officials from the neighbouring state have always remained a cause for concern for Odisha government officials.

Sources said that Dora after his arrival at Dhulipadar village was welcomed by its residents at the meeting place. Dora also addressed the villagers for a substantial period of time. A number of villagers sought help from Dora to avail of the benefits provided by the Andhra Pradesh government, and he assured them of all cooperation. Pottangi BDO Soumya Sarthak



Andhra Pradesh Deputy CM Peedika Rajanna Dora addresses a gathering in Kotia Panchayat, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Mishra and other block officials were present at the Kotia panchayat office when the meeting took place. However, they were completely in the dark about Dora's visit to Dhulipadar village. This is just an indication of how Odisha government officials are ignorant about the developments within the panchayat on a daily basis.

Dora was lauded by people for efforts of his government in developing some areas of the border locality. Dora told them that development has been achieved in the fringe villages of Kotia panchayat only because of the efforts of the Andhra Pradesh government.

Dora explained to the residents about the benefits available in 'Kadupu-Kadupu' scheme which means doorstep delivery of essentials. He read out a long list of the benefits to the villagers available under the scheme. He assured residents of the bordering villages that they will get maximum benefits if they come under the Andhra Pradesh government.

"The Andhra Pradesh government is committed to the all-round

development of the people of the border villages. We are formulating some additional welfare schemes for the residents of these villages. You will soon get the benefits of the new schemes," Dora reportedly told to the villagers.

Andhra's Salur CI Rohini Pathi, block officials and representatives of various panchayat of the neighbouring state were present during the meeting.

Earlier, Dora had visited Tadibalsala village under Kotia panchayat, December 25, last year and attended a programme. The visit of Dora had then sparked a controversy in the state. When contacted, Pottangi BDO Mishra said he has been informed about the visit of Dora and he will pass on the message to the district administration.

Odisha has filed a case in Supreme Court as Andhra Pradesh is continuously staking its claim on Kotia panchayat which is in Koraput district. The matter is sub-judice in the apex court but the neighbouring state is continuously intruding into Kotia panchayat to stake its claim, officials pointed out.

Quake toll nears 20K

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ankara, Feb 9: Thousands who lost their homes in a catastrophic earthquake huddled around campfires and clamoured for food and water in the bitter cold, three days after the temblor and series of aftershocks hit Turkey and Syria, killing 19,823 persons. Rescuers continued their race to pull more people alive from the rubble, with the window closing to find trapped survivors. Currently, rescuers are tumbling upon dead bodies more frequently than managing to bring out people from the rubble alive.

The quake's toll is the highest worldwide since a 2011 earthquake off Japan triggered a tsunami, killing nearly 18,400 people. While stories of miraculous res-



cues briefly buoyed spirits, the grim reality of the hardship facing tens of thousands who survived the disaster cast a pall.

In the Turkish city of Antakya, dozens of people scrambled for aid in front of a truck distributing children's coats and other supplies.

In the Syrian government-held city of Aleppo, rescue workers pulled seven people out alive and 44 bodies on Thursday from a collapsed building in the city centre, state TV reported. **Contd...P4**

HC relief for Bhub house owners

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: Delivering a huge blow to the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and relief to the residents in the Odisha capital, the Orissa High Court quashed Thursday the BMC's notification of collecting revised and hiked holding tax. The civic body had issued a notification in 2011 to collect holding tax at the revised and hiked rate. The hike was 10 times more than the old tax. Even, tax was imposed on vacant plots.

The notification of the revised holding tax was issued on the basis of the old Municipality Act. Hence the Bhubaneswar Confederation of Citizens Association filed a petition in the Orissa High Court challenging the decision of the BMC and sought quashing of the notification.

After hearing the petition, the high court had cancelled the no-



tification issued by the BMC. It had also asked the BMC to reconsider its decision of increasing the holding tax rates.

However, the then BMC commissioner, Prem Chand Choudhary had implemented the notification. The revised tax amount was also collected from some city dwellers.

The petitioners had again sought the intervention of the High Court and in turn, it had issued a stay order. The petitioners had contended that the old Municipality Act has been abolished with the introduction of the new Act and the

CHARGES AGAINST ADANI: SC AGREES TO HEAR PETITION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: The Supreme Court has agreed to hear Friday a plea seeking a direction to the Centre to constitute a committee monitored by a retired apex court judge to inquire and investigate into the Hindenburg Research report which has made a slew of allegations against the business conglomerate led by industrialist Gautam Adani.

Advocate Vishal Tiwari, who has filed the petition, mentioned the matter Thursday for urgent listing before a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud. He told the bench, also comprising Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala, that a separate plea filed on the issue is scheduled to be listed for hearing February 10.

LIC officials to meet Adani top brass soon

Mumbai: LIC officials will soon meet the top management of Adani Group and seek clarification on the crisis being faced by the diversified conglomerate, chairman MR Kumar said here Thursday. LIC's investment into Adani group firms' stock has come under criticism by opposition parties as well as investors after Hindenburg Research's report. "We are soon going to call them (Adani) to meet us and explain what is happening in the market and in the group," Kumar said. LIC is the second largest shareholder in most of the listed Adani group companies, with a cumulative investment of Rs 36,474.78 crore as of January 27.

"A similar petition is coming up tomorrow (Friday). This pertains to the Hindenburg Research report which has tarnished the image of the country and caused loss," Tiwari said. He urged the bench that his petition be also heard Friday along with the separate plea. "All right. Tag it," the CJ said.

In his public interest litigation (PIL), Tiwari has also sought directions to set up a special committee to oversee the sanction policy for loans of over ₹500 crore given to big corporates.

Petition for CBI probe dismissed

Cuttack: The Orissa High Court dismissed Thursday the petition filed by the Bharatiya Vikash Parishad seeking CBI investigation into the murder of former Health Minister Naba Kishore Das. The high court said there is no need for interference as Crime Branch probe is underway. "The hearing of the PIL seeking CBI probe was held today. The honourable court however stated that it is just 11 days since the Crime Branch took over the case and as investigation is going on, there is no need for the court intervention now. The case is hereby dismissed," informed lawyer of BVP, Gopal Prasad Jena.

hiked holding tax was levied as per the old Act. On the basis of this, the Odisha High Court gave the fresh order.

7 die after falling in oil tanker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kakinada, Feb 9: Seven workers of an edible oil packaging factory in a village near here were asphyxiated Thursday when they got into an oil tank to clean it, district officials said. The incident occurred at G Ragampet at around 8.30 am when one of the labourers who was cleaning the tank slipped and fell into it. In order to save him, another six people entered the tanker and were asphyxiated. Five of the workers were from Paderu and two were from Peddapuram, police said.

The factory has been sealed and a case registered against it under IPC section 304A (death due to negligence), Kakinada District Collector

Krithika Shukla told reporters here. She said a four member committee headed by the joint collector has been constituted to conduct an inquiry into the mishap and submit a report within three days.

Shukla said the panel is currently going through the documents and the approval the factory had for running the oil packaging facility. Strict action will be initiated against those responsible for the lapses, officials said.

An ex-gratia of ₹25 lakh has been announced by the state government for the kin of the victims while the factory also has been ordered to provide compensation, an official release said.

Over 4K youths cheated on pretext of 'Gigolo' jobs

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THEIR FRUSTRATIONS, CYBER CRIMINALS TRAPPED THE YOUTHS OFFERING THEM POSITIONS AS MALE ESCORTS

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 9: The pangs and pains of unemployment can force people to take drastic measures. For some even the job profile of a 'Gigolo' or a 'male escort' doesn't matter as long as it provides them opportunities to earn money.

However, such types of jobs have their pitfalls too. Recently, the Delhi police arrested two persons in the national capital. And with it they busted a racket that lured people by offering them jobs of 'male escort' and in the process duped them of crores of rupees. Delhi police said Thursday that



the racket had duped over 4,000 people in the age group of 23-30 years in the Delhi-NCR area.

The two arrested have been identified as Kuldeep Singh Charan, 29, and Shyam Lal, 33, both residents of village Dantra near Jaipur. Police said that Shyam is fluent both in English, Hindi and mimicry. He used to lure gullible job aspirants by mimicking and posing as an NRI woman.

The matter came to light when a person belonging to Gautam Colony, Narela lodged a complaint with the cyber crime department of the Delhi police. In the complaint, the man stated that he was searching for an online

job on Google when he came across a website 'SP Playboy services.com' and contacted the number given. Initially the man was told that he would have to work as a male escort. He agreed to it.

"In the name of providing a job, the accused demanded the initial registration fee amounting to ₹2,499. Thereafter the accused started demanding amounts in the name of advance commission of 40 per cent, massage kit, pass code charges and hotel booking. In this process the accused defrauded the complainant to the tune of ₹39,000," a senior police official investigating the matter said. **Contd... P4**

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Without apparent reason you may go into your shell today. No doubt you will acknowledge the contribution of others, but Ganesha says you have to do more than that; you will have to share your knowledge with your peers. Besides this, Ganesha says you need to cut down on your spending.

TAURUS
Ganesha sees you being very planned and focuses, poised and practical in handling your affairs today. You'll be able to take identify the best strategy, course of action that the situations demand. This day you would be performing like a specialist, a real expert and will not fail to accomplish whatever you have set out to do.

GEMINI
You are on your way to falling in love. Your parents or children are likely to fetch you substantial gains, financially or otherwise. You may want to make a few changes at work, probably a new business strategy.

CANCER
You will not only make plans, but will also act on them. So you can save money, time and energy for creative pursuits. The quality of your work and accomplishments will be high. Your creativity plays a key role in your accomplishments in career or business.

LEO
You will need to work hard to achieve your goals today. Those who are serious about their work will be easily able to tide over the day. You need to be cautious today. Not only at work, but even in personal relationships, you need to be on guard. You need to maintain a balance between home and at work, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Issues regarding religious beliefs and spirituality will surface today. Pursue your goals single-mindedly to attain success in the field of your choice, and exploit your abilities and talents to the hilt, advises Ganesha. You will be more logical and calculative, rather than emotional, in matters of your relationships.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that today in your office you should be very careful in your work. It is likely that your superiors will not be happy about your work or your ability today. Those of you who are businessmen should try and delay sending off tenders today. Those who have given their job interviews may not get a favorable response to it.

SCORPIO
At work, you would want to change the perspective with which people see you. Your colleagues recognise you as the emerging alpha-lion. Ideas and opinions will impress your bosses. But keep a level head and learn where to stop, even when winning, counsels Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Lengthy business meetings keep you occupied almost throughout the day. You may also do some value addition to your work by taking co-workers' suggestions and inputs, says Ganesha. Implementation of these inputs will prove highly beneficial in the long run.

CAPRICORN
The day will be of paramount significance as you are likely to meet someone who will be associated with you for life, says Ganesha. Also, relationships and relatives will keep you busy for major part of the day. You may not find it interesting, but you will not have any options either. A visit to holy places for some peace of mind is also likely.

AQUARIUS
The day begins on high note. You work hard, put your best foot forward and at the end get the final output as per your requirements. Romantic and beautiful, the setting Sun will bring the softer side of your personality to the fore as you will spend the evening with your sweetheart, predicts Ganesha.

PISCES
For you, today may all be work and no play, says Ganesha. This, however, will not stop you from putting in extra efforts to finish your pending projects and to meet your deadlines. But then who else but a Pisces is known to handle the pain nonchalantly without bemoaning the lack of pleasure?



LEONARDO DiCAPRIO GETS ATTACKED BY RADIO HOST

Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio has been attacked by a radio host named Megyn Kelly after it was rumoured that he is dating teenage model Eden Polani, with Kelly ranting he will never be happy if he continues going out with younger women.

PAMELA ANDERSON STILL OWNS ICONIC BAYWATCH SWIMSUIT

Actress Pamela Anderson has admitted she still has the iconic red swimsuit she wore on the hit TV show *Baywatch*. The 55-year-old former glamour model revealed the outfit still fits and said she slips into it despite it being more than 30 years since she first wore it.



Sharvari makes heads turn in 'angel in disguise' look

Mumbai: Some of the most well-known actors, including Ayushmann Khurrana, Suniel Shetty, Riteish Deshmukh, Raveena Tandon, Sonakshi Sinha, Huma Qureshi, and many more recently attended the wedding ceremony of Raveena Taurani, daughter of film director Ramesh Taurani. But it was celebrity guest Sharvari Wagh who made the most heads turn in her 'angel in disguise' look.

When it comes to Indian cultural clothing, chikankari is an excellent choice whether the garment is traditional ivory or a brighter colour. If you don't already have a gorgeously embroidered outfit, let Sharvari serve as your inspiration. Falguni & Shane Peacock were responsible for creating Sharvari's lehenga. The blouse had to be the star of her costume because the voluminous skirt had delicate white embroidery over a barely-there pink background. Her blouse, which had a plunging neckline and half sleeves as well as a pattern of small

floral-shaped sequins all over it and metallic tassels at the end, added a whimsical, modern touch to the modest design on her skirt. Her delicate pink tulle dupatta had a lace border with mirror work as well. Sharvari picked a pair of statement diamond earrings and a choker to finish her festive appearance, leaving her neck and hands bare. Her makeup complemented her uncomplicated appearance: radiant complexion, a hint of coral eye makeup, pink lips, and a low bun accented with white and pink flowers.

AGENCIES



Samantha sets midweek motivation

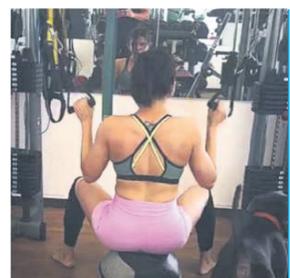
Mumbai: Samantha Ruth Prabhu is bouncing back like a queen. The actress is getting back to her social media game and sharing glimpses of her day-to-day life, from the gym, favourite songs, and quotes to pics. Now, she gave a glimpse of her Thursday morning workout session and it's the perfect mid-week motivation you need.

The *Family Man 2* actress, who is an avid fitness freak, always manages to hit the gym every day. Thursday, she took to her Instagram story and shared a video of her intense workout session. She is seen performing upper-body pull-ups and flaunting her bare back and biceps. Time and again, Samantha has proved that she is a fighter and unstoppable. The actress sets

all the fitness inspiration one needs to stay fit and exercise every day.

Samantha recently gave a major shout out to the celebrated American singer Miley Cyrus's recent hit track *Flowers* with her Instagram story. The actress shared a reel video posed by Cyrus on her Instagram story, with a caption that reads "Goddamn!!!" Later, she also shared a screenshot of the song's lyrics that gives major 'Self Love' goals.

AGENCIES



Sridevi's biography in works

Mumbai: Filmmaker Boney Kapoor Thursday announced the biography of his late wife and legendary actress Sridevi titled *The Life of a Legend*. He took to social media to make the announcement.

Boney said: Sridevi was a force of nature. She was the happiest when she shared her art on screen with her fans but she was also a fiercely private person." The book is penned by Dhiraj Kumar who the actress considered family. "Dhiraj Kumar is who she considered family. He is a re-

searcher, writer & columnist. We are happy that he is writing the book that befits her extraordinary life."

The book draws a complete portrait of Sridevi, the quintessential superstar who has an unmatched career in Indian cinema. She worked in over 300 films across 50 years in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi. She was conferred the Padma Shri, won National Film Awards, State Government Awards and International Awards.

IANS



DDLJ to have pan India release on Valentine's Day

Mumbai: Fans across India now have a chance to see Raj and Simran on the big screen again with the re-release of *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDLJ)*, the Aditya Chopra film that catapulted Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol to superstardom.

A romantic blockbuster, the 1995 film is the longest running movie in the history of Indian cinema and continues to enjoy its screening at Mumbai's Maratha Mandir theatre. The film will have a wide re-release in major Indian cities this Valentine's Day. Yash Raj Films said Thursday.

DDLJ, the longest running film in the history of cinema, has become synonymous with romance for India and Indians for generations since its historic release.

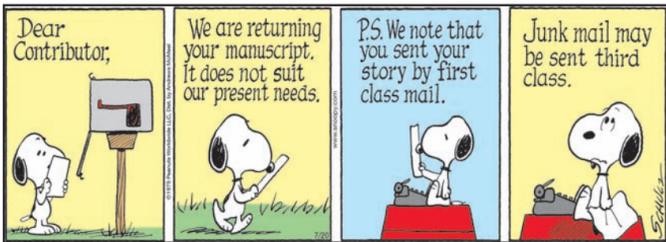
"We are constantly requested by the audience and fans, through the year, for a wider showcasing of the film so that they can again and again watch this milestone-setting film with their friends and family in theatres! This year, on the occasion of Valentine's Day, we are making their wish come true. *DDLJ* will be screened across India, starting Feb 10, for a period of one week only," Rohan Malhotra, Vice President, Distribution, YRF, said.

DDLJ will be released in 37 cities across India. Fans now have the option to watch Shah Rukh Khan as both Raj and Pathaan in theatres during the Valentine's Day period, two films with different avatars of the superstar.

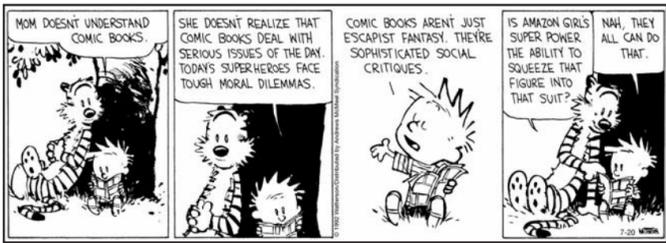
PTI



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

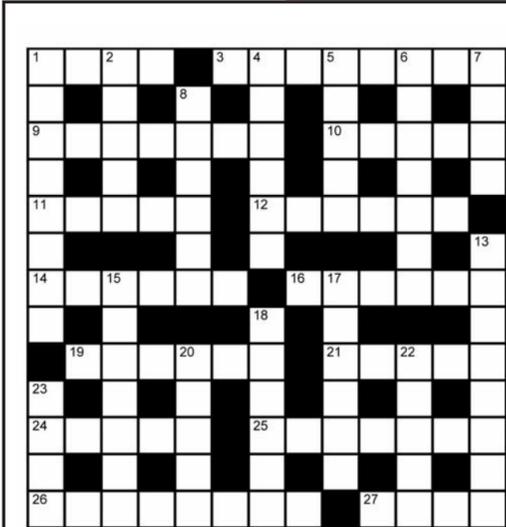


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD

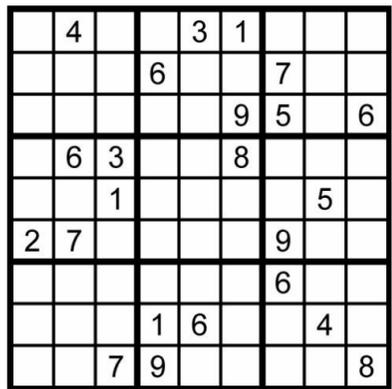


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- Across**
- 1 Errand boy
 - 3 Clothes
 - 9 Unpaid athlete
 - 10 Musical pace
 - 11 Nocturnal ungulate of SE Asia
 - 12 Greek capital
 - 14 Sweet-talk
 - 16 Involuntary response
 - 19 Hearsay
 - 21 High anxiety
 - 24 Soupçon
 - 25 Eyelet fastener
 - 26 Prosperous (4-2-2)
 - 27 Bad day for Caesar
 - 5 Like two socks, usually
 - 6 Minimal
 - 7 Wild plum
 - 8 Auto need
 - 13 Performs an action
 - 15 Diary
 - 17 Engage
 - 18 Arctic
 - 20 Undisguised
 - 22 Wanderer
 - 23 Pack up
- Down**
- 1 Rehearse
 - 2 Hold firmly
 - 4 Overseas

SUDOKU

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

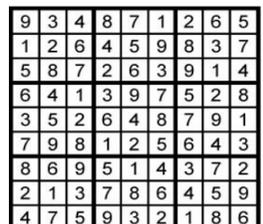


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



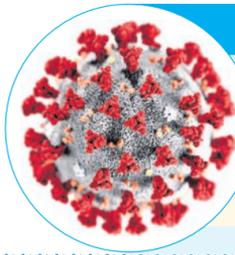
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



BURNING BIKE

A motorcycle caught fire at Bomikhil in Capital city, Thursday. The blaze was doused later



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	676,928,174	649,465,794	6,776,867
India	44,683,748	44,151,219	530,748
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

Every initiative aims at people's welfare: CM

Addressing the induction programme of mineral administrative service and geological service officers, the CM said as this day marks the beginning of a new chapter in your life, you are expected to shoulder the roles and responsibilities that come attached



CM Naveen Patnaik and 5T Secretary VK Pandian at the induction programme

tration, which needs application of proper domain knowledge, adoption of scientific methodologies and modern technologies.

Speaking on the efficacy of the mining sector of Odisha, he said, "The state government has put in place an effective mechanism for monitoring mineral transactions, which has been well appreciated across the country. We are now considered as a leading state in implementation of new changes in mineral laws. In return, the system has been generating highest revenue in mining for the state facilitating different welfare activities."

The hard work and devotion of young and capable officers will help people harvest the true benefits of these initiatives, the Chief Minister added.

Encouraging the new entrants, Patnaik said, "As this day marks the beginning of a new chapter in your life, you are expected to shoulder the roles and responsibilities that come attached. Your success and achievement must be reflected in the success story of our society." The Chief Minister wished for a bright career of the new officers.

Steel & Mines Minister Prafulla Kumar Mallick said, "The mining sector provides the highest

The mining sector provides the highest non-tax revenue to the state facilitating development and welfare works, said Steel and Mines Minister Prafulla Kumar Mallick

non-tax revenue to the state facilitating development and welfare works."

He appreciated the leadership of the Chief Minister in transforming the mining sector of the state. The minister expected the new officers, with their knowledge in domain subjects, would contribute immensely to the sector.

Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra said that the new officers have a significant role to play as the mining sector is growing at a rapid pace. Odisha is one of the fastest growing states and the mining sector has a critical role in the state's growth prospects.

Secretary to Chief Minister (5T) VK Pandian moderated the programme.

Interstate drug peddler arrested from Assam

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: The special task force (STF) of Odisha police arrested an interstate drug peddler from Guwahati in Assam, police said Thursday.

A team of STF with the assistance of Assam police arrested Salim Ahmmed, a resident of Mantripukri, Imphal, Manipur.

He was arrested in connection with a case registered December 3, 2022, and brown sugar of 1.335 kg, along with a car, was seized. Earlier, two persons were arrested and forwarded to the court, the police said.

Ahmed is the main drug peddler. The accused was absconding following the case and concealing his presence at Guwahati. On receiving reliable input, the STF nabbed and brought him to Odisha on transit remand.



SUMMER DELIGHT: A vendor arranges watermelons hoping a brisk business at Station Road in Cuttack, Thursday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: As many as 65 officers of mineral administrative service, geological service and subordinate mineral administrative service, Thursday, joined the Steel & Mines department of the state government.

Attending the orientation programme of the newly-inducted officers on a virtual platform, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said, "Each and every initiative of the state government aims at welfare of the people. Initiatives like 5T and Mo Sarkar are working towards providing better services to the people."

"No matter how amazing and innovative a strategy might be, its true success depends on effective implementation. Therefore, I would like all of you to work judiciously, with honesty and integrity, for the benefit of the people," Patnaik added.

He further stated that mineral administrative service and geological service are unique in their own ways. They aim at conserving and maintaining the precious mineral resources of the state by maintaining transparency in adminis-

City decked up to welcome Prez

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: The Capital city has been decked up to welcome President Droupadi Murmu, who will begin her two-day visit to her home state Friday.

Huge cut-outs and posters of the President dotted the streets of Bhubaneswar.

Murmu will attend two functions Friday, besides visiting Lord Lingaraj temple and attending a meeting in Cuttack Saturday.

Rama Devi Women's University (RDWU), the alma mater of the President, was also decked up to welcome Murmu, who will attend the institution's convocation. She completed her BA from the then college in 1979.

As many as 7,430 students will get their degrees, including 22 gold medals, in the convo-



gation. Honorary doctorates would also be conferred on Odissi dancer Aruna Mohanty, litterateur Purnamasi Jani from Kandhamal district, Soumya Swaminathan, a former chief scientist at World Health Organisation, and social activist Sunitha Krishnan.

Murmu was conferred with an honorary de-

gree in the first convocation after the college was upgraded to a university in 2021.

After reaching Bhubaneswar around 11:45am Friday, the President will attend the Foundation Day of Jnanaprabha Mission, followed by the RDWU convocation. On Saturday, Murmu will start her day with a visit to the Lord Lingaraj temple and later in the day attend a function in Cuttack to inaugurate the second Indian Rice Congress at National Rice Research Institute.

Elaborate security arrangements have been put in place in view of the President's visit and around 1,500 police personnel have been deployed in the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack region.

This will be Murmu's second visit to her home state after assuming the highest constitutional position in the country in July last year.

BJD for 'spl focus state status'

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 9: Stating that Odisha is prone to natural calamities, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Thursday once again urged the Union government to grant 'special focus state status' to the state for at least three years after a natural calamity strikes the state.

Senior BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab, while speaking during a discussion on Union Budget for 2023-24, requested the Union government to grant 'special focus state status' to Odisha for at least three years.

He demanded the sharing of funds should be in the ratio of 90:10 for the three years where 90 per cent of funds should be provided by the Union government and 10 per cent by state government.

"Our only demand is to make Odisha a special focus state. Our government has also initiated discussions with the NITI Aayog and the Prime Minister to make Odisha



ODISHA IN PARLIAMENT

BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab demanded fund sharing on 90:10 basis for the three years after a calamity strikes the state

a special focus state for at least three years," Mahtab added.

The Cuttack MP also flagged concerns over reduction in allocations under PM Kisan scheme and MGNREGA.

Amar bats for better tele density in rural pockets

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, Feb 9: BJD MP Amar Patnaik Thursday urged the Union government to take steps to augment tele density and internet connectivity in rural pockets of Odisha.

During the Zero Hour, the BJD MP informed the Rajya Sabha that tele density in rural parts is only 62.73 per cent and internet density is a meagre 34.5 per cent. He said rural people of Odisha have not benefited from the extension of digital revolution in the country.

The BJD MP further said that in KBK region over 10,000 villages have no internet connectivity while over 6,000 villages are without mobile connectivity. Patnaik added that mobile connectivity is so poor in these areas that people have to climb trees to get signal.

He said there are several proposals to install mobile towers in Left-wing Extremism (LWE) areas and aspirational districts but there is no timeline for completion of these projects. Under Bharat Net project, the Odisha government had sought ₹327 crore under special assistance for increasing utilisation of Bharat Net phase 2 but this was also not released, Patnaik rued.

New era of devpt started in Odisha: Chief Secy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: Odisha has set examples for other states in every sector and a new era of development has already started in the state. Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra said here Thursday.

Mahapatra said this while inaugurating a two-day general body convention of OAS Association at KIIT University Auditorium.

The state has made huge investments in infrastructure sector during the last two decades and it will emerge as a developed state in the country in the coming five to six years, he said.

The state's growth in education, health, agriculture and social sectors is highly encouraging. Every Gram Panchayat (GP) has a 5T school as the government focuses on providing quality education for all. The state also tops the list in the country in food security and an increase in average collection of goods and services tax (GST) in the last five years, he added.

Naxal menace in the state has come down marginally due to service delivery at grassroots level, he said.



Infrastructure development has been ensured while protecting the environment as forest area has grown from 30 to 40 per cent. The state has also become a safer place for Olive Ridley turtles and migratory birds, he pointed out.

Highlighting the steps taken for development of road connectivity, the Chief Secretary said that more than 1,500 bridges have been built in the last decade and every village has a pucca road thereby reducing the impact of river inundation during heavy rains.

By arranging sports events, combating natural calamities and fighting Covid-19 pandemic, the state has shown exemplary readiness through teamwork, he mentioned.

KEY POINTS

The state's growth in education, health, agriculture and social sectors is highly encouraging, says the Chief Secretary

Every Gram Panchayat has a 5T school as the government focuses on providing quality education for all

The state also tops the list in the country in food security and an increase in average collection of GST in the last five years

Use of technology at every stage of government and 5T initiative works very effectively as it collects feedback directly from the beneficiary, the top bureaucrat of Odisha said.

Acknowledging the contributions of the OAS officers, he said they contribute immensely to the growth of the state and their service at field level is highly challenging and encouraging.

On the occasion, Additional Chief Secretary, Revenue & Disaster Management, Satyabrata Sahu and Principal Secretary of Finance Vishal Kumar Dev highlighted the growth of the state over the years and contribution of OAS officers in the growth story.



जन-जन का संकल्प फाइलेरिया मुक्त भारत

“जन-जन का स्वस्थ जीवन न्यू इंडिया का दृढ़ संकल्प है।”

10 फरवरी का दिन फाइलेरिया के खिलाफ देश की लड़ाई के लिए महत्वपूर्ण है। इस दिन से स्वास्थ्यकर्मी आपके घर आ कर फाइलेरिया से बचाव की दवा देंगे, ज़रूर खाएं

फाइलेरिया मच्छर के काटने से फैलता है, इसलिए सतर्क रहें। फाइलेरिया से बचाव की दवा का सेवन न करने से हाथीपांव एवं अंडकोष में सूजन हो सकती है

देशभर के 20 फाइलेरिया प्रभावित राज्यों में हाथीपांव के 5.16 लाख मरीज़ और अंडकोष की सूजन (हाइड्रोसील) के 1.5 लाख मरीज़ हैं

यह अभियान देश के 10 राज्यों (बिहार, उत्तर प्रदेश, झारखण्ड, ओडिशा, महाराष्ट्र, मध्य प्रदेश, आंध्र प्रदेश, छत्तीसगढ़, कर्नाटक, पश्चिम बंगाल) के 90 जिलों में आज से शुरू होकर दो सप्ताह तक चलेगा



आइए, सब मिलकर भारत को फाइलेरिया मुक्त बनाएं



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NGT blow to pellet plant project in Sundargarh



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has put a stay on establishment of an iron ore beneficiation plant, pelletisation plant and some ancillary industries in Sundargarh district until further order on account of violation of environmental norms.

Kapand mouza of Lahunipada tehsil in Sundargarh.

The apex green panel issued the order while hearing the arguments presented by the counsel on behalf of petitioner Chittaranjan Mahanta.

The petitioner alleged that the said firm has illegally felled a number of trees without getting the requisite Forest Clearance (FC) under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 from the Union government. The Sundargarh DFO had reportedly granted the permission for the construction work at the plot terming the area as 'non-forest' in violation of law.

The Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

(MoEF&CC) has also returned the file and refused to grant EC in view of the high pollution potential of the project. However, the firm allegedly felled a large number of trees illegally adversely affecting the wildlife habitat and their movement in the area.

"The area is contiguous to Kukia Reserve Forest which is also a habitat of wild animals with rare and endangered species," the complainants claimed.

The NGT has constituted a team under the DG, Forest of MoEF&CC to ascertain the impact of the project on the wildlife, forest and environment including the adjoining rivers and other environmentally sensitive areas.

The committee has been ordered to meet within one month and present the report within two months. The committee members will visit the spot to ascertain the impact of the project on the wildlife, forest and environment including the adjoining rivers and other environmentally sensitive areas. The nodal agency for coordination and compliance will be the Integrated Regional officer of MoEF&CC, Bhubaneswar for coordination and compliance.



FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: Members of Ambedkar-Lohia Vichar Manch staging a protest at PMG in Bhubaneswar seeking human rights protection in state, Thursday

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LOST

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Rairangpur, I, Sri Vikash Kumar @Vikash Kumar Bhoot, aged about 51 years, S/o- Late Debi Prasad Bhoot, W.N.-6, P.O.- Rairangpur, P.S.- Rairangpur Town, Dist.- Mayurbhanj, Odisha declare that I have purchased AC. 0.07 dec. of land Kisam- Gharbari over Plot No.1076, Khata No.-399 of Mouza- Ichinda, N.S.- Rairangpur, P.S.-82, Dist.- Mayurbhanj vide Sale deed No.-424 dated 02.9.2003 from Smt. Suchitra Kabi, W/o- Sri Tapas Kumar Kabi of W.N.15, P.O./P.S.- Rairangpur, Dist.- Mayurbhanj, Odisha. After mutated the land records R.O.R. bearing Khata No.- 449 / 407, Plot No.- 1076 / 2241, Mouza- Ichinda measuring A0.07 dec. was issued in my favour. That said the original sale deed & R.O.R. has been lost somewhere at the time of travelling from my residence to my shop. That the above said documents has not been deposited at anywhere for availing financial benefit by me or my vendor. That if it is found false or any claim is received for the same, I will make responsible for the consequence arises thereof. I undertake to deposit the original documents if it is found in future and I also declare that said property is free from all encumbrances. That I swear this declaration to be deposited before Punjab National Bank, Rairangpur relating mortgage of the property in my name. If anybody has got any claim over this property may claim it within fifteen day from the publication of this notification. Vikash Kumar, Mobile No. 9437034627.

IGKC Hospital organises cancer awareness events

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: To commemorate the World Cancer Day, IGKC Multispecialty Hospital, Ghatikia, Kalinga Nagar, Bhubaneswar recently organized a marathon to run with a cause and to spread awareness about the beliefs and notions associated with the disease. The marathon was joined by Odia film actor Akash Das Nayak who was the guest of honour for the day and who joined hands with IGKCians to fight against cancer.

Prakash Chandra Dalai, the Managing Director, Rupsa Nayana Rout, Deputy Medical Superintendent and various other consultants spoke about the importance of early cancer screening and detection to combat the deadly disease at the beginning stage. Susant Paikaray, Medical Oncologist spoke about the awareness and stressed on the latest medical in-



terventions for cancer which was previously not so feasible for the common man to afford.

The IGKC Multispecialty Hospital also took initiative to increase the awareness by involving the entire hospital in various events like poster/ collage making on the topic 'Cancer: Life before and after' wherein the posters were kept displayed for public to be educated regarding the disease. The hospital took an initiative by arranging an open discussion on the topic Cancer: Close the Care Gap so as to reach common man.

NABA MURDER

Gopal undergoes polygraph test

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: The Odisha Crime Branch Thursday conducted the first round of polygraph test of police ASI Gopal Das, who had shot dead minister Naba Das January 29.

The first round of the test was conducted at State Forensic Science Laboratory (SFSL), Directorate of Forensic Science (DFSS), in Gujarat's Gandhinagar. The test will continue Friday also.

Narco tests of the accused will also be conducted Friday after a detailed medical examination of the accused, said Crime Branch sources.

An eight-member team led by investigating officer DSP Ramesh Chandra Dora is camping at Gandhinagar for the above tests. ADG Arun Bothra is also there to personally monitor and supervise the investigation, the source said.

The forensic psychological assessment and LVA test of the accused have already been conducted by the team of Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL), New Delhi at Jharsuguda February 6.

The special medical board consisting of psychiatrists has conducted a detailed study of the mental health of accused at Jharsuguda, and the report is awaited, said the sources.

The Crime Branch is also investigating financial transactions of the accused and his family.

'Odisha has potential to become major RE state'



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: The International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST) Thursday released a report on Odisha's renewable energy (RE) potential using the latest data and methodology.

The meeting was organised by iFOREST with the support of GRIDCO and OREDA under their MoU signed for knowledge, planning and capacity-building support to enhance the role of Renewable Energy in the state.

The report titled "Odisha Renewable Energy Potential (OREP) Re-assessment: Focus on Solar, Wind and Biomass" was released at the meeting chaired by Nikunj Bihari Dhal, Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), and Principal Secretary, Energy Department.

Speaking at the meeting, Dhal said, "OREP 2022 is a very ambitious policy. We have given best in class incentives to enable RE in the state. We want Odisha to become a lead-

ing player in RE sector. And from the iFOREST report it is clear that there is enough potential in the state to achieve the policy goals and beyond."

Hemant Sharma, Principal Secretary, Industries Department, appreciated the report of iFOREST and said, "The industrial policy resolution which was released in Make in Odisha conclave aims to transform Odisha into most preferred investment destination for green mining and manufacturing. Green manufacturing will create RE jobs and lead the next phase of economic growth in the state."

Chandra Bhushan, CEO and President, iFOREST said, "Our report essentially highlights that in contrast to the general perception, Odisha has significant RE generation potential and can emerge as a major RE state. Our research shows that even with modest use of wasteland and reservoir area, Odisha can install over 170 gigawatts (GW) of solar capacity. This is six to seven times higher than the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy estimate."

Over 4K youths...

Continued from P1

The police found out that the two had engaged a web developer to design the website. And through it they have been duping people for the last four. "The nature of the job that was offered prevented many victims from lodging complaints as they feared social stigma. This allowed the two accused to carry out their modus operandi," police said.

"The web developer who developed the website used in the commission of the crime has been served notice under Section 41.1 (A) CrPC and his role in the case is being examined," Devesh Kumar Mahla, deputy commissioner of police said. During investigation, police said they found through the bank accounts of the accused that they had extorted money from more than 4,000 persons.

"The mobile number given to the complainant in the name of NRI client was stated to be in the possession of Shyam and he was arrested," the DCP informed.

Quake toll nears...

Continued from P1

"We are racing against time. Time is running out," said the Syrian paramedic group in the rebel-held northwest known as 'White Helmets'. "Every second could mean saving a life."

Any perception that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government has mismanaged the crisis could hurt him at a time when he faces a tough battle for re-election in May. Erdogan - who was scheduled to continue his tour of devastated areas Thursday - has sought to play down the criticism.

Meanwhile, emergency crews on both sides of the border worked through the night to find survivors. Experts said the survival window for those trapped under the rubble or otherwise unable to obtain basic necessities was closing rapidly. At the same time, they said it was too soon to abandon hope.

Turkey's disaster management agency said more than 110,000 rescue personnel were now taking part in the effort and more than 5,500 vehicles, including tractors, cranes, bulldozers and excavators had been shipped.

Anti-filarial drugs administration drive from today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 9: The Department of Health and Family Welfare will organize a Mass Drug Administration (MDA) from February 10 for elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) in 10 endemic districts of the state.

A state level media sensitization workshop was organized in Bhubaneswar in this regard by the Health department in collabora-

tion with 'Global Health Strategies', Thursday.

The objective of the workshop was to facilitate comprehensive dissemination of information that highlights the debility caused by LF and to ensure individuals and communities receive accurate information about the seriousness and impact of the disease.

During the workshop, Ajit Kumar Mohanty, Special Secretary, Health and Family Welfare department



said, "During MDA round, it will be ensured that eligible beneficiaries in the 10 districts must consume anti-filarial drugs in the presence

of health workers. Everyone except children below 2 years, pregnant women and seriously ill people must consume the prescribed dosage during the rounds in the presence of trained health workers."

Niranjan Mishra, Director, Public Health, Department of Health and Family Welfare, stated that "Filariasis is a serious public health problem which is spread by mosquito bites. The disease is one of the

leading causes of long-term disability worldwide. Commonly acquired in childhood but manifested in adulthood, this infection damages the lymphatic system and if left untreated, causes abnormal swelling of the body parts which is irreversible. People with Filariasis often suffer from manifestations such as Hydrocele (inflammation of the scrotum), Lymphoedema (swelling in the limbs) and Chyluria (milky white urine).

47% of daters prefer a budget-friendly V-day date

With Valentine's Day right around the corner, the Indian dating and friendship app, QuackQuack, ran a poll among 15,000 users from tier 1 and tier 2 cities, both GenZ and Millennials, on how they prefer to celebrate their Valentine's Day. The study throws light on the V-day trends and how the day of love impacts the online dating industry. The survey participants range between 18 and 32 and comprise primarily students and working professionals.

QuackQuack's Founder and CEO, Ravi Mittal, commented, "Every year, we see a spike in the number of users during this time of the year. And this is also the time when people look beyond romance. Among the 22 million users, almost 33 per

cent of the users seek friendship around the corner, the Indian dating and friendship app, QuackQuack, ran a poll among 15,000 users from tier 1 and tier 2 cities, both GenZ and Millennials, on how they prefer to celebrate their Valentine's Day. The study throws light on the V-day trends and how the day of love impacts the online dating industry. The survey participants range between 18 and 32 and comprise primarily students and working professionals.

A recent study shows that 47 per cent of daters prefer to have a budget-friendly Valentine's Day date over fancy dining and exchanging expensive presents. Daters below 23, essentially the GenZ daters from tier 1 and 2 cities, disclosed having a pact with their date to exchange meaningful yet practical gifts, and most of them have a set budget. It makes sure that no one has to burn a hole in their pockets to enjoy the day of love and makes it easier for the young daters who are just starting their careers.

The busiest times



It says the weekend before Valentine's Day is one of the busiest times of the year for them. They see most traffic the day before, with singles trying to land a quick date for V-day. According to their data, the surge is more from tier 1 cities since people from tier 2 cities flock to the metros for jobs and higher

studies. 35 per cent of dates are arranged the night before V-day than any other day.

Where's my soulmate? 22 per cent of women from tier 1 and 2 cities mentioned joining the app to find a date because they felt lonely. The app's data shows there is almost a 13 per cent spike

in the number of people joining the app on Valentine's Day compared to other days of the month. Upon surveying the participants, it was understood that singles join dating apps during this time of the year out of the urgency to find a soulmate, especially on the day of love.

Communicating 37 per cent of the survey participants between 25 and 30, primarily working professionals in 9 to 5 jobs, mentioned beating their loneliness by participating in communicating. It's the trend where daters use the app to find new friends and connections beyond romantic relationships. It noticed almost 33 per cent of its users seeking genuine companions during this time of the year.

Rebounds 11 per cent of male daters over 25 and 18 per cent below 23 years from tier 1 and 2 cities disclosed rounding back to their old matches on this day. More than 15 per cent of women over 28 revealed rebounding with their ex on the day of love.

Self-Love Self-care and me-time are on the top of the GenZ single daters' list of ideal ways to spend V-day without falling off the wagon. 28 per cent of the survey participants between 18 and 23 mentioned having a fun night planned with friends. 12 per cent of women daters from tier 1 and 2 cities are planning Galentine's day instead of wallowing in self-pity.

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Another jumbo poached in STR; trunk, tusks severed

Circumstantial evidences suggest the involvement of poachers from the hilly state of Arunachal Pradesh



■ THINGS HAVE COME TO SUCH A PASS THAT THE POACHERS ARE EVEN ENTERING THE CORE AREAS OF NORTH AND SOUTH DIVISIONS OF STR
■ ELEPHANT DEATHS HAVE SPIKED WITHIN THE 16 FOREST RANGES UNDER THE TWO FOREST DIVISIONS DURING LAST TWO MONTHS

forest officials who were patrolling in the wee hours of Thursday stumbled upon the decaying carcass. They informed their higher ups who rushed to the spot and launched an investigation.

Similipal wildlife sanctuary, which is home to various flora and fauna including wild animals like tigers and elephants, has become the latest target of poachers. It has turned out to be a safe haven for the poachers. They are easily entering the jungles and escaping after killing wild animals such as Royal Bengal Tigers, leopards and tuskers with impunity. Elephants are being poached in frequent intervals and the killing of four elephants within last two months has sparked concern among the nature lovers and wildlife enthusiasts.

The fresh development has raised doubts on the functioning of the Forest department and its personnel. However, the forest officials' failure in catching the poachers during their stay in the forest for poaching has surprised the residents. Things have come to such

a pass that the poachers are even entering the core areas of North and South divisions of STR allegedly due to laxity in security measures and patrolling.

Elephant deaths have spiked within the 16 forest ranges under the two forest divisions during last two months. Notably, three forest officials were involved in the killing of a tusker at Gorandi forest range of South forest division while poachers had killed a tusker at Bankadihi area under Talabandha forest range of North forest division. An ailing Kumki elephant Sobha also died due to lack of proper treatment.

Meanwhile, police have been able to seize the two tusks of the slain tusker from Talabandha range. However, no such recovery has been made from the three arrested forest officials. Former honorary wildlife warden Bhanumitra Acharya said that attempts are being made to cover up the wrongdoings of the accused forest officials and shield them from any action.

Naveen attends Naba Das's condolence meet

A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM EIGHT WESTERN ODISHA DISTRICTS PARTICIPATED IN THE CONDOLENCE MEETING

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, Feb 9: Slain Odisha minister Naba Kishore Das's son Bishal and daughter Deepali broke down in front of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who consoled them before attending a condolence meeting held in Jharsuguda Thursday.

Patnaik flew to Jharsuguda and attended the 'Shradhdhanjali Sabha' of former health minister, who was shot dead by a policeman January 29. He paid floral tributes to Das.

The Chief Minister had earlier visited the Bhubaneswar hospital where Das was declared dead after the shooting.

Upon his arrival, Patnaik met Das's widow Minati, son Bishal and daughter Deepali.

A large number of people from eight western Odisha districts participated in the condolence meeting.



Speaking at the memorial service, an emotional Deepali said, "My father used to say that truth always triumphs. He has all along worked for the development of Jharsuguda. He taught us to keep our heads up."

Bishal said that his father has worked for the development of

Jharsuguda and was loved by people. Tight security arrangements were in place at the venue and private security personnel were seen guarding the slain minister's family members.

Thirteen platoons of armed police were deployed at the venue and patrolling was undertaken in

several areas. The Odisha Police Crime Branch is probing the killing of the three-term MLA and prominent leader from western Odisha.

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition Jaynarayan Mishra of the BJP alleged that the BJD turned the condolence meeting into a political event and that he was not invited to it.

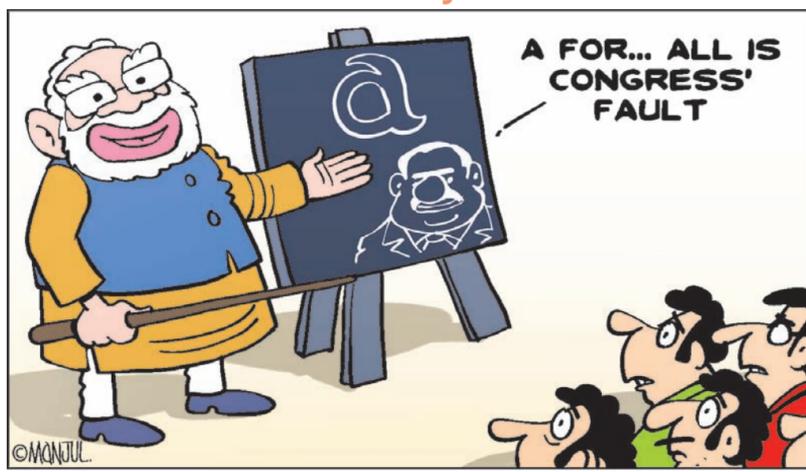
"Why should they invite me to their political event? It was a BJD programme," he said.

The BJP leader alleged that the BJD was doing vote politics over the death of a politician.

Reacting to the LoP's statement, BJD leader and Cuttack Mayor Subhash Singh accused Mishra of making "immature remarks".

"Leaders of all political parties attended the event and paid tributes to Naba Das. BJP leader and Barghar MP Suresh Pujari also attended it. Mishra was invited by Das's family members over the phone," he said.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



EAST COAST RAILWAY
File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/22-23/E-Tender/149, DL.06.02.2023
Tender Notice No. eTender-South-KUR-414-2022, Dt.02.02.2023
DESCRIPTION: PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF TRACK MAINTAINER ROOM CUM TOOL ROOMS IN KHURDA ROAD - PALASA SECTION UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF DIVISIONAL ENGINEER (SOUTH)/KHURDA ROAD.
Approximate Cost of the work (₹) : ₹ 192.88 Lakhs, EMD (₹) : 2,46,500/-
Completion Period of the work : 12 (Twelve) Months.
Date and time of closing of tender : At 1500hrs of 01.03.2023.
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-Tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
NOTE: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender.
Complete information including e-tender documents is available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.
Divisional Railway Manager(Engg.) PR-989/N/22-23 | Khurda Road

Man carries wife's body on shoulders after death in AP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



DANA MAJHI RERUN

Nabarangpur, Feb 9: A 35-year-old man from Koraput district walked several kilometres with his wife's body on his shoulder after she died in an auto-rickshaw while returning from a hospital in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

Policemen spotted Samulu Pangri and arranged an ambulance to take the body of his wife Ide Guru (30) home in Sorada village of Pottangi block.

Pangi had admitted his ailing wife to a hospital in Sangivalasa in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh. However, the doctors there said she was not responding to treatment and advised him to take her back home, around 100 kilometres away.

Pangi said he hired an auto-rickshaw for returning to his village but Guru died midway near Vizianagaram. The

auto driver then refused to continue the journey and dropped them on Chelluru Ring Road before leaving the spot.

Finding no other way, Pangi started walking towards home, which was still around 80 kilometres away, carrying his wife's body on his shoulder.

After some time, alerted by local people, Rural Circle Inspector TV Tirupati Rao and Gantayada sub-inspector Kiran Kumar stopped him.

Initially, the Andhra Pradesh policemen were find-

ing it difficult to gauge what Pangi was saying due to language problem. Later, one person was found who understood the Odisha man's language.

The police officials, after ascertaining what had happened, arranged for an ambulance that took Pangi and his wife's body to his village.

While Pangi thanked the police for their help, the locals appreciated the men for their timely response.

According to sources, Guru and his wife from a remote

village under Pottangi block in Odisha's Koraput worked as migrants in Andhra Pradesh's Vishakhapatnam. However, her health condition deteriorated due to alleged bad working conditions and Guru admitted her to a hospital in Vishakhapatnam.

However, she breathed her last while undergoing treatment yesterday. With no friends and relatives in Vishakhapatnam, Guru decided to take the body to his village for the final rites. However, he was reportedly denied a hearse van from the hospital.

This incident is a reminder of a 2016 incident at Bhawanipatna when another man, Dana Majhi, walked for around 12 kilometres carrying the body of his wife on his shoulder after being denied a hearse by a hospital.

The incident hit international headlines and caused embarrassment for the government in Odisha.

VC asks employees to wear khadi clothes

ECO-FRIENDLY MOVE

STUDENTS, STAFF TO AVOID PERSONAL VEHICLES SATURDAYS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, Feb 9: The Vice-Chancellor (VC) of the Berhampur University here in Ganjam district has come up with some 'eco-friendly' initiatives to make the campus pollution-free.



According to a notification (letter no-1035), issued by the VC Geetanjali Dash Wednesday, the employees and teachers have been asked to wear khadi clothes to work. However, they have been asked to wear khadi clothes to work at least once in a week that is every Friday. The new rule will come into force from February 10.

Similarly, the VC stressed on making the campus pollution-free every Saturday.

In her bid to make the campus pollution-free, the students and employees of the university have been advised not to bring petroleum-driven personal vehicles to the prem-

ises on Saturdays. However, bringing e-vehicles to the campus has been encouraged. The new rule will come into force from February 11.

The letter says that the VC has been pleased to take an initiative to make the campus pollution-free and to encourage zero emission at least one day per week for which all employees (both teaching and non-teaching) and students are requested to avoid using personal vehicles inside the campus every Saturday.

The order in the letter-1035 mentions that wearing khadi clothes during office hours Fridays will encourage the weavers and create awareness on the benefit of cotton and handloom clothes. This will remind us of the ideals Gandhiji stood for and help us in building a self-reliant India by instilling a sense of nationalism, patriotism, unity and integrity among the staffers.

If this becomes successful, then it will encourage the students to wear khadi clothes in coming days. The move by the Berhampur University which is the first in the state has been welcomed by the local intelligentsia and residents.

No new Covid variants emerged during China's recent outbreak

No new Covid-19 variants have emerged in China during the recent surge in infections since the country ended its zero-Covid policy, according to an analysis of cases in Beijing published in The Lancet.

The study suggests two existing Omicron sub-variants, BA.5.2 and BF.7, among the most dominant variants in Beijing during 2022, accounted for more than 90 per cent of local infections between November 14 and December 20, 2022.

Imported cases during the same period mostly involved different variants to those dominant in Beijing.

Genome analysis of 413 new Covid-19 infections in Beijing spanning the time period when China lifted its most strict pandemic control policies suggests that all were caused by existing strains.

"Our analysis suggests two known Omicron sub-variants - rather than any new variants - have chiefly been responsible for the current surge in Beijing, and likely China as a whole. However, with ongoing large-scale circulation of Covid-19 in China, it is important we continue to monitor the situation closely so that any new variants that might emerge are found as early as possible," said Professor George Gao of the Institute of



Microbiology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The results represent a snapshot of the pandemic in China, due to the characteristics of Beijing's population and the circulation of highly transmissible Covid-19 strains there.

In the three years since Covid-19 was declared a global pandemic, the emergence of variants such as Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Omicron has caused multiple waves of cases around the world.

In the latest study, the authors analysed

Covid-19 samples detected in Beijing in 2022. Genome sequences were generated using rapid, large-scale sequencing technology, and their evolutionary history and population dynamics analysed using existing high-quality Covid-19 sequences.

Analysis of the 413 new sequences revealed they all belong to existing, known Covid-19 strains. The dominant strain in Beijing after November 14, 2022 was BF.7, which accounted for 75.7 per cent of local infections. Another Omicron sub-variant, BA5.2, was responsible for 16.3 per cent of local cases.

Professor Wolfgang Preiser and Dr Tongai Mponga of the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, who were not involved in the study, said, "It is welcome to see this much-needed data from China. It is certainly reassuring that this study yielded no evidence for novel variants but not a surprise the surge is amply explained by the abrupt cessation of effective control measures."

However, they urge caution in drawing conclusions about China as a whole based on data from Beijing, saying that the SARS-CoV-2 molecular epidemiological profile in one region of a vast and densely populated country cannot be extrapolated to the entire country.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RWS & S DIVISION, BARGARH
Email :- eerwss_bgh@nic.in, Ph (O):-06646 233220, FAX :- 06646 234626
No. 364 / Dt. 07.02.2023

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA "e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Bid Identification No 09 of 2022-23
No. O-1791:- The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bargarh on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites tenders from the reputed licensed Electrical contractors, having valid H.T. License with experience in similar nature of works to be eventually drawn up in P1 Contract Form for the work as per terms and condition noted below.

- Name of the work:- External Electrification to the Pump House in different Rural piped water supply schemes under Padampur, Paikmal & Jharbandh Block.
 - Approx. Estimated cost :- Varies from Rs 5.29 to 19.96 lakhs
 - Date and time of availability of documents in the portal :- Dt 16.02.2023 to Dt. 27.02.2023 up to 5.00 P.M.
 - Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal :- Dt 27.02.2023 up to 5.00 P.M
 - Date & time of Opening of Tender :- Dt 28.02.2023 at 11.00 A.M.
 - Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid :- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bargarh, District :- Bargarh
- Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "http://tendersorissa.gov.in".
The authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
OIIPR-25157/11/0014/2223 Sd/- Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Bargarh

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. A-1137 DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER UPPER KOLAB HEAD WORKS DIVISION AT/PO-KOLABNAGAR, DIST: KORAPUT e-Procurement Notice- SE-UKHWD-08/2022-23 Dated 06.02.2023 (ONLINE)

- Name of Work : Supplying & Installation of 02 (Two) nos. 62.5 KVA Silent Generator Set for Inspection Gallery of U.K. Dam
 - No. of Work : 01 (One) no.
 - Value of Work : 11.54 Lakhs
 - Class of Contractor : Manufacturers/ Authorized firms by manufacturers/ Authorised dealers by manufacturers
 - Period of completion : 02 (Three) Calendar Months
 - Date & time of availability of bid documents online : 10.02.2023 at 11.00 Hours to 20.02.2023 up to 17.30 Hours
 - Date & Place of opening of Bid online : 21.02.2023 (11.30 Hours) at Office of the Superintending Engineer, UKHWD, Kolab Nagar
 - Name of the officer inviting Bids. : Superintending Engineer, UKHWD, Kolab Nagar
- Further details can be seen in the Govt. of Odisha e-Procurement Website <http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Upper Kolab Head Works Division, Kolabnagar
OIIPR-32015/11/0017/2223

UCO BANK RENUKOOT BRANCH Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh, Tel No.: 05446-256827, E-mail:renuko@ucobank.co.in

POSSESSION NOTICE For Immovable Property

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the UCO Bank, Renukoot Branch under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002(Act No.54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 8 & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices under section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the Borrower/Legal Heirs to repay the amount with interest at the contractual rate together with incidental expenses and costs within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Legal Heirs and the public in general that the undersigned has taken POSSESSION of the properties described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 & 9 of the said Rules. The Borrower/Legal Heirs in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank, Renukoot Branch for an amount plus interest & expenses thereon.

Name of the Borrower / Legal Heirs	Amount Outstanding as on Specified Date	Date of Demand / Possession Notice	Description of the Immovable Properties
Borrower: M/s. Aastha Construction Company, Prop.: Ashok Kumar Ojha / Legal Heirs: 1) Pravasini Ojha, 2) Arpita Ojha, 3) Aastha Ojha	₹77,00,540.45 & ₹4,27,930/- + further interest & other charges thereon	25.04.2021/ 06.02.2023	1) Land measuring Area: Ac.0.044.01 Dec.(1917.47sqft) under Khata No.: 519/470, Plot No.: 353/1503, corresponding to Khata No.: 519/210, Sub Plot No.: 353, Sub Plot No.: L2-173, Mouza : Oltapur, SRO: Niali, PS.: Oltapur, PS No.: 59, Tahasil: Kantapada, Dist.: Cuttack, Standing in the name of Pravasini Ojha, W/o: Ashok Kumar Ojha, Bounded by North: Road, South: Project Boundary, East: Sub Plot No.: L2-304, West: Sub Plot No.: L2-302, 2) Land measuring Area: Ac.0.062.07 Dec.(2704 sqft) under Khata No.: 519/468, Plot No.: 353/1501, corresponding to Khata No.: 519/210, Plot No.: 352, Sub Plot No.: L2-173, Mouza : Oltapur, SRO: Niali, PS.: Oltapur, PS No.: 59, Tahasil: Kantapada, Dist.: Cuttack, Standing in the name of Ashok Kumar Ojha, S/o: Babaji Charan Ojha, Bounded by North: Sub Plot No.: L2-172, South: Road, East: Road, West: Sub Plot No.: L2-174

Place : Renukoot, Date: 09.02.2023 Authorised Officer, UCO Bank

FOCUS ECONOMY

NEGLECT OF THE POOR



Given the reduction in the overall expenditure and fiscal deficit, higher capital expenditure is possible only through a squeeze on expenditure for the poor

been hearing industry doesn't think [the environment] is conducive. Alright, the tax rate was brought down. ... Give PLI (production linked incentive). We have given PLI. I want to hear from India Inc.; what's stopping you?"

The answer to that puzzle is not simple. Their expectations of consumption demand are an important factor. Besides excessive cronyism and lack of fairness and transparency would be another deterrent. A public policy that is geared to the creation of a few champion investors leads the minimum government to be a maximum government when it comes to certain favoured corporates. Such a situation does not enthrone the "animal spirits" of investors. It is symbolic that the budget celebrations were rudely disrupted, not by protesting people but by the investors who bid down the share prices of Adani companies.

Whatever the reason, the subdued investment given the level of technology, would imply subdued growth. We have already referred to economic deceleration under NDA. Though even the economic survey has very carefully avoided it from the list of shocks that adversely affected the Indian economy, it was demonetisation that triggered the downward slip.

Even after a downward slide began, in every budget the NDA regime has pursued a foolish strategy of reducing the overall budgetary expenditure to GDP ratio from 14% in 2013-14 to 12.2% in 2018-19. Though not related to the budget, the situation was compounded by the RBI adopting a policy of increasing real repo rate even while inflation was coming down. These policies were reversed only with the pandemic. India's economic deceleration was the result of multiple policy failures, and the present budget does not seem to have any new strategy to make up for the mistakes.

The writer is a former Finance Minister of Kerala.

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We may soon be the third largest economy in the world. But budgets like the one for 2023-24, presented last week in Parliament, will ensure that the quality-of-life ranking of the average citizen in the third largest economy is at the bottom quarter of the global list. Rapid growth with fair distribution should be the objective of any budget. And every budget should be assessed by the dictum of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi: "Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if this step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him."

What is the condition of the ordinary Indian citizen today? The bottom 50% own less than 6% of the national wealth and less than 15% of the national income. The World Inequality Report 2022 which highlighted the situation placed India among the most unequal countries with rising poverty and an "affluent elite". The growth in the national income had been decelerating during the NDA period from over 8% to 3.1% in the quarter on the eve of COVID. If we take the average of the four years from 2019-20 to 2022-23, the growth rate would come to 2.7%. The per capita income in 2021-22 is lower than the per capita income before COVID. But the basic assumption of this budget is that of "a full recovery in FY22 ahead of many nations and (is) position(ed) to ascend the pre-pandemic growth path in FY23."

Having declared a state of full recovery by 2021-22, there is little wonder why the budget has turned away from the poor and ordinary citizens. The government claims a reduction in urban unemployment (it is silent on rural employment) and in inflation but both are still on the high side. It remains a fact that the available official data also points to an increase in the people under the official poverty line, for the first time since poverty began to de-

cline during the 1980s.

In the past four years, per capita real consumption has been growing by less than 5% per annum. But the budget, instead of stimulating consumption demand, has decided to cut back on food subsidies. The nominal food subsidy has been cut by 31% from ₹2.87 lakh crore to ₹1.97 lakh crore.

Poverty alleviation programmes have been given short shrift. The most important among them is MGNREGS whose allocation has been cut to ₹60,000 crores. The total allocation for the National Social Assistance scheme, anganwadis, National Livelihood Mission, nutrition programmes has stagnated at less than ₹60,000 crore. As a ratio to GDP the allocation for the above anti-poverty programmes has declined from 0.79% in 2022-23 to 0.53%.

The allocation for agriculture and allied sectors including PM-KISAN is ₹1.4 lakh crore, lower than the budget estimate for 2022-23. The fertiliser subsidy is down by 22% from ₹2.25 lakh crore to ₹1.75 lakh crore. The allocation for food procurement and market intervention has been reduced from ₹72000 crore to ₹60,000 crore.

The education and health sector has seen a marginal improvement from budget estimates for 2022-23, but this is totally inadequate compared to the requirement. As a ratio to GDP, the allocation for

education has witnessed a steady decline during the NDA regime from 0.63% in 2013-14 to 0.37% in the present budget.

Why was the budget of the poor compressed in the above manner and under such dire conditions? The reason is that the government considers fiscal stability paramount for future. So, it has reduced the fiscal deficit from 6.4% to 5.9% of GDP. And has reduced the overall government expenditure in relation to GDP from 15.3% in 2022-23 (revised) to 14.9%.

At the same time, the government's growth strategy involves maintaining the acceleration in capital expenditure during post-COVID period. In 2022-23, capital expenditure has been raised from 3.9% of GDP in 2022-23 to 4.6%. Given the reduction in the overall expenditure and fiscal deficit, higher capital expenditure is possible only through a squeeze on expenditure for the poor. That is precisely what Nirmala Sitharaman has done.

Now the question arises, will higher capital expenditure through multiplier effects lead to acceleration in growth? But the puzzle is that despite higher government capital investment private investment is not forthcoming. An exasperated finance minister was heard demanding an answer from industry at a summit in Delhi last September: "Since 2019 ... I have



TM Thomas Isaacs

INDIA'S ECONOMIC DECELERATION WAS THE RESULT OF MULTIPLE POLICY FAILURES



Ian Buruma

Violence is often fuelled by the memory of historic wrongs, and the Holocaust is no different

The History Trap

Speaking in Volgograd, formerly known as Stalingrad, Russian President Vladimir Putin recently evoked the horrors of World War II to justify his invasion of Ukraine. "Again and again, we have to repel the aggression of the collective West," he said with a straight face, without mentioning that the United Kingdom and the United States were the Soviet Union's allies during the war. Then as now, he added, Russia is threatened by German tanks, forced to defend itself against "the ideology of Nazism in its modern form."

This is of course a malicious distortion of history, cynically delivered on the site where over a million Soviet and German soldiers died during World War II's deadliest battle. Russia is not defending itself; it has invaded a sovereign country whose president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, happens to be a Jewish man who lost relatives in the Holocaust. The suggestion that Nazi ideology is what drives Zelenskyy and his fellow Ukrainians to defend their country against Russia's aggression is preposterous, even by Putin's standards.

As for German tanks allegedly threatening Russia, the reason why German Chancellor Olaf Scholz dithered for so long before agreeing to send 14 Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine was that he did not want Germany to be seen as a military leader. Scholz came around only after US President Joe Biden reluctantly agreed to provide Ukraine with M1 Abrams tanks, after months of refusing to do so.

Like Putin, German leaders often bring up World War II, sometimes ad nauseam. But the conclusions they draw from that war are the opposite of Putin's chauvinist militarism. A week before Putin's speech in Volgograd, Scholz used the German parliament's annual Holocaust commemoration as an opportunity to emphasise Germany's historical responsibility for the murder of millions of Jewish people. Acknowledging this, he noted, has been essential to ensuring that such a crime would never be repeated. Opening the session, Bundestag President Bärbel Bas highlighted the recent surge in anti-Semitism in Germany, calling those trying to minimise the Holocaust a "disgrace for our country."

While some observers have criticised Scholz for his reluctance to take on a more active role in supporting Ukraine, arguing that he had learned the wrong lessons from history, his aversion to military aggression reflects the post-war pacifism that shaped German leaders of his generation. Likewise, Germany's decades-old decision to rely on Russian gas could be viewed as part of its effort to use trade and mutual dependence as a prophylactic against war. But since Russia invaded Ukraine, Germany has been pushed by its allies to rethink its pacifist foreign policy, assume a leading military role, and help defend Ukraine, a country it had treated brutally in the past.

Violence is often fuelled by the memory of historic wrongs, and the Holocaust is no different. For example, right-wing Israeli politicians, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, constantly invoke the real trauma of the Holocaust to justify the oppression – and often violent repression – of Palestinians in the occupied territories and within the country's pre-1967 borders.

So, does that mean that memories of the Holocaust and other historical wounds are doomed to be exploited and manipulated by political opportunists, their true significance and meaning forever clouded by bad-faith analogies? Was George Santayana right when he coined his famous dictum that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it?"

Yes and no. While detecting historical parallels across different periods and contexts can offer valuable lessons and a sense of perspective, it might also encourage us to see similarities where they don't fit, or even exist at all, leading us to the wrong conclusions.

Grotesque examples of this include former US Congresswomen Michele Bachmann comparing tax increases to the Holocaust, and sitting Republican US Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene comparing COVID-19 public-health measures to the Nazis' persecution of Jews. While it is tempting to attribute such offensive views to cynicism and malice, the cause is often just plain ignorance.

Some purported historical parallels, though neither cynical nor malicious, are still unhelpful. For example, a recent statement by the International Auschwitz Committee compared the suffering of Holocaust survivors living in Ukraine today with the atrocities they suffered at the hands of the Nazis. But while Russia's criminal behaviour in Ukraine is undeniable, drawing parallels between Putin's atrocities and the Holocaust risks trivializing both. Putin is bad enough – there is no need to compare him to Hitler.

There is more to learning from history than merely drawing parallels. To study history is to understand who we are, why certain things happened, and how they may still affect us. But we should also be aware that things never repeat themselves in the same way.

Contemporary policies must be judged on their merits, not only by their relation to the past. There is no reason why acknowledging their country's responsibility for the Holocaust should prevent Germans today from sending tanks to Ukraine. Likewise, the terrible suffering of the people of the Soviet Union at the hands of Nazi Germany almost a century ago cannot possibly justify Russia's aggression today.

As the British novelist LP Hartley once wrote, the past is "a foreign country: they do things differently there." Alas, this does not mean that we necessarily do things better now. But to understand that lesson, we have to follow Santayana's advice, and study history very carefully.

The writer is the author, most recently, of *The Churchill Complex: The Curse of Being Special, From Winston and FDR to Trump and Brexit*. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- “Solitude vivifies; isolation kills.” — JOSEPH ROUX
- “It always seems impossible until it's done.” — NELSON MANDELA
- “Excellence is not a skill, it's an attitude.” — RALPH MARSTON

WORDSWORTH

Fritinancy

Few words could be rarer than this exotic creation by a master of neologisms, the physician and author Sir Thomas Browne, who is at number 69 in the list of most quoted authors in the Oxford English Dictionary. Browne – whom the English writer Philip Howard described as “a polysyllabic old quack” – invented it in his vast encyclopaedic work of 1646, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. This attempted to refute many of the errors and superstitions of his age, but has been ridiculed since for its own frequent errors. Browne spelled his creation fritinancy and used it for the sounds of insects (“The note or fritinancy [of the Cicada] is far more shrill than that of the Locust”). He took it from the Latin *fritinere*, to twitter or chirp. The Oxford English Dictionary, in an entry dated 1898, prefers fritinancy, but notes that “modern dictionaries” prefer fritinancy. Today's modern dictionaries don't include it but the very few authors who have borrowed it have indeed mostly used that spelling.

SPECTRUM TRANS-BOUNDARY RIVERS

India's ad hoc hydro-diplomacy

A dramatic title aimed at Western influenced security scholars, 'Is China aiming to weaponize water' in an English daily based in Geneva on 31 January, has once again triggered apprehensions in India of unilateral water diversion in the Brahmaputra by China. Weeks ago, Kathmandu news portal Eparadafas first reported that China is constructing a huge dam on the Maja Zangbo for future water war. It is obvious that due to the strained relation between the countries, the Chinese dam buildings have created ripples in public discourse.



Avilash Roul

INDIA HAS TO TACKLE THE SHARED WATER ISSUES WITH CHINA AND OTHERS IN A CAUTIOUS AND TACTICAL MANNER

When India is questioning the role of the World Bank in the most successful 1960 Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan, the news of Chinese dam building has put India in a tight diplomatic spot. A section of military and strategic thinkers who vehemently advocate and promote the use of water from the Indus river system as weapon in dealing with Pakistan, are hurriedly huddling on this Chinese conundrum. India has to tackle the shared water issues with China and others in a cautious and tactical manner.

Either the government and its agencies are aware of the Chinese activities that are potentially critical to India's national security but are not very keen to share with the public or are completely unaware of the events. From border incursion or construction of mili-

tary infrastructure to dam building and formation of artificial lakes, India always gets the news from external sources. From the UPA government's position on Chinese unilateral intervention in Brahmaputra as 'media hype' to NDA-II and III governments' media briefing as 'closely monitoring the situation', the Chinese Brahmaputra conundrum remains untraceable and unresolved. Successive governments have been deliberately allowing the classic 'Brahmaputra anxieties' to be played out for, at best, fuelling the popular sentiments through loud media scrutiny against China on a mythical path of water war. There is no water war or nor will be, at least, between India and China. This jingoism by a section of population is actually curtailing India's negotiating power with China in terms of hydro-diplomacy.

However, the official position of the Chinese administration has been constant that none of its projects, either completed or ongoing or proposed, would do any harm to India as a lower riparian country, as all projects are run-off the river projects. One must be aware that the Chinese are famous for their secrecy and gargantuan projects. Access to the project sites in China is strictly limited. Earlier incidents of not allowing Asian Development Bank's Accountability Mechanism to visit a project site in 2008 and recently, the delaying tactics of WHO

visit to Wuhan are striking examples. Thus, India can only follow diplomacy to ascertain the projects and its impacts on the upstream of Brahmaputra.

The Brahmaputra as it's known in India, Yamuna in Bangladesh and Yaluzangbu or Tsangpo in China is the 7th largest river. The trans-boundary rivers flowing from China to India are clubbed into two groups: the Brahmaputra river system that consists of the Siang and its tributaries and the Indus river system consists of the Indus and the Sutlej. Interestingly, in 1954 both countries had signed an MoU but the war halted the progress. However, in 2002 both countries signed a MoU for sharing of hydrological information on Brahmaputra during flood season from 15 May to 15 October every year at three locations in China. The MoU was renewed in 2008, 2013 and 2018. In 2005, another MoU was signed with China for supply of hydrological information during flood season at station with respect to Sutlej. The MoU was renewed in 2010 and 2015.

Subsequently a consultative joint Expert-Level Mechanism between the two countries has been meeting annually since 2006. This platform allows both countries to discuss interaction and cooperation on provision of flood season hydrological data, emergency management and other related issues. Despite several MoUs, mostly

ad-hoc and renewable in five years, existing between India and China on sharing hydrological information, both countries have a tremendous gap in information sharing on development of river stretches in respective territories. India can resolve these apprehensions through constructive and transparent engagement with China. However, it seems the border issue is the first and foremost for India than water in the northeast. Perhaps, the Indian establishment considers the northeast of India is water-rich even though China diverts the Brahmaputra. It is illogical and unscientific for India to engage in a dam building spree in its own stretch of Brahmaputra to counter China's motive.

It's almost certain that China, having the extra edge of being upper riparian, does not need any agreement with India right now, which definitely curtails its freedom to develop water resources till the famous U-bend near Arunachal Pradesh. However, India must persuade China for a long-term water framework on Brahmaputra at the earliest. India as a civilised nation neither considers nor uses water as a weapon with its neighbouring countries who share the natural flow of rivers.

The writer is Principal Scientist at Peri-urban Initiative, IIT Madras and a Senior Fellow at SSPC.

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

Orissa POST

B-15, Rasulguru Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Balloon surveillance

Sir, Even though the Chinese surveillance balloon didn't actually pose a military or any physical threat, still its intrusion into American airspace over several days was a clear violation of the US dominion. The balloon sowed doubts whether there was any intelligence value in its flight across the US, and whether it could survive the fall into an ocean from that altitude. Cheap and hard-to-reach balloons have long been used for reconnaissance purposes, including in conflicts like the American Civil War. This practice became widespread during World War I, and was extensively used during the Cold War, when the US launched hundreds of balloons to gather intelligence on the Soviet Union and China. Back to the Chinese surveillance balloon, it seems to have not only derailed the planned diplomatic talks between the two superpower nations, but also injected fresh apprehensions into the already strained relations between them.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Methane pollution

Sir, Methane is a colourless, odourless gas. However, the increasing presence of methane in our atmosphere is threatening multiple species of wildlife by hastening climate change. According to studies, this pollutant from oil and gas facilities has an impact on our climate, communities, and wildlife. One must speak up now to help reduce methane emissions and ensure a healthy environment for vulnerable wildlife. It is critical to keep the super-pollutant methane under control, as it can be especially harmful to most terrestrial species. To protect biodiversity, we should do everything we can to protect wildlife like these social, herbivorous creatures and other diverse wildlife species in the country. Pollution from the oil and gas industries endangers human health. Methane is emitted in conjunction with toxic pollution, which can cause asthma-inducing smog or even cancer. To continue protecting frontline communities and wildlife, cutting methane emissions from the oil and gas sector must be as stringent as possible. Regular inspections and repairs should be required at all oil and gas facilities, particularly those with methane leak-prone equipment. It's important to eliminate unnecessary gas flaring and establish community monitoring programmes. A healthy environment is a right, not a privilege, and strengthening methane rules will have positive wildlife and human health impacts for decades to come.

Vijaykumar HK, RAICHUR

of the day quote

Development has come to a standstill and institutions opened by the previous BJP government for public welfare have been closed to fulfill the guarantees promised on the eve of the assembly polls, but still people are waiting for implementation of these guarantees

JAI RAM THAKUR | BJP LEADER

The decision by the Supreme Court on the disqualification of the party's rebel MLAs should come first and then by the Election Commission on whom the original party belongs to

UDDHAV THACKERAY | FORMER MAHARASHTRA CM

The 'unconstitutional' state government headed by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde will not last long and fall very soon

AADITYA THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Muraleedharan's house attacked

Thiruvananthapuram: Unidentified miscreants have allegedly targeted Union Minister V Muraleedharan's residence here, smashing its window pane, police said here Thursday. The window pane of the car porch of his residence at Ulloor was found broken by his office staff at around 11 am today. After being informed by the staff, the Medical College police reached the spot. A police officer said they have traced blood drops from the spot. An investigation has been launched to nab the culprits behind the incident and also their motives behind it, he added.

Cop arrested

New Delhi: The CBI arrested an Assistant Sub Inspector of the Chandigarh police Thursday for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 1 lakh from a woman. The accused policeman has been identified as Balkar Singh, posted at Manimajra police station in the city who demanded money for helping the woman's son in getting bail and for not adding a relevant section pertaining to rape in the FIR registered against him. A case was registered against Singh on the complaint of the woman.

Juvenile held

Chandigarh: In a major breakthrough against trans-border smuggling, Punjab Police have arrested a juvenile after recovering 15 kg heroin, and Rs 8.40 lakh drug money from his possession, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said here on Thursday. The 17-year-old arrested drug smuggler is a resident of Amritsar. Apart from recovering heroin and drug money, the police have also recovered a motorcycle, on which he was travelling.

Leopard killed

Hyderabad: In yet another incident indicative of growing man-animal conflict, a leopard was killed after being hit by an unknown speeding vehicle in Telangana's Nizamabad district. The animal was run over by the vehicle on national highway near Chandrayanpalli when it was apparently crossing the road. The leopard's remains were shifted to the district forest office for a post-mortem examination. Forest officials said they have registered a case and were trying to identify the vehicle which hit the leopard resulting in its death. "Speed kills. Another victim of speeding vehicle on national highway. This ill fated leopard was killed near Chandrayanpalli," tweeted Mohan Pargaen, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Telangana.



The government has done certain good things like ending the culture of hartal and stone-pelting (in Kashmir). It is a positive thing which has happened, but if they start demolishing homes and small shops, there is a likelihood that hartals and stone-pelting will return and the government itself will be responsible for it

GHULAM NABI AZAD | DEMOCRATIC AZAD PARTY CHAIRMAN

GOLD RECOVERED

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and Indian Coast Guard Thursday recovered 12 kg of gold dumped in the sea off Mandapam in Tamil Nadu's Rameswaram, officials said Thursday



2.25L gave up citizenship in 2022: Govt



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: Over 16 lakh Indians renounced their Indian citizenship since 2011 including 2,25,620 last year, the highest during the period, while the lowest of 85,256 was in 2020, according to government data.

The year-wise number of Indians who renounced their citizenship was provided by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in response to a question in Rajya Sabha. Jaishankar said the number of Indians who renounced their Indian citizenship in 2015 was 1,31,489, while 1,41,603 people gave it up in 2016 and 1,33,049 in 2017.

■ IN 2018, THE NUMBER WAS 1,34,561, WHILE 1,44,017 RENOUNCED THEIR CITIZENSHIP IN 2019, 85,256 IN 2020 AND 1,63,370 IN 2021

■ THE YEAR-WISE NUMBER OF INDIANS WHO RENOUNCED THEIR CITIZENSHIP WAS PROVIDED BY EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER S JAISHANKAR IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION IN RAJYA SABHA

In 2018, the number was 1,34,561, while 1,44,017 renounced their citizenship in 2019, 85,256 in 2020 and 1,63,370 in 2021. The number in 2022 was 2,25,620, according to the minister.

For reference purposes,

Jaishankar said the data for 2011 was 1,22,819, while it was 1,20,923 in 2012, 1,31,405 in 2013 and 1,29,328 in 2014. The total number of Indians who gave up their Indian citizenship since 2011 comes to 16,63,440.

To a specific query, he said, according to information, five Indian nationals obtained the citizenship of the United Arab Emirates during the last three years. Jaishankar also provided a list of 135 countries whose citizenship Indians acquired.

To another question, Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said the government is aware of the issue of professionals having been laid off by US companies in recent months.

"Of these, a certain percentage is likely to be Indian nationals on H-1B and L1 visas. The government of India has consistently raised issues relating to the movement of high skilled workers, including IT professionals, with the US government," he said. "It has also been working with various stakeholders, including industry organisations and business chambers on these issues," Muraleedharan said.

Bullet train of 'national importance', says HC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 9: The Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train is a "dream project of this country and of national importance and in public interest", the Bombay High Court said Thursday dismissing a petition filed by Godrej & Boyce company challenging acquisition proceedings initiated by the Maharashtra government and the NHRCL in Mumbai's Vikhroli area for the project.

A division bench of Justices R D Dhanuka and M M Sathaye said the project was one-of-its-kind and collective interest would prevail over private interest.

The court said in cases of conflict on inter-fundamental rights and intra-fundamental rights, the court has to examine as to where lies the larger public interest while balancing the two conflicting rights.

"It is the paramount collective interest which would ultimately prevail. In the facts of this case, the private interest claimed by the petitioner does not prevail over the public interest which would subserve infrastructural project of public importance which is a dream project of this country and first of its kind," it said.

"In our view the bullet train project is an infrastructural project of

national importance, a large numbers of public would be benefited and would have saved other benefits for betterment of this country," the court said.

Of the total 508.17 kilometres of rail track between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, about 21 km is planned to be underground. One of the entry points to the underground tunnel falls on the land in Vikhroli (owned by Godrej).

The state government and the National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) had claimed the company was delaying the entire project which was of public importance. The bench, in its judgment, said the provisions of the Fair

Compensation Act empowers the government to take the acquisition proceedings already initiated to its logical conclusion.

The court also refused to accept Godrej's contention that the compensation was initially decided to be Rs 572 crore but was reduced to Rs 264 crore when the final award was passed. "The compensation derived at the stage of private negotiation cannot be considered as final and binding since the said private negotiation had admittedly failed," HC said.

The authorities had told the HC the acquisition process of the entire line for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project was complete except the land owned by Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Company Limited in Vikhroli area.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during an event in Howrah district. Benefits in connection with various schemes of the state government were handed over to the beneficiaries in the event

Sisodia responds to snooping allegation

THE CBI IN ITS PRELIMINARY INQUIRY REPORT FOUND THAT THE FBU FORMED THROUGH A DELHI CABINET DECISION ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2015 INDULGED IN GATHERING POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 9: After Delhi BJP leaders Thursday staged a protest near the Delhi Secretariat seeking the removal of Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia over the allegations of 'snooping' on politicians by the Aam Aadmi Party's Feedback Unit (FBU), Sisodia said that "it seems I have equalled Modi."

In a tweet in Hindi, Sisodia said,

"BJP people have brought a new allegation against me that I have been spying on them since 2015. Such big people, whose existence is dependent on getting CBI, ED, Pegasus to conspire against opposition leaders, if even such big people are afraid of me, then it seems that I have become equal to Modi."

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva alleged that the AAP since its inception has been working with hostility to-



wards its political opponents. "The Kejriwal government formed the FBU to keep an eye on not only its political opponents but Union Ministers, MPs, LG Office, media houses, leading businessmen and also the judges," Sachdeva said.

BJP people have brought a new allegation against me that I have been spying on them since 2015. Such big people, whose existence is dependent on getting CBI, ED, Pegasus to conspire against opposition leaders, if even such big people are afraid of me, then it seems that I have become equal to Modi

MANISH SISODIA | DELHI DEPUTY CM

The CBI in its preliminary inquiry report found that the FBU formed through a Delhi cabinet decision on September 29, 2015 indulged in gathering political intelligence.

Delhi Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Wednesday gave his ap-

proval to the CBI to file a case against Delhi Deputy Chief Sisodia and six others over allegations that the AAP government created a Feedback Unit under the vigilance department to collect political intelligence.

"From the careful perusal of the note, it can be unambiguously observed that there was a concerted effort by the state Government to create an agency that was outside its mandate and not within the constitutional scheme of Governance. There seems to have been a well conceived attempt to establish an extraneous and parallel covert agency with over-arching powers of snooping and trespass, without any legislative, judicial or executive oversight whatsoever," LG Saxena has observed in his order.

Two of them are being interrogated and the role of all the alleged persons is being ascertained. "Multiple teams have been constituted to apprehend the remaining two persons," the official added.

Securing future of child brides vital: Experts

More than 2,500 arrests have been made on the basis of 4,074 FIRs lodged across the state in an operation against child marriage since February 2, with the Chief Minister asserting that the drive will continue till 2026 Assembly elections

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 9: From child brides to survivors - thousands of young women in Assam are caught in a nearly overnight transition with almost no education or skills to see them through the process, experts pointed out with concern, as the state police continued its crackdown on underage marriages in this northeastern state.

Questioning the "haywire" manner of the drive, they also raised apprehensions on the future of these women, who have no means to feed

their children with their husbands now locked behind bars. "The women, who were victims of child marriages, are now being called survivors. Even if it is a legal issue, we must look at it from a humane angle, keeping the larger social perspective in view," Rakhee Kalita Moral, head, Centre for Women Studies, Cotton University said.

"These child brides will be basically now persona non grata. They will have nobody to care for them. Employability will be vital to secure their futures," she maintained. More than 2,500 arrests



have been made on the basis of 4,074 FIRs lodged across the state in an operation against child marriage since February 2, with the chief minister asserting that the drive will continue till 2026 Assembly elections.

The opposition has criticised the manner in which it was being carried out, equating the police action with "terrorising people", while family members of those arrested have also been protesting against the operation.

Echoing Moral, senior advocate of Gauhati High Court Rakhee S Chowdhury said, "We have to think about these women; they have to look after their children. Action on child marriage was certainly needed, but the procedure seems unclear. Households are getting disrupted."

"The drive is being carried out in a haywire manner. The government should have thought of the fall out," the advocate stated. Gender studies have shown that many of these women had eloped consensually in search of "liberty" as they were seen as "liabilities" at their parental homes, Moral claimed.

"They elope, thinking of it as a means of empowerment, but that delusion is soon broken and they fall back into the trap of social ills," she pointed out. For a state like Assam, its geo-strategic location also contributes to such social evils

Seven children killed after truck rams auto

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kanker, Feb 9: Seven school children were killed and two others, including a student, were critically injured after an autorickshaw ferrying the kids was hit by a truck in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district on Thursday, a senior police official said.

Earlier, the police said five children had died. Eight students from a private school were going home in the auto when the accident took place on the Korar-Bhanupratappur Road around 3.10 pm under the Korar police station limits, the official said.

Five students died on the spot, while two others were pronounced dead at a nearby hospital, he said. One student and the auto driver are seriously injured and they have been taken to the state capital Raipur, about 140 km from Korar, for better medical assistance, the official said.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel expressed condolences over the death of the schoolchildren. The administration has been directed to extend all possible help to the injured, he said in a tweet in Hindi. "May God give courage to the family members," added CM Baghel.

The truck driver fled the spot leaving behind the heavy vehicle, the official said. "We have launched a search to nab the truck driver," he added.

Caterer beaten to death by DJ team

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 9: A catering staff was allegedly beaten to death by a group of men using a plastic crate after he had an altercation with a group of DJs at a wedding function in Delhi's Rohini area, an official said Thursday.

The incident occurred in the Prashant Vihar area. The deceased has been identified as Sandeep Thakur, a resident of Kirari. A senior police official said that a PCR call was made to the Prashant Vihar police station at 12.58 a.m. on Thursday about a quarrel behind Sawariya Tent in Sector 12, Japanese Park, Rohini.



"A police team immediately reached the spot and found that the victim, who was injured at the time, was being taken to the BSA hospital by his friends. But Sandeep was declared brought dead in the hospital," said the official. Initial inquiry revealed that there was a scuffle over plates for dinner to the DJs.

"Two of the boys had beaten the deceased while one of them attacked him with a plastic crate. Police investigating the case also found that there were four persons present at the time of incident," said the official.

Two of them are being interrogated and the role of all the alleged persons is being ascertained. "Multiple teams have been constituted to apprehend the remaining two persons," the official added.

STRICT COMPLIANCE OF AMENDED GFRs MUST

Stonewalling relay of sensitive information through spy gadgets

The renewed focus on drones and the Chinese balloon over the US has brought to fore a major loophole in the security system in J&K and the rest of the country



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jammu, Feb 9: As the drone dropping of weapons and drugs into J&K from across the International Border grows into a major security challenge, strict compliance of the amended general financial rules (GFRs) is likely to come handy in checking the menace.

Rule 144 of the GFRs 2017 entitled 'Fundamental Principles of Public Buying' has been amended by inserting sub-rule (xi) which reads, "Notwithstanding anything contained in these rules, department of Expenditure may, by order in writing, impose restrictions, including prior registration and/or screening on procurement from bidders from a country or countries, or a class of countries, on grounds of defence of India or matters directly or indirectly related thereto including national security; no procurement shall be made in violation of such restrictions."

The larger implication of this amendment means no contractor is allowed to sub-contract works. The amended rule will impose strict restrictions on goods and services imported from neighbouring countries like Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Nepal and Bangladesh.

The renewed focus on drones and the Chinese balloon over the US has brought to fore a major loophole in the security system in J&K and the rest of the country.

There is a large and unchecked boom of foreign goods, especially those from China and Pakistan into J&K.

Experts fear that any invisible

There is a large and unchecked boom of foreign goods, especially those from China and Pakistan into J&K

Experts fear that any invisible chip in such items like cell phones and other appliances could relay secret information

chip in such items like cell phones and other appliances could relay information to be picked up by drones or spy balloons and satellites of neighbouring countries.

This is a major chink in the armour of our national security. The liability of the bidder would ultimately vanish through sub-contracts as no concrete checks and balances were available in the GFRs till rule 144 was amended with the insertion of sub-rule (xi).

The amended rule provides that a certificate shall be taken from bidders in the tender documents regarding their compliance with this order.

If such a certificate given by a bidder whose bid is accepted is found to be false, this would be ground for immediate termination and further legal action in accordance with the law. This, according to experts, can totally stonewall any relay of crucial information picked up by cell phones and other gadgets that could be the spy gadgets of the enemy, said an expert on the subject.

In the context of a militancy ravaged territory like J&K, strict compliance of amended GFR is the only way out to protect the national security from being compromised.

Social media: Dos and don'ts issued for UP Police

THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY WILL APPLY TO POLICE PERSONNEL OF ALL RANKS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 9: As per the UP Police social media policy-2023 issued by the state police headquarters in Lucknow, the Uttar Pradesh Police has banned its personnel from using social media during duty hours, besides making or sharing clips of police officers dancing in uniform or in civvies and sharing confidential information related to policing and the police force, senior police officers said.

In-charge of UP Police Social Cell, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP), Rahul Srivastava said that the new social media policy for police officers had been revised taking cognisance of the massive use of social media platforms by police personnel.

He added their social media

posts often triggered controversy that attracted action against them.

The social media policy was first issued by Uttar Pradesh Police in 2017 and later revised in 2018 but the recent revised policy was issued in a detailed manner after a gap of five years. The ASP said the social media policy will apply to police personnel of all ranks. The instructions issued by the cadre control authority of Union Home Ministry related to social media use for IPS officers would also be followed by the police personnel. He added that there were provisions of stern action against violators.

He said there were as many 26 points in the revised policy that mostly included ban on social media posts that maligned the image of the police force or defamed anybody.



The policy also restricted any live telecast of the training process, any complainant or victim. The policy also suggested that police officers must not share photographs of victims of rape or any sexual crime or of minors involved in crime. Apart from that, the new policy also restrains police officers

from making any social media post that hurts religious sentiments or is against any caste or community.

It restrains them from sharing their pictures on social media along with any person who has a criminal background.

The police officers are directed to share pictures of criminals on

social media after blurring them. Relatives of police officers are also restrained from sharing pictures of police uniform or firearms issued to officials and policemen are prohibited from sharing pictures of personal events.

Police officers are also restrained from displaying profile pictures on their social media accounts which is in support or opposition of any political party or incident. They are restrained from joining WhatsApp groups which propagate messages against the state government or police force.

The police personnel have also been prohibited to log into government social media accounts from their personal mobile numbers. Only CUG numbers issued by the police department are to be used.



ICY ABODE: A view of the world's biggest Igloo cafe made out of snow at a ski resort in Gulmarg Thursday

Lithium reserves found in J&K



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: The government Thursday said lithium reserves have been found for the first time in the country in Jammu and Kashmir.

Lithium is a non-ferrous metal and is one of the key components in EV batteries.

For the first time, lithium reserves have been discovered and that too in Jammu and Kashmir, Mines Secretary Vivek Bharadwaj said. Upon exploration by the Geological Survey of India (GSI), lithium reserves have been found in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier, the mines ministry had said that to strengthen the criti-

cal mineral supply chain for emerging technologies, the government was taking several proactive measures to secure minerals, including lithium, from Australia and Argentina.

Currently, India is import-dependent for many minerals like lithium, nickel and cobalt.

Speaking at the 62nd Central Geological Programming board meeting here, Bharadwaj also said that whether it is a mobile phone or a solar panel, critical minerals are required everywhere.

In order to become self-reliant, it is very important for the country to find out critical minerals and also process it, he said.

He also said, "If gold imports are reduced, then we will become aatmanirbhar (self-reliant)."

Yogi govt seeks source of funding of madrasas near Indo-Nepal border

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Gorakhpur (UP), Feb 9: The Uttar Pradesh government has started an exercise to track sources of the money reaching around 1,500 unrecognised madrasas running along the Indo-Nepal border and collect information regarding the number of students studying there.

In a letter to district minority welfare officers of various districts, the registrar, Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Education Board, Jagmohan Singh has sought details about the strength of students along with income and expenses records of madrasas functioning at the borders.

Madrasas have to be categorised in three categories.

In the first category the madrasas with strength of 100 to 200 students, while in the second category madrasas having enrolment

of over 200 to 500 students and in the last category, madrasa with over 500 students will be listed.

Gorakhpur minority welfare officer Ashutosh Pandey said a letter to this effect had been received and the objective of the exercise was to update the record of Madrasa Board website.

These madrasas are located in Balrampur, Shravasti, Maharajganj, Siddharth Nagar, Bahraich and Lakhimpur Kheri districts.

During the state government's 46-day madrasa survey conducted in September-October last year seeking information on 12 aspects, including their source of funding, most of these madrasas had claimed that they got 'zakat' from cities like Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad but there was no record of the money that reached them.



Did Shakespeare predict J&K's bigwig land grabbers in his sublime tragedy?

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

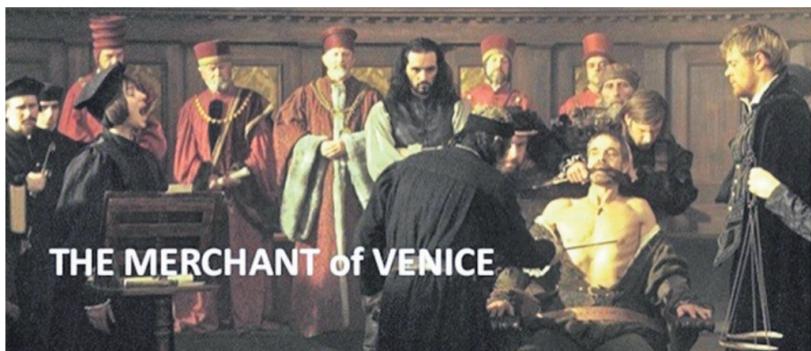
Srinagar, Feb 9: In his sublime tragedy, 'Merchant of Venice', Shakespeare wrote, "There be land-rats and water-rats, water-thieves and land-thieves, I mean pirates, and then there is the peril of waters, winds and rocks. This simile aptly describes the powerful and mighty land grabbers of Jammu and Kashmir."

While the demand for protecting the dwellings of poor citizens and small farmers gains momentum in Jammu and Kashmir, the list of people on whom the axe of anti-encroachment drive has fallen so far reads like the who-is-who of the influential and powerful in the Union territory.

Those indulging in encroaching state and grazing lands have grown orchards, laid sprawling lawns, constructed commercial buildings and even built personal palaces on those lands.

Obviously, the hurt of giving up encroached empires is understandable. Among the top ranking politicians, who lost possession of encroached lands during the ongoing anti-encroachment drive, is the former state unit Congress president and minister, Peerzada Mohd Syed.

Syed had fenced an area and thereby brought a large chunk of land under illegal possession in Ara Khushipora village of



Anantnag's Dooru tehsil.

In the same tehsil, the legal heirs of a former chief minister and senior Congress leader, Syed Mir Qasim had grown trees on encroached land that was freed from illegal possession by the authorities. Abdul Majeed Bhat, a former MLA, had constructed a commercial building on encroached land in Anantnag. Bhat also lost the commercial concern during the anti-encroachment drive.

Ghulam Hassan Khan, former social welfare minister, had constructed 8 shops on encroached land in Hergam village of Shopian district. He recently suffered demolition of those shops by the authorities.

Dr Haseeb Drabu, former finance minister, had laid an or-

chard on 3 kanals of encroached land in Pirpora village of Keegam tehsil in Shopian district.

Authorities restored the encroached land to the public by dispossessing Drabu of the encroached land. Taj Mohiuddin, former minister, had grown an orchard on 13 kanals and 16 marlas of encroached land in Sedow village in Shopian district. Taj also lost his illegal orchard during the anti-encroachment drive.

In Shistergam village of Dooru tehsil of Anantnag district, politician and close relation of former chief minister, Mufti Sayeed, Feroz Andrabi had grown trees on encroached land which was restored to public recently.

Not only the politicians and oth-

ers, but even terrorists had made good of the bad times during 1990s.

Aashaq Ahmad, a terrorist presently in Pakistan occupied Kashmir, built a house in Hanjan Bala village of Pulwama district.

Authorities have since dismantled the house and removed the terrorists' encroachment on state land. Politicians, government servants, land brokers and influential businessmen, all have had their finger in the pie of encroached lands in Jammu and Kashmir.

For Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor, Manoj Sinha, removing encroachments is going to be a tightrope walk.

He must not earn the wrath of the common man by uprooting poor citizens and small farmers while targeting the mighty encroachers.

TAJ CITY METRO PROJECT TO BE READY 6 MONTHS EARLY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra, Feb 9: Work on the 29.6 km Agra metro rail project is progressing at a brisk speed, raising hopes of its completion much before the scheduled date.

"Indications are that the facility would be operational before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls," officials hoped.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the Agra Metro Underground tunnel construction work at the Ramlila Maidan Monday by launching the TBM Yamuna. He said, "UP Metro officials are doing a commendable job and executing the project timely. Uttar Pradesh has the maximum number of cities that have operational metro services. Agra will also emerge as a metro city in the future and give plenty of employment opportunities, enhance tourism, and boost its image on the world map."

The CM said, "UPMRC is putting all efforts into achieving this target six months ahead of its schedule. The schedule is

marked for August 2024 and the team of UPMRC is planning to execute the project by early 2024. Metro services will be operational for the people of Agra by the beginning of 2024."

MD UPMRC Sushil Kumar said, "UPMRC has always executed metro projects timely and ahead of schedule. This time as well we will achieve the same milestone, by delivering a world-class metro to the people of Agra ahead of the set timeline."

The two TBM machines have been named 'Yamuna' and 'Ganga'. Yamuna commenced the tunnelling work Tuesday while Ganga will start tunnelling after two weeks from the

Launching Shaft/Crossover section at Ramlila Maidan.

Yogi arrived at the crossover site and inspected the world-class safety park built at the site. Officials told him about the safety features followed at the site. He signed on to the pre-cast ring segment and pressed the button for inaugurating the tunnel boring machine.

After the first breakthrough at Agra Fort Metro Station, the TBM will then go towards the Taj Mahal Metro Station (Purani Mandi Chauraha) and will be retrieved thereafter from the retrieval shaft.

One TBM weighs around 450 tonnes and its length is approximately 85 meters. The TBM daily operates for around an average of 10-12 meters.



of the day quote

India was earlier known as a weak nation. But now, the whole world is aware that India is a strong country. We are now ready to face any challenge

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

The speed of development made by the "double-engine government" in Tripura has reached that of the bullet train

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

Delhi saw a significant dip in air pollution levels in the 2022-23 winter season owing to strict implementation of the 15-point action plan and a proactive Graded Response Action Plan

GOPAL RAI | DELHI ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Teacher dismissed

Rajkot (Gujarat): A teacher was dismissed from service after a student alleged that he had asked her to say 'I love you' in class. Rajkot District Education Officer B.S. Kaila terminated the service of the Maths teacher. Kaila said, "On Wednesday, Karnavati School's Class 8 girl student and her parents complained that the Maths teacher had asked her to say, 'I love you' in the classroom in presence of other students."

Body found

New Delhi: The body of a 35-year-old man was found in a drain in Delhi's Rohini area Thursday, said an official. The victim was identified as Rajender, a resident of Shyam Colony. A PCR call was made to the Vijay Vihar police station at around 8.20 a.m. informing of the body lying in a roadside drain near Budh Vihar Phase-I. "From local enquiry, it was revealed that Rajender used to drink regularly. He was sitting near the roadside drain in the intervening night in an inebriated condition," said the official.

Four burnt alive

Shimla: Three siblings among four minors were burnt alive in a fire that broke out in two huts in Himachal Pradesh's Una district, officials said on Thursday. The huts of Bhadeshwar Das and Ramesh Das, who hail from Bihar, caught fire on Wednesday night. Ramesh Das's three children -- Neetu (14), Golu Kumar (7), Shivam Kumar (6) - and his relative Kalidas' son Sonu Kumar (17) were killed in the fire.

Girl killed

Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh): A 14-year-old girl was shot dead in her house in Ghilora village under the Bhamora police station limits in Bareilly district. An FIR has been filed against three accused persons on the complaint of the victim's grandmother. According to police, Riya, 14, who studied in Class 8, was alone in the house when the crime took place. Her father, Vijay Singh Gurjar and mother, Manisha Devi, had gone to Bareilly city for their five-month-old son's treatment.

One dead

New Delhi: A 35-year-old labourer was killed here Thursday after a church building wall collapsed in the Shakurpur area of the national capital, an official said. The deceased has been identified as Raghubansh, a resident of Bihar's Banka district. He had succumbed to his internal injuries and doctors declared him dead during treatment in the hospital, the official added.

JOSHIMATH CRISIS

Locals fearful as new cracks develop

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Joshimath, Feb 9: Residents of Uttarakhand's Joshimath are living in a state of fear as five more houses have developed minor cracks along with the widening and increasing number of cracks in residential buildings already affected with land subsidence in the city.

Chamoli District Magistrate Himanshu Khurana reached the area and inspected the houses on Wednesday. Khurana, on Thursday said that the size of the old cracks had increased in the houses where crackmeters were installed.

Cracks had also developed in the fields in Manohar Bagh ward in January. Suraj Kaparwan, owner of one of the affected fields, said that the administration had filled the cracks with soil and plastic. The development of new cracks in the holy city had stopped after January 20, but has started again, adding to the worries of the locals and the administration.

Along with this, cracks in the houses of Manohar Bagh and Singhdhar ward have widened. Locals have also been worried about the sudden drying up of a natural stream that had been flowing since the past several years in Joshimath's Singhdhar ward.



Cracks in the fields in Manohar Bagh ward in Joshimath.

PM thumps chest, says he alone is enough for Oppn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a fresh broadside against the opposition on Thursday, saying their "keechad" (dirt) of allegations will only help the lotus bloom more and asserting he alone outweighs all who had to take turns to shout slogans to oppose him.

Thumping his chest, Modi declared that he lives for the country and wants to do something for the country, which has rattled the opposition parties and they are playing political games just to save themselves.

"Desh dekh raha hai, ek akela kitno ko bhari padh raha hai (the country is watching how one person has outweighed so many)," he said as the opposition members kept shouting "Modi-Adani, bhai-bhai". Unperturbed by the jeering, Modi finished his 90-minute speech in reply to a debate on a motion thanking the President for her address to a joint sitting of Parliament, and listed various achievements of his government.

With members of the treasury benches chanting "Modi-Modi", he pointed at the opposition MPs who had gathered in the Well of the House in a bid to shout him down and said, "Naare bolne ke liye bhi unko badal karna padhta hai (they have to take turns even to shout slogans)."

"Ek conviction ke karan chala hoon, desh ke liye jeeta hoon, desh ke liye kuch karne ke liye nikla hoon (I live for the country and have embarked with the conviction to serve the nation)," he said, adding his political opponents are playing games as they do not have the courage to take him on.

The opposition, he said, is resorting to this to save themselves. Replying to the Congress charge that the BJP was ignoring Jawaharlal

There is a need to find a solution to the countrywide problem of paper leaks. Will the BJP get a CBI inquiry into the paper leak in Madhya Pradesh?

ASHOK GHELOT | RAJASTHAN CM

14-16 CHEETAHS TO BE TRANSLOCATED TO INDIA

As many as 14 to 16 cheetahs are expected to be translocated to India in the coming months, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said Thursday and asserted that the government is making holistic efforts for wildlife protection and sustainability



'Govt returned 10 proposals reiterated by SC Collegium'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 9: Amid an ongoing tiff between the Executive and the Judiciary over the procedure to appoint judges, the government has asked the Supreme Court Collegium to reconsider 10 proposals reiterated by it, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju told Rajya Sabha Thursday.

Out of these 10 proposals, the SC Collegium has reiterated its earlier recommendation for appointment in three cases. On the remaining seven reiterated proposals, the Collegium has sought additional inputs from the high court Collegium, he said in a written reply to a question.

"Ten proposals reiterated by SCC (Supreme Court Collegium) were recently referred back to the SCC for reconsideration," he said. In view of various reports and input received by the government, which in its opinion warrant further consideration by the Collegium, the Centre has sent such reiterated cases for reconsideration as was done in the past as well, Rijiju explained.

"There have been instances in the past when the SC Collegium had agreed to the views expressed by the government and recalled its reiterated recommendations," he said. According to existing Memorandum of Procedure on appointment of high court judges, the proposal is initiated by the chief justice of the high court in consultation with two senior most judges of that high court.

The Union law minister then considers the recommendations keeping in mind IB reports on the candidates. The complete material is then forwarded to the Chief Justice of India for his advice. Accordingly the government sends



all proposals received from the various high court collegiums to the Supreme Court Collegium for advice. The Collegium then recommends names to the government for appointment as HC judges.

Nearly 60 lakh cases pending in HCs: Govt

New Delhi: Over 69,000 cases are pending in the Supreme Court while there is a backlog of over 59 lakh cases in the country's 25 high courts, Rajya Sabha was informed Thursday. Citing details available on the SC website, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said in a written reply that 69,511 cases were pending in the top court as on February 1. "There are 59,87,477 cases pending in the high courts across the country as per the information available on National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) on February 1, 2023," he said. Out of these, 10.30 lakh cases were pending in the Allahabad High Court -- the biggest high court of the country. The Sikkim High Court has the least number of 171 cases.

Doval calls on Putin in Moscow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: National Security Advisor Ajit Doval called on Russian President Vladimir Putin and agreed to continue work towards implementing the India-Russia strategic partnership, the Indian embassy in Moscow said Thursday.

"NSA Ajit Doval called on HE President Putin. Wide-ranging discussion on bilateral and regional issues. Agreed to continue work towards implementing the India-Russia strategic partnership," the embassy tweeted.

The Kremlin said President Putin met with heads of delegations taking part in the multilateral consultations on Afghanistan. On Wednesday, Doval attended the fifth multilateral meeting of Secretaries of Security Councils/NSAs on Afghanistan which was hosted by Russia. "We are also worried about at-

tempts to use the situation in Afghanistan to allow extra-regional forces to expand or build their infrastructure," Putin said, according to the Kremlin. "These countries will create this under the pretext of countering international terrorism, but they are not doing anything that is really necessary in the real counterterrorism struggle," he said.

"Obviously the situation in the country is not improving and we see this. The humanitarian situation is worsening," Putin added. In his address at the multilateral meeting on Afghanistan, Doval said no country should be allowed to use Afghan territory to export terrorism and asserted that India will never abandon people of Afghanistan in their time of need.

The meeting was also attended by representatives from Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.



IAF's Sukhoi aircraft flies past during rehearsals for the upcoming Aero India-2023 air show, at Yelahanka airbase in Bangalore, Thursday

Battle royale over Tripura's heartland Dhanpur

THE CONSTITUENCY, LARGELY AGRICULTURAL, HAS JUST 48,000 VOTERS, OF WHOM LAST TIME AROUND 40,000 VOTED. SOME 11,000 TRIBALS AND 14,000 MUSLIMS IN THE AREA MAKE IT AN INTERESTING DEMOGRAPHIC MIX FOR CAMPAIGN MANAGERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sonamura (Tripura), Feb 9: "Tripurar bhala din pheroit aita se, Kalo raat sesh hoita se" (Tripura's good days are back, the dark night is over), the song in local dialect set to a popular folk tune, blared from a microphone atop the truck crammed with CPI(M) volunteers wearing red tees with the hammer and sickle sign, rushing along the highway to Dhanpur.

The battle for Dhanpur, about eight kilometres from the sub-divisional headquarters of Sonamura, is on. The BJP has pitted its central minister Pratima Bhoomik in a prestige fight to wrest the Left bastion, where she had lost five years back to former chief minister and Communist veteran Manik Sarkar. "Takkor er lorai hobe, kintu amra jitbo (It will be a tough battle but we shall win)," beamed a con-



fident Bhoomik, the first Tripura woman to be a central minister. "I have been working hard for the entire West Tripura parliamentary constituency (which includes Dhanpur) ... I especially concentrated on our tribal villages," she said. The Communist party's old warhorse Sarkar who represented

the constituency four times in a row is not contesting the election but is concentrating on touring the state to try and win it back in alliance with Congress, after being in power for seven terms in the last 50 years.

The CPI(M) has fielded Kaushik Chanda in the Dhanpur battle

which locals expect to be a straight fight between lotus and the hammer-sickle-and-star symbols, despite TMC fielding Habi Miah and Tipra Motha nominating Amiya Dayal Naotia.

The constituency, largely agricultural, has just 48,000 voters, of whom last time around 40,000 voted. Some 11,000 tribals and 14,000 Muslims in the area make it an interesting demographic mix for campaign managers. Sarkar had won the seat in 2018 by a little over 5,000 votes.

"The CPI(M) has been winning this seat since 1970s. We are more than confident that we will retain it this time too. The tribals had voted for Tipra Motha in the tribal autonomous district council in 2021, but this is for the state elections and we believe that they will continue to be with the party as they have in the past," said Ratan Saha, CPI(M) Sonamura sub-division committee secretary.

GIRL GANGRAPED IN HYDERABAD

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, Feb 9: A minor girl was allegedly gang-raped by five youths after giving her sedatives at a birthday party in Hyderabad.

The shocking incident occurred in the old city of Hyderabad on February 4, but came to light on Wednesday when the victim lodged a complaint with the police. The police also arrested a girl and her boyfriend for abetting the offence.

The 16-year-old girl had gone to a medical shop in Chatrinaka area on the night of February 4. She was lured by another girl from the same area to come to a friend's place at Bhoiguda for a birthday party.

When they reached the house, the girl who brought the victim went into a room with her boyfriend while five youths present in the house started misbehaving with her. The victim told police that they forced her to consume a drink laced with sedatives. The accused then took turns to rape her.



According to police, the accused had kept the music loud to ensure that neighbours would not hear any noise in case the girl screamed. After returning home around 3 a.m., the victim narrated the ordeal to her mother. They later lodged a complaint with the Chatrinaka police station.

Police recorded her statement and sent her for medical examination. Based on her complaint, the police arrested five accused, aged between 18 and 21 years, for rape. The 16-year-old girl and her boyfriend were also arrested for abetting the crime. The five men were sent to judicial custody while the girl was sent to a juvenile home.

Police registered a case under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

international

of the day quote

I don't see any prospect for a productive political and diplomatic process. We have a very deep and unprecedented crisis in Russia-US relations. The Biden administration has driven them into a deadlock

SERGEI RYABKOV | DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, RUSSIA

The high level of participation from across the US government, US industry, and our universities is unprecedented, and sends a strong signal that the United States want not only to be India's security partner of first resort - but to be the premier partner in India's extraordinary growth story

PATRICK RYDER | PRESS SECRETARY, PENTAGON

I believe that the best way to create conditions for peace and dialogue is to keep the two sides on an equal footing

GIORGIA MELONI | PM, ITALY

SHORT TAKES

Pak's IMF talks hit a roadblock

Islamabad: The cash-strapped Pakistani government's talks with the IMF to secure a bailout package to avert a nearing sovereign default hit a snag as the two sides remained short of concluding external financing estimates and precise domestic fiscal measures, according to a media report Thursday. A clear roadmap on external financing and domestic budgetary steps, coupled with substantial energy cost adjustments, should have led to sharing of a draft Memorandum of Economic and Fiscal Policies (MEFP) by the visiting International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission with the authorities at least a day before scheduled conclusion of talks February 9, reported the Dawn newspaper.

S'pore to scrap Cov entry curbs

Singapore: Singapore will scrap all Covid-19 border safety measures from next Monday when the country steps down its disease alert to its lowest level. This is due to the improving pandemic situation globally and the low impact of imported cases on Singapore's healthcare capacity said the Ministry of Health (MOH) Thursday. Singapore will also step down its disease alert to its lowest level since the Covid-19 pandemic started three years ago, with face masks no longer mandatory on local public transport as well as at some healthcare and residential care settings from Monday.

REDUCED BY RUBBLE

RESCUERS CONTINUED THEIR RACE TO PULL MORE PEOPLE ALIVE FROM THE RUBBLE, WITH THE WINDOW CLOSING TO FIND TRAPPED SURVIVORS AMID COLD, HUNGER AND DESPAIR

REUTERS

Antakya, Feb 9: Cold, hunger and despair gripped hundreds of thousands of people left homeless by earthquakes in Turkey and Syria Thursday, while hopes faded of many more people being found alive amid the ruins of cities.

The death toll from the quakes, which struck early Monday morning, has risen to 19,823 Thursday across both countries.

That surpasses the more than 17,000 people killed in 1999 when a similarly powerful quake hit Turkey's more densely populated northwest. A Turkish official said the disaster posed "very serious difficulties" for the holding of an election scheduled for May 14 in which President Tayyip Erdogan has been expected to face the toughest challenge in his two decades in power.

With anger simmering over the slow delivery of aid and delays in getting the rescue effort under-

Hopes for survivors fading



DEATH TOLL REACHES 16,546 IN TURKEY, OVER 3,000 IN SYRIA

THOUSANDS LEFT HOMELESS IN MIDDLE OF WINTER

FIRST UN AID CONVOY ENTERS SYRIA FROM TURKEY

way, it is bound to play into the vote should it still go ahead.

Meanwhile the first United Nations convoy carrying aid to stricken Syrians crossed over the border from Turkey, three days since quake struck.

Authorities say some 6,500 buildings in Turkey collapsed and countless more were damaged in the quake zone where some 13 million people live. The confirmed death toll in Turkey rose to 16,546 Thursday, Erdogan said. In Syria, already devastated by nearly 12 years of civil war, more than 3,000 people

have died, according to the government and a rescue service in the rebel-held northwest.

Turkish officials say some 13.5 million people were affected.

SYRIA OVERWHELMED

In Syria, relief efforts are complicated by a conflict that has partitioned the country and wrecked its infrastructure.

In Syria's Idlib province, Munira Mohammad, a mother-of-four who had fled Aleppo after the quake, said: "It is all children here, and we need heating and supplies, last night we couldn't sleep because it was so cold. It is very bad."

The UN aid convoy entered Syria at the Bab Al Hawa crossing - a lifeline for accessing opposition-controlled areas where some 4 million people, many displaced by the

Man loses 7 of family

In the devastated Syrian town of Jandaris, Ibrahim Khalil Menkawen walked in the rubble-strewn streets clutching a white body bag. He said he had lost seven members of his family including his wife and two of his brothers. "I'm holding this bag for when they bring out my brother, and my brother's young son, and both of their wives, so we can pack them in bags," he said. "The situation is very bad. And there is no aid."

Two-year-old rescued

A two-year-old boy was picked out of the rubble by a Romanian and Polish rescue team in Hatay 79 hours after the quake, video released by Turkey's Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) Thursday showed. The boy, wearing a striped sweater, cried as he was gently lifted from the hole where he had been trapped.

NDRF saves 6-year-old

A team of India's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) engaged in relief and rescue operations in the quake-hit Turkiye has successfully rescued a six-year-old girl from under the rubble in Gaziantep. The NDRF has dispatched three teams to Turkiye for rescue operations. India launched "Operation Dost" to extend assistance to Turkiye as well as Syria.

war, were already relying on humanitarian aid before the quake.

Hundreds of thousands of people across both countries have been left homeless in the middle of winter. Many have camped out in makeshift shelters in supermarket car parks, mosques, roadsides or amid the ruins, often desperate for food, water and heat.

CLIMATE CONSCIOUSNESS

For the first time in history, Australia has blocked the creation of a coal mine under environmental laws. The government rejected a proposal for a new mine about 10 km from the Great Barrier Reef. Australia is one of the world's largest exporters of both fossil fuels, which are major sources of the nation's wealth



LARGEST-EVER

NK SHOWS OFF N-ARMS FLEET

Developing a solid-fuel ICBM has long been seen as a key goal for the country, as it could make its nuclear missiles harder to spot and destroy during a conflict

REUTERS

Seoul, Feb 9: Nuclear-armed North Korea showcased its missile production muscle during a nighttime parade, state media reported Thursday, displaying more intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) than ever before and hinting at a new solid-fuel weapon.

The country has forged ahead with its ballistic missile programme, test-launching dozens of advanced missiles last year despite United Nations Security Council resolutions and sanctions.

"This time, Kim Jong Un let North Korea's expanding tactical and long-range missile forces speak for themselves," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. "The message Pyongyang wants to send internationally, demonstrating its capabilities to deter and coerce, will likely come in the form of solid-fuel missile tests and detonation of a miniaturised nuclear device."

Imagery released by state media

outlet KCNA of the Wednesday night parade showed as many as 11 Hwasong-17s, North Korea's largest ICBM, which are suspected to be able to strike nearly anywhere in the world with a nuclear warhead.

Eleven missiles could be enough to overwhelm current US missile defences, Ankit Panda of the United States-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace said on Twitter. "This is cumulatively more ICBM launchers than we've ever seen before at a North Korean parade," he said in a tweet.

The Hwasong-17 was first tested last year. Alongside them at the parade were what some analysts said could be a prototype or mockup of a new solid-fuel ICBM in canister launchers.

North Korea held the parade in Pyongyang to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of its army, KCNA said. Leader Kim Jong Un attended with his daughter, who is seen as playing a possible future leadership role in the hereditary dictatorship.



India is next in line: Researcher who predicted Turkey-Syria earthquake

The Dutch researcher who allegedly predicted the massive earthquakes that jolted parts of Turkey and Syria has now declared that Asian countries are "next in line". In a video that has since gone viral, Frank Hogerbeets could be seen predicting a major earthquake that will erupt in Afghanistan and ultimately end in the Indian Ocean after crossing Pakistan and India. A Twitter user shared Frank's video with the caption, "Dutch researcher @hogrbe who anticipated the quake in #Turkey and #Syria three days ago had also predicted seismic activity anticipating a large size earthquake originating in #Afghanistan, through #Pakistan and #India eventually terminating into the Indian Ocean." Hogerbeets could be heard saying in the video, "These areas could be next candidate for larger seismic activity if we look at the atmospheric fluctuations but again keep in mind that these are rough estimates and not all large earthquakes leave a footprint in the atmosphere they do not always announce themselves". Notably, the Dutch researcher had warned in a tweet February 3 that "sooner or later there will be a -M 7.5 earthquake in this region (South-Central Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon)."

Church of England to bless same-sex couples

The Church of England has been under political pressure to reform its approach to same-sex marriage ever since it became legal in England and Wales in 2013

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

London, Feb 9: The Church of England's governing body Thursday endorsed plans to let priests offer blessings to same-sex couples, after hours of acrimonious debate highlighted deep Anglican divisions on the issue.

The Church's General Synod - comprising hundreds of elected members, which meets two or three times a year - backed the proposals by a wide margin following an eight-hour debate across two days.

A total of 250 bishops, clergy and laity supported the reforms, while 181 opposed them and 10 abstained, at a vote held at the Synod



gathering in central London.

Unveiled last month after nearly six years of internal debate, the plans will not change rules banning Anglican priests from officiating at weddings of same-sex couples.

Synod members supported an amendment endorsing that stance, while also voting in favour of the proposal to allow blessings for civil marriages or civil partnerships in a church.

They also recognised "the failure of the Church to be welcoming" to LGBTQ people, following an unprecedented apology last month by bishops for the "hostile and homophobic response" they have sometimes faced.

Russia blames US for Nord Stream blasts

Russia has repeatedly said the West was behind the blasts affecting the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines last Sept - multibillion-dollar infrastructure projects that carried Russian gas to Germany

REUTERS

Moscow, Feb 9: The Kremlin said Thursday the world should know the truth about who sabotaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines and that those responsible should be punished after an investigative journalist said US divers blew them up at the behest of the White House.

A sharp drop in pressure on both pipelines was registered Sept 26 and seismologists detected explosions, triggering a wave of speculation about sabotage to one of Russia's most important energy corridors.

In a blog post, Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh cited an unidentified source as saying that US



The world must find out the truth about who carried out this act of sabotage. This is a very dangerous precedent: if someone did it once, they can do it again anywhere in the world

DMITRY PESKOV | SPOKESMAN, KREMLIN

navy divers had destroyed the pipelines with explosives on the orders of President Joe Biden.

The White House dismissed the allegations as "utterly false and complete fiction". Norway's foreign ministry said the allegations were "nonsense".

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Hersh's blog post deserved more attention and that he

was surprised it had not been covered more fully by Western media. He called for "an open international investigation of this unprecedented attack on international critical infrastructure", adding: "It is impossible to leave this without uncovering those responsible and punishing them."

Peskov struck a note of caution about treating a blog as a primary source but said it was "unfair" to ignore an article he said was "remarkable for the depth of analysis".

President Vladimir Putin has accused "Anglo-Saxon" powers of blowing up the pipelines, a Kremlin-designed project to circumvent Ukraine in exporting its gas under the Baltic Sea directly to western Europe.

SCEPTICISM GROWS Aus to remove China cameras from govt sites

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Sydney, Feb 9: Australia will strip Chinese-made security cameras from some government buildings to ensure they are "completely secure", the country's defence minister said Thursday.

It follows similar moves in the United States and Britain, which have both taken measures to stop government departments from installing Chinese-made cameras at sensitive sites.

Britain acted in November last year due to fears that Chinese companies could be forced to share intelligence with Beijing's security services.

The security cameras were installed at more than 200 Australian government buildings - according to official figures compiled by an opposition politician - including at least one run by the Department of Defence.

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles said officials would find and remove all cameras found within the defence department's vast collection of offices and facilities.

"It's a significant thing that's been brought to our attention and we're going to fix it," he told national broadcaster ABC.

"It's important that we go through this exercise and make sure that our facilities are completely secure."

China's foreign ministry urged Australia to provide "a fair environment" for Chinese companies, in response to a question at a regular briefing about Australia review of the cameras.



Zelenskyy, in Brussels, urges EU to grant Ukraine membership

THE BRUSSELS VISIT CAME AS RUSSIA INTENSIFIED ITS ATTACKS IN EASTERN UKRAINE AMID SIGNS THAT A MAJOR NEW OFFENSIVE BY MOSCOW WAS UNDERWAY BEFORE THE FEBRUARY 24 ANNIVERSARY OF THE WAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Brussels, Feb 9: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Thursday that "a Ukraine that is winning" should become a European Union member, arguing the bloc wouldn't be whole without his country being an integral part of the EU.

Zelenskyy made his comments during an address to the European Parliament on a rare trip outside Ukraine, which has been trying to repel a full-scale invasion by Russia for nearly a year.

Zelenskyy, who also visited the UK and France on a whirlwind European tour that started on Wednesday, will already head home with heaps of goodwill and commitments of more military aid.

He arrived to the European Parliament to rapturous applause, cheering and hoots from legislators, insisting in his plenary speech that Ukraine's fight against Russia was one fought for the freedom of Europe as a whole.

"A Ukraine that is winning is going to be member of the European Union," Zelenskyy said to applause,



building his address around the common destiny that Ukraine and the 27-nation bloc face in confronting Russia head-on.

"Europe will always be, and remain Europe as long as we ...

Take care of the European way of life," he said.

Zelenskyy added that Russia wants to destroy the European way of life, but "we will not allow that."

He held up an EU flag after his address and the entire legislature stood in sombre silence as the Ukrainian national anthem and the European anthem "Ode to Joy" were played one after the other.

Zelenskyy then headed to the urn-shaped Europa building, where the 27 EU leaders were meeting in a summit, to push those same points.

Before Zelenskyy spoke, European Parliament President Roberta Metsola said allies should consider "quickly, as a next step, providing long-range systems" and fighter jets to Ukraine.

Mettsola also told him that "we have your back. We were with you then, we are with you now, we will be with you for as long as it takes."

EU leaders were hoping to impress on Zelenskyy that the powerful bloc is steadfast in its support for Ukraine as Russia is feared to be making moves for a new offensive.

The latest draft of the summit conclusions seen by The Associated Press says "the European Union will stand by Ukraine with steadfast support for as long as it takes." Military analysts say Putin is hoping that Europe's support for Ukraine will wane.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the bloc will send Zelenskyy "this signal of unity and solidarity, and can show that we will continue our support for Ukraine in defending its independence and integrity for as long as this is necessary."

business

of the day quote

Crossing the 8 crore active demat accounts would not have been possible without the guidance of the regulator and the constant support of the market infrastructure institutions and market intermediaries

NEHAL VORAL | MD, CDSL

Collection efficiencies have remained robust throughout FY2023 so far in spite of the global uncertainties, inflationary pressures and rising interest rates

ABHISHEK DAFRIA | HEAD (STRUCTURED FINANCE RATINGS), ICRA

Aptos Labs comes with immense experience and we will leverage their expertise in building and scaling social media platforms. This is a significant partnership that Chingari will forge to onboard the first one billion on-chain users

SUMIT GHOSH | CEO AND CO-FOUNDER, CHINGARI

SHORT TAKES

LIC's net income jumps manifold

Mumbai: Public sector insurer LIC Thursday reported manifold jump in net income at ₹8,334.2 crore during the three months ended December 2022 as against ₹235 crore a year ago. The Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) earned ₹1,11,787.6 crore in net premium income during the reporting quarter as against ₹97,620.34 crore in the year-ago period, it said in a regulatory filing. The numbers are strictly not comparable as the insurer was not a publicly traded company earlier. LIC's income from investments rose to ₹84,889 crore from ₹76,574.24 crore a year ago, the filing said.

ArcelorMittal Q4 income dips 93%

New Delhi: Global steel giant ArcelorMittal has posted a 93.54 per cent fall in its net income to \$261 million for the fourth quarter ended December 31 on account of lower sales. The Luxembourg-based company had posted a net income of \$4,045 million in the year-ago period. In a statement, ArcelorMittal said it has "recorded a net income in 4Q 2022 of \$261 million compared to...\$4,045 million for 4Q 2021. Adjusted net income was \$1,189 million compared to \$3,827 million for 4Q 2021". Its steel production fell to 13.2 MT from 16.5 MT a year ago.

Disney lays off 7K

San Francisco: Entertainment giant Disney said Wednesday it was laying off 7,000 employees, in CEO Bob Iger's first major decision since he was asked back to lead the company late last year. The layoffs follow similar moves by the US tech giants that have laid off thousands of workers as the economy sours and companies dial back a hiring spurt that began during the height of the pandemic. "I do not make this decision lightly. I have enormous respect and appreciation for the talent and dedication of our employees worldwide," Iger said.

Digital silver

New Delhi: MMTCP-PAMP, a joint venture between state-owned MMTCP Ltd and Switzerland-based bullion brand PAMP SA, Thursday announced the launch of digital silver. The digital silver can be purchased for as low as Re 1. Investors have the choice of retaining the purchase within MMTCP-PAMP's secure digital vault or redeem it later, the company said.

Jio-bp rolls out E20 petrol with 20 pc ethanol

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: Jio-bp, the fuel and mobility joint venture of Reliance Industries Ltd and UK's bp, has launched petrol blended with 20 per cent ethanol, aligning with the government programme to cut oil imports and reduce carbon emissions.

"In line with the roadmap set by the Government, Jio-bp has become one of the first fuel retailers in India to make E20 blended petrol available," the company said in a statement.

"Customers with E20 petrol-compatible vehicles will be able to opt for this fuel at select Jio-bp outlets, and the offering will soon be expanded across the network."

The E20 fuel is a 20 per cent blend of ethanol and 80 per cent of petrol.

The blending of ethanol, extracted from sugarcane as well as broken rice and other foodgrains, in petrol is being introduced in the country by the government to reduce the country's oil import cost and lower carbon emissions while giving farmers an additional source of income.

"India's market for fuels and mobility is rapidly growing. It is expected to be the fastest-growing fuel market in the world over the next 20 years. Jio-bp mobility stations are designed to help meet this growing demand and are ideally located to suit customer convenience. They bring together a range of services for consumers on the move - including added services, EV charging, refreshments and food, and plan to offer more low carbon solutions over time," the statement said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier this week launched the E20 fuel at India Energy Week in Bangalore.



Fresh blows to Adani

Analysts say a change in free float status may lead to weightings of MSCI index constituents being altered, which could possibly trigger a further shifting of positions by funds as many investments globally are aligned to such indices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 9: Financial index provider MSCI said Thursday that some Adani securities should no longer be designated as free float, after market participants raised concerns about the eligibility of the Indian conglomerate's companies for some of its indexes.

Gautam Adani has already seen \$110 billion wiped off his seven main Indian-listed stocks in slightly more than two weeks after a scathing January 24 report by a US short seller which accused the conglomerate of improper use of offshore tax havens and stock manipulation.

"Some investors follow MSCI index as a gauge," said Neeraj Dewan, director at Quantum Securities. "Depending on the outcome of the MSCI review, we could see more pressure on select Adani group stocks."

The Adani group has denied the allegations by Hindenburg Research, saying its narrative of stock manipulation has "no basis" and stems from an ignorance of Indian law.

MSCI, the US-based creator of widely-watched stock indexes, said in a statement that it "has received feedback from a range of market participants concerning the eligibility and free float determination of specific securities."

"MSCI has determined that the characteristics of certain investors

Indian automotive market has shown a rising demand for electric vehicles, and providing EV financing options would be a way to accelerate India's transition to an electric future

UDAY NARANG | CHAIRMAN AND MD, OMEGA SEIKI MOBILITY

HIT HARD BY HINDENBURG

MSCI says some Adani securities should no longer be designated as free float

Conglomerate accused of stock manipulation, improper use of tax havens

Losses well over \$100bn and counting despite group's denials



The sentiment is affected by the MSCI announcement. It will lead to outflows if MSCI removes certain stocks

AMBAREESH BALIGA | MARKET ANALYST

have sufficient uncertainty that they should no longer be designated as free float ... This determination has triggered a free float review of the Adani Group securities," it added.

Changes for Adani securities associated with its MSCI Global Investable Market Indexes are due to be announced later Thursday as part of its regular review for February.

MSCI defines the free float of a security as the proportion of shares outstanding that is considered

ROUT CONTINUES

Shares of nine of the 10 group firms closed in the red. Adani Enterprises plummeted 10.72 per cent to settle at ₹1,927.30 per piece on the BSE. The flagship company's market valuation dived ₹26,373.92 crore to stand at ₹2.19 lakh crore. Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone slipped 2.90 per cent to end at ₹582.05 and the company's market capitalisation fell ₹3,758.64 crore to ₹1.25 lakh crore. Adani Power settled lower at ₹172.90, Adani Transmission at ₹1,248.55, Adani Green Energy at ₹761.95 and Adani Total Gas at ₹1,324.45. The shares of these companies declined 5 per cent each and their closing levels touched the respective lower price bands on the exchange.

available for purchase in public equity markets by international investors.

In response to the MSCI statement, Hindenburg founder Nathan Anderson wrote on Twitter: "We view this as validation of our findings".

The MSCI announcement marks the latest setback for Adani. His flagship Adani Enterprises was forced to abandon a \$2.5 billion stock offering due to the market rout.

The short-selling attack and shelving of the share sale have tarnished Adani's reputation.

Blunder by Bard costs Alphabet \$100 billion

THE SEARCH AND ADVERTISING GIANT IS LOOKING DESPERATE TO KEEP PACE WITH OPENAI AND RIVALS

REUTERS

London, Feb 9: Alphabet Inc lost \$100 billion in market value Wednesday after its new chatbot shared inaccurate information in a promotional video and a company event failed to dazzle, feeding worries that the Google parent is losing ground to rival Microsoft Corp.

Alphabet shares slid as much as 9% during regular trading with volumes nearly three times the 50-day moving average. They pared losses after hours and were roughly flat. The stock had lost 40% of its value last year but rallied 15% since the beginning of this year, excluding Wednesday's losses.

Reuters was first to point out an error in Google's advertisement for chatbot Bard, which debuted Monday, about which satellite first took pictures of a planet outside the Earth's solar system.

Google has been on its heels after OpenAI, a startup Microsoft is backing with around \$10 billion, introduced software in November that has wowed consumers and become a fixation in Silicon Valley circles for its surprisingly accurate and well-written answers to simple prompts.

Google's live-streamed presentation Wednesday morning did not include details about how and when it would integrate Bard into its core search function. A day ear-

lier, Microsoft held an event touting that it had already released to the public a version of its Bing search with ChatGPT functions integrated.

"While Google has been a leader in AI innovation over the last several years, they seemed to have fallen asleep on implementing this technology into their search product," said Gil Luria, senior software analyst at DA Davidson. "Google has been scrambling over the last few weeks to catch up on Search and that caused the announcement yesterday (Tuesday) to be rushed and the embarrassing mess up of posting a wrong answer during their demo."

Microsoft shares rose around 3% Wednesday, and were flat in post-market trading.

In the advertisement, Bard is given the prompt: "What new discoveries from the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) can I tell my 9-year old about?" Bard responds with a number of answers, including one suggesting the JWST was used to take the very first pictures of a planet outside the Earth's solar system, or exoplanets. The first pictures of exoplanets were, however, taken by the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope (VLT) in 2004, as confirmed by NASA.

"This highlights the importance of a rigorous testing process, something that we're kicking off this week with our Trusted Tester program," a Google spokesperson said. "We'll combine external feedback with our own internal testing to make sure Bard's responses meet a high bar for quality, safety and groundedness in real-world information."



Norway Wealth Fund sells \$200mn worth stake in Adani companies

Norway's sovereign wealth fund has sold its stakes in three Adani Group companies worth just over \$200 million since the start of the year, the world's largest stock investor said Thursday. The \$1.35 trillion fund at the end of 2022 held stakes in Adani Total Gas, Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone and Adani Green Energy. "Since year-end, we have further reduced in Adani companies. We have no exposure left," Christopher Wright, the fund's head of ESG risk monitoring, told a news conference. "We have monitored Adani for many years (on ESG) issues, many on their handling of environmental risks," he said. Norway's sovereign wealth fund at the end of 2022 held a stake in Adani Total worth \$83.6 million, a stake in Adani Ports worth \$63.4 million and a stake in Adani Green Energy of \$52.7 million. The fund, managed by a unit of the central bank, owns 1.3% of all globally listed shares with stakes in some 9,200 companies.

BIZ BUZZ

Polycab official partner for ICC Global Events in 2023

Bhubaneswar: Polycab India Ltd (PIL), India's leading electrical goods company with a consolidated turnover of ₹122+ billion in FY22 today announced an official partnership with the International Cricket Council. The partnership will include Polycab's sponsorship of all major men's and women's ICC global events scheduled until the end of 2023, including the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in South Africa, the ICC World Test Championship final in the United Kingdom, and the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 scheduled in India. Nilesh Malani, President & Chief Marketing Officer said, "It is a matter of great pride for Polycab, a reputed home-grown brand with presence in 60+ countries, partner with the International Cricket Council. The game is a passion for millions of fans worldwide and being driven by the same philosophy, we at Polycab understand the importance of connecting with our customers through their passion. We are delighted to partner with ICC to support cricket and together we will create a memorable experience for our patrons." Anurag Dahiya, Chief Commercial Officer, ICC said, "We are pleased to confirm that Polycab will be an official partner for ICC events up until the end of 2023. We look forward to collaborating with them on our upcoming events, as we deliver our vision of more fans enjoying our sport."



Twitter Blue to cost ₹900/month on phones

For Twitter Blue services in India on android mobile or iPhones, users would need to pay ₹900 per month while a subscription plan on the web will cost ₹650 per month

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 9: Microblogging site Twitter Thursday announced the subscription plans for Twitter Blue in India. The users in India will have to pay to keep their Twitter Blue subscription active and use the additional features.

To use the Twitter Blue services in India on android mobile or iPhones, users would need to pay ₹900 per month. A subscription plan on the web will cost ₹650 per month. The company also offers an annual subscription plan for web users at ₹6,800 annually.

The new subscriptions to Twitter Blue are currently available on the web, iOS, or Android in India, the US, Canada, Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand, Brazil, the UK, Saudi

Arabia, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Australia.

The subscribers will get several services like undo tweets, edit tweets, early access to some features, the ability to post longer and high-quality videos, along with prioritised rankings in chats. They may also encounter half the number of ads compared to the non-subscribers.

"Ultimately our goal is to provide enough value through premium features that people feel that it is worth paying for. And we hope to offer fewer ads for Twitter Blue subscribers in the future," Twitter said.

To enjoy the benefits, however, they will have to be on the platform for at least 90 days before the date of application.

Twitter also said that once a



user has subscribed to Twitter Blue, changes to the profile photo, display name, or username will result in losing the blue checkmark until the account is validated. No further changes will be allowed during this review period.

The users will also be allowed to cancel their Twitter Blue sub-

scription. "Your Twitter Blue features will expire at the end of your billing cycle. To avoid further charges, cancel your Twitter Blue subscription at least 24 hours before the auto-renewal period. Cancelling won't give you a refund for amounts already paid," it said.

India may extend wheat export ban to preserve local supplies

A JUMP IN EXPORTS FOLLOWING RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE HAS PUSHED UP LOCAL WHEAT PRICES, PROMPTING INDIA TO BAN EXPORTS IN MAY, BUT THAT FAILED TO STOP DOMESTIC PRICES RISING, AS A SUDDEN SPIKE IN TEMPERATURES HIT LAST YEAR'S OUTPUT

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 9: India is considering extending a ban on wheat exports as the world's second-biggest producer seeks to replenish state reserves and bring down domestic prices, government sources said.

The current ban was scheduled to be reviewed in April and top government officials from food, farm and trade ministries are likely to make a decision on an extension by the end of March, or early April, government and industry sources said, adding they don't expect wheat exports to resume until mid-2024.

The new farming season looks

promising, slightly warmer than normal patterns in March, when farmers start harvesting, could still shrivel the crop.

"The idea is to ensure that the government's own wheat procurement goes up this year," said a government source who didn't wish to be named, in line with official rules. "We do not want a repeat of last year."

Higher food prices make the government vulnerable to criticism from opposition parties ahead of state elections, which are due later this year.

Last year, state purchases of wheat fell by 53% to 18.8 million tonne, as open market prices rose above the rate at which the gov-



DOMESTIC WHEAT PRICES HIT RECORD HIGH IN JANUARY

INDIA TO REPLENISH STOCKS AT GOVT WAREHOUSES: SOURCES

WHEAT STOCKS AT STATE WAREHOUSES DROP TO LOWEST IN SIX YEARS

IN 2023, INDIA IS EXPECTED TO HARVEST A RECORD 112 MILLION TONNE OF WHEAT

ernment buys the staple from domestic farmers.

The government buys rice and wheat from farmers at state-set prices to run the world's biggest food welfare programme. "The priority is to build stocks and

bring down prices," said a second government source. "The focus is to buy as much as possible from farmers from the current season's crop and build the wheat stockpile."

Wheat stocks at government warehouses dropped 47.9% to 17.2 million tonne January 1, the lowest for the month in six years.

India's local wheat demand is estimated at around 105 million tonne, and traders estimate last year's production dropped to about 95 million tonne, resulting in record prices.

Domestic wheat prices hit an all-time high of ₹32,500 a tonne in January, higher than ₹21,250 a tonne - the price at which the government will buy the grain from local farmers this year.

SPIN TWIN SPINS WEB

Jadeja troubles Australia with a five-wicket haul on his return, while his partner Ashwin also chips in before Rohit hits attacking half century to take India 100 shy of Australia's first innings total of 177

■ 'PITCH ISN'T A RANK TURNER'

Jadeja opens up on his exploits on Day 1



ROHIT SHARMA

BRIEF SCORES

AUSTRALIA 177
(Marnus Labuschagne 49, Steve Smith 37, Alex Carey 36, Peter Handscomb 31; Ravindra Jadeja 5/47, R Ashwin 3/42);

INDIA 77/1
(Rohit Sharma 56 batting, KL Rahul 20; Todd Murphy 1/13).
Match to continue.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Feb 9: Ravindra Jadeja marked his return to international cricket with a five-wicket haul that knocked the stuffing out of Australian middle order and put India firmly in the driver's seat on the opening day of the first Test, here Thursday.

Jadeja did bulk of the bowling on the Jamtha dustbowl, earning his 11th fiver (5/47) in 22 overs that helped India skittle Australia out for a paltry 177 after the visitors decided to take the first strike in the series-opener.

R Ashwin, who probably dominated the Aussie mind space more than his spin colleague, got 3/42 in 15.5 overs and in the process completed 450 wickets in Test cricket.

At stumps, Rohit Sharma's counter-attacking 56 not out (89b, 9x4, 1x6) put India in complete command with hosts ending the day at 77/1 and trailing by 100 runs. KL Rahul's lean patch continued as he was caught and bowled by Australian debutant Todd Murphy after making a 20-run contribution from 71 balls.

With pitch set to deteriorate further, Indian skipper's decision to attack Nathan Lyon did pay dividends in the final hour. Two of his

shots off Lyon stamped his class and authority: a forward defensive jab that rocketed to the fence between bowler and mid-off and a down the ground six. There were also cover driven fours off deliveries that were over-pitched.

On this track, one cannot survive without a defensive mindset and the decision to score quickly seemed to be the right call.

But no accolades will be enough for Jadeja, inarguably the 'MVP' (Most Valuable Player) in the Indian Test set-up. The iconic Sachin Tendulkar has termed him as compete 'package'.

When India play abroad, he becomes a batting all-rounder, often bailing the team out at No.6 and when it comes to Indian dustbowls, he is just lethal. On the day he showed that a knee surgery and five month lay-off hasn't taken away anything from his armoury.

The Australians prepared for Ashwin's guile and variations but perhaps forgot to factor in Jadeja's impact on tracks that offer above average turn.

On turners, the spinners who don't try too much trickery with their fingers and just let the ball land on the cracks and let the pitch do the rest, are more dangerous than others. Jadeja is a perfect exponent of that art of keeping things simple.

There is no denying the fact that there is considerable turn and bounce on offer but Australian batters too were guilty of playing some bad shots. It seemed they got too much messed up in their heads and tried to tackle the track more than the bowler.

Save Marnus Labuschagne (49), who got an unplayable delivery from Jadeja, the others either played rank bad shots or erred in judgement.

Labuschagne got a delivery that was tossed up to draw him forward. It hit one of the dry cracks to rear up as well as deviate past his bat. As he was drawn forward, debutant Kona Bharat effected his first official dismissal showing smart reflexes while effecting that stumping.

What was admirable about Bharat was his change of stance after he struggled to collect a couple of Jadeja deliveries in the first session. Both deliveries turned and jumped.

Instead of crouching too low which he does with domestic spinners, he stayed on his haunches and could easily gather deliveries on his waistline in the post lunch session.

Once Labuschagne was dismissed after an 82-run stand with Steve Smith, floodgates opened as left-handed Matt Renshaw fell prey to a Jadeja delivery that hit the same spot and turned back sharply to find him plumb in-front.

Smith (37) was dismissed when he played the wrong line to an arm-ball from Jadeja and was bowled bat-pad. From 84/2, it soon became 109/5 and although Peter Handscomb (29) and the counter-attacking Alex Carey (36) got quick runs to get the team past 150-run mark.

Ashwin, who primarily bowled from round the wicket, induced a false shot from Carey who went for a non-existent reverse sweep while Pat Cummins became Ashwin's second victim when he offered a

regulation catch to Virat Kohli at slips.

Earlier, Smith and Labuschagne handled the Indian spinners with a lot of confidence in the first session as Australia recovered from early jitters to reach 76/2 at lunch.

Mohammed Shami (1/18) and Mohammed Siraj (1/30) removed Usman Khawaja (1) and David Warner (1) in quick succession but Labuschagne and Smith led the Australian fight back in an engaging first session.



Jadeja applies "ointment on sore finger", triggers debate

NAGPUR: Ravindra Jadeja drew attention not only for demolishing Australia with his fiver on the opening day of the first Test but also for applying something on his spinning finger, triggering a debate on what it was. A video made way to social media, showing Jadeja receiving something from his teammate Mohammed Siraj and then applying and rubbing that on his left index finger, something that had Australian media and a former player interested. When a fan shared the footage with former Australia captain Tim Paine, he replied, "interesting". However, a BCCI source told PTI that it was an "ointment for pain relief for the sore finger". David Warner and Steve Smith, who are part of the visiting side, served bans for their role in the ball-tampering scandal in 2018 in South Africa.



COMPLETELY UNDONE: Steve Smith was deceived by the pitch as he was bowled off a straight ball by Jadeja while playing for spin, Thursday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, Feb 9: Ravindra Jadeja used the crease intelligently to create a variety of angles which confused the Australian batters, and clearly showed his exploits Thursday were not the result of so-called "rank turner" as is being bandied around by some.

"This wasn't a rank turner. Compared to other pitches, it was slow and had low bounce. I felt defending wasn't very difficult today but as the game progresses, it (defending) will become increasingly difficult. But that's the nature of Test cricket," Jadeja said at the end of day's play.

He then explained how he played mind games with the batters and got the better of them. "I used the crease as not every delivery was turning. And, as I said, the bounce was low, so trying (I tried) to create doubts in the minds of the batters," he explained.

"I was going wide off the crease and coming close to the stumps and some deliveries if they stepped out and it turned, there would always be a chance. Luckily, he (Marnus Labuschagne) stepped out (and) that one (delivery) turned after pitching. And for (Steve) Smith, the ball went straight from that same spot from where I delivered the earlier (Marnus) delivery," said the man, who is now three shy of 250 Test wickets.

The idea was to keep the Aussies guessing about which delivery would turn and which one would come straight with the angle, and it worked to perfection for the wily spinner.

"Yes, there was natural variation from the wicket, but I tried to mix up the angles, so that there was doubt in the batter's mind," he said.

NAGPUR PITCH 'TRICKED' AUSSIES

Nagpur: Australia batter Peter Handscomb Thursday admitted that the Nagpur track "tricked" the visiting side as it did a lot less than what they had feared in the opening Test. Many Australian batters were out playing poor shots. Some of them played for the turn when there was none. "It definitely wasn't easy out there. It's tough because when the pitch is playing tricks that starts to play with your mind a little bit as well," Handscomb said at the press conference after the opening day's play. "The ball that doesn't do as much you expect to do a little bit more and that's where you can come straight on, rather than the big turners we saw out there as well." Handscomb said the Indian team bowled really well as a unit and didn't give away easy runs. "It's tough out there, Jadeja was obviously bowling very well, not really giving our batsmen a lot to hit and I found him tough to score (against)," the 31-year-old said.

Jadeja also said the aim was to bowl stump to stump on a low-bounce track. The spinner added that he was happy with his rhythm, having played a quality Ranji Trophy match for Saurashtra against Tamil Nadu last month.

"I loved the rhythm with which I bowled (today) and the ball came out of my hand quite well, line and length was also accurate, since there is no bounce off the track. I preferred bowling stump to stump. On a low-bounce track, there are more chances of leg before and bowled, and luckily, I got a few leg-before and bowled, so that makes me happy," he said.

"I wouldn't say this is exactly like the Chennai track (where the Ranji Trophy game was played) but quite similar to it in terms of low bounce. So, the thought process was to bowl stump to stump."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rashford, Sancho answer taunts with goals to save Man Utd

MANCHESTER: In the face of cruel taunts from Leeds fans, Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho responded in style. Both players scored in a rousing second-half comeback as Manchester United rallied Wednesday to salvage a 2-2 draw in the Premier League. "You let your country down," fans chanted in the away section at Old Trafford, bringing back painful memories of the United forwards' penalty misses in England's Euro 2020 final shootout defeat to Italy. But by the end of the game Rashford had scored his 20th goal of the season in all competitions to start United's comeback and Sancho had equalized to mark his return to the team. Sancho's contribution was significant after he was given time off earlier this season in a bid to reignite his career.

Real Madrid beat Al Ahly, advance to Club WC final

RABAT: Real Madrid secured their place in the Club World Cup final with a 4-1 win against Egyptian club Al Ahly to keep alive their quest for a record-extending eighth world title. Vinicius Junior, Federico Valverde, Rodrygo and Sergio Arribas scored for the Spanish side, who will play Al-Hilal in Saturday's final. The Saudi Arabian team beat Brazilian club Flamengo 3-2 Tuesday. Madrid have won the world club title a record seven times, including three times when the competition was called the Intercontinental Cup. Madrid are chasing their first world club title since 2018.

Rare home win for Marseille against PSG in French Cup

PARIS: Marseille celebrated their first home win against PSG in more than a decade to reach the quarterfinals of the French Cup, beating their bitter rivals 2-1. Marseille had rarely looked so dominant against PSG since the Paris club started their supremacy in France after Qatari investors took over. Marseille's previous win at the Stade Velodrome against PSG in all competitions dated back to November 2011. Alexis Sanchez put the hosts in front and Ukraine attacking midfielder Ruslan Malinovskyi scored the winner after Sergio Ramos pulled one back.

Riyadh to host Santosh Trophy semifinals, final

BHUBANESWAR: The semifinals and final of the National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy will be played March 1-4 at the King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the national federation announced Thursday. AIFF secretary general Shaji Prabhakaran told a press conference here that the dates have been fixed after consultation with their Saudi Arabian counterparts. "This is a great moment for Indian football, as the four states that make it to the semifinals will get to fight for the Santosh Trophy title in Saudi Arabia," Prabhakaran said. He pointed out that the incentive to play in Saudi would make the Santosh Trophy final round, beginning here Friday, an even more interesting and competitive event.

India eyes chase maiden title

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cape Town, Feb 9: The much-envied hegemony of Australia are likely to continue but a host of teams, led by India and England, will harbour hopes of breaking it when the ICC Women's T20 World Cup begins here Friday.

Packed with proven performers, Australia have lifted the trophy five times in seven editions. They have hardly been challenged in the format since winning the last T20 World Cup in 2020. In the last 22 months, they have lost just one T20 and that defeat came against India away from home via a Super Over.

The defending champions will no doubt start as favourites once again and will aim for a second hat-trick of titles, which will be a record-extending sixth trophy.

However, the hard-fought series against India and the loss in the warm-up match against Ireland shows that Australia too can be defeated and the likes of India, England and New Zealand would fancy their chances.

Runners up in the last edition, India will be keen to go one step ahead and claim the title that has eluded them thus far. However, a lot will depend on the Indian batting unit, especially the top order comprising the likes of elegant Smriti Mandhana, big-hitting Shafali Verma and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur.

The 'Women in Blue' had enjoyed a stellar run at the 2020 edition before the final ended in disappointment. Shafali, had been the breakout star, ending the tournament as India's leading run scorer. Pumped up after the U-19 World Cup win in South Africa a few days ago, the flamboyant opener will be keen to carry on the momentum.



Skippers of participating teams pose with the World Cup during captains' photo-shoot

India have found a much-needed finisher in U-19 World Cup-winning young Richa Gosh and that will give the top order the freedom to the top order to go all guns blazing from the start.

India have a good mix of spin and pace options but bowling has been their achilles heel. The pace department, barring veteran Shikha Pandey, is relatively inexperienced. They will have to rise to the challenge.

The ever-reliable Deepti Sharma has been a match winner for India on several occasions, and with spinners sparking in the warm-up matches, she will once again be a key player.

India have been clubbed alongside England, Pakistan, West Indies and Ireland in Group B. England, who have been a consistent force in the format for years, will be a strong contender.

Led by Heather Knight, England will be eager to get their hands on the title for the first time since inaugural edition in 2009. They have reached three finals without any success.

Besides Australia, New Zealand are another top contender to reach the last four from Group A. The Sophie Devine-led side has enjoyed a good run in the format recently.

South Africa's best finishes came in 2020 and 2014, when they reached the semifinals. The Proteas women will be keen to capitalise on the home advantage. The recent Tri-Series final victory over India will only add to their confidence.

Grouped alongside Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, it will be a tall task for the hosts to advance to the semifinals. The opening encounter will be between hosts South Africa and Sri Lanka Friday.



Odisha players pose with their jersey in the presence of R Vineel Krishna (Commissioner cum Secretary, Sports & YS Dept., Govt. of Odisha), Dr. Shaji Prabhakaran (Secretary General, AIFF) and Avijit Paul (Chairman AIFF's State Development Committee and Joint Secretary, FAO) during the jersey launch at Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar Thursday ahead of National Football Championship for Santosh Trophy Final Rounds, starting Friday. Odisha will begin their campaign against Maharashtra on the opening day at the Capital Ground before facing Goa (Feb 12), Punjab (Feb 14), Kerala (Feb 17) and Karnataka (Feb 19) in their Group A matches.

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK