



## BENEVOLENT SUNNY

Sunny Leone and husband Daniel Weber to donate 10% of the February earnings of their cosmetic brand

LEISURE P2



## US WARNS CHINA

US Secretary of State warns China not to repeat its 'irresponsible act' of sending a spy balloon into American airspace

INTERNATIONAL P10



## SAURASHTRA WIN RANJI

Saurashtra crush Bengal by nine wickets at the Eden Gardens to win their second Ranji Trophy title

SPORTS P12

## Cyberattacks made Indians poorer by ₹1,500cr in 2 years

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 19: "Dear SBI User, Your SBI Account Will Be Blocked Today. Please Update Your PAN Card Immediately Click Here."

Like many cyber victims, Delhi's Komal (name changed) was also perplexed after receiving this warning message on her mobile. As soon as a panic-stricken Komal clicked on the link, it took her to a webpage, where she followed the instructions asking her to feed in her details.

After following the process, she entered the OTP which she received on her phone to complete the PAN and mobile link process. However, within minutes, ₹40,000 was deducted from her account.

It was at this moment that she realised that she had been duped by cyber cheats and there was nothing wrong with her bank account. Though Komal, who works with an MNC, registered a police complaint, she never got back her money.

According to government data, more than nine lakh incidents of phishing and vishing have been reported in the last two years and customers have collectively lost nearly ₹1,500 crore due to such incidents between April 1, 2020, and March 31, 2022.

A senior police officer said that a new modus operandi has been noticed in the field of cyber crime, wherein the fraudsters send random messages to people, stating things like 'update your PAN card or your bank account will be blocked', among others.

## 3 of family among 5 killed in mishaps

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul/Boinda, Feb 19: Five persons including three members of a family were killed and three others were critically injured in separate road mishaps in Angul district, police said Sunday.

In the first incident, three members of a family died after an unknown vehicle hit the auto-rickshaw in which they were travelling near Khalagaon under Bantala police limits late Saturday night. The deceased were identified as Pitambar Pradhan (45), Gundicha Pradhan (70) and Munna Pradhan of Kulasinga. They were returning home after dropping Pitambar's daughter at her in-laws' house when the mishap took place. Pitambar's wife and five-year-old daughter were injured.

In the second incident, a six-year-old boy of Bisipali in Boudh district died after a truck hit his father's bike on Boinda-Athamallik road. His father sustained critical injuries.

In the third incident, Bibhuti Moharana (57) of Kalamchhuin was killed after a biker hit him in Gopalprasad police station area.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No big refrigerator for live-in couples. I feel safe with the smallest one

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 33.2°C	32.0°C
	MIN 20.4°C	20.0°C
Humidity	70%	82%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Mainly clear sky	



JUBILANT MOOD: Indian bowler Ravindra Jadeja celebrates with teammates after the wicket of Australian batter Matthew Kuhnemann during the third day of the 2nd Test match between India and Australia, at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, in New Delhi, Sunday. Jadeja thoroughly exposed a technically ill-equipped and mentally messed up Australian batting unit with a career-best seven for 42 as India won the second Test by six wickets to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. (Report on Page 12)

## TN moves SC against NEET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Tamil Nadu government has moved the Supreme Court challenging the validity of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Examination (NEET) for admissions in medical courses in colleges across the nation, alleging that the single window common test is violative of the principle of federalism.

In a lawsuit, filed under Article 131 of the Constitution, the state government has alleged that the principle of federalism, which is part of the basic structure of the Constitution, is being violated by examinations like NEET as it takes away the autonomy of states to make decisions regarding education.

The plea, filed through lawyer Amit Anand Tiwari, said the validity of NEET was upheld in 2020 by the apex court on grounds that it was required to curb the evil of unfair practices such as granting admission based on paying capacity of candidates, charging capitation fee, large-scale malpractices, exploitation of students, profiteering, and commercialisation.

However, such grounds are not applicable in the case of admissions to government seats and the reasoning of the judgment is applicable only to private college seats, it said.

The southern state alleges the single window common test is violative of the principle of federalism

## Padampur to be dist in a yr: CM ₹2k-cr deal to 'purchase' Shiv Sena name: Raut

Stating that he believes in action, not words, Patnaik assured the people of completing the works promised during the Padampur bypoll

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday assured the people of Padampur Assembly constituency that Padampur subdivision will be made a separate district within a year.

Patnaik assured this to the people while addressing public meetings at Padampur, Paikamal and Jharbandh.

Notably, the BJD won the Padampur byelection with a margin of more than 42,000 votes in December last. The Chief Minister had announced to make Padampur a separate district during his campaign for the bypoll.

"Last time, I announced something for the Padampur constituency. Out of that Paikamal primary health



centre has been upgraded into a community health centre. Work for Chakradhar dam project has already started and land for setting up of a 133/11 KV substation has been identified," Patnaik said at the public meetings.

Stating that he believes in action, not words, Patnaik assured the people to complete other works, promised during the bypoll, within

the prescribed time frame. The Chief Minister said he has sanctioned ₹64 crore for the development of the Padampur region. During the bypoll, many people of the Padampur area had met Patnaik and submitted proposals for development of each ward, panchayat and NAC of Padampur sub-division. The fund has been sanctioned as per the proposal submitted by the

people, which is first in the history of Odisha, said the CM.

Taking a dig at the Union Ministers, who have visited the constituency during the last byelection, Patnaik said the Union Ministers have made many promises to the people about paddy procurement, crop insurance, railways, waive off of GST on kendu leaves, etc. "My humble request to Lord Nrusinghanath to remind the central ministers about their promises," he said.

Notably, Union Ministers Narendra Singh Tomar, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Dharmendra Pradhan and Bishweshwar Tudu have participated in the electoral campaigning during the byelection.

Tomar had said about distribution of crop insurance claims to beneficiary farmers while Vaishnaw raked up construction of railway line to Padampur and Pradhan stated about GST on kendu leaves.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister distributed credit support of ₹1.23 crore to women SHGs and said he hopes that the SHGs will become good entrepreneurs utilising the money.

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 19: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut Sunday claimed a 'deal of ₹2000 crore' has taken place so far to 'purchase' the Shiv Sena party name and its 'bow and arrow' symbol, two days after the Election Commission allotted them to the group led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Legislator Sada Sarvankar from the camp led by Shinde dismissed the claim and asked, "Is Sanjay Raut a cashier?"

Maharashtra minister and BJP leader Sudhir Mungantiwar also hit back at Raut saying such baseless comments were an attempt to malign independent institutions like the Supreme Court and the Election Commission of India.

Raut in a tweet claimed the ₹2,000 crore was a preliminary figure, and that this was 100 per cent true.

He also told reporters that a builder close to the ruling dispensation shared this information with him.

The Rajya Sabha member said his claim was backed by proof



which he would disclose soon. Raut Sunday said ₹2,000 crore is not a small amount to 'purchase' the name Shiv Sena.

"The EC's decision is a deal," he alleged.

"I have reliable information that there has been a deal of ₹2000 crore to get the Shiv Sena name and its symbol. This is a preliminary figure and is 100 per cent true. Many things will be revealed shortly. Never before this has happened in the country's history," Raut tweeted.

## ChatGPT sparks AI 'gold rush' in Silicon Valley

SINCE ITS DISCRETE RELEASE IN LATE NOVEMBER, THE CHATBOT HAS BECOME ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING APPS EVER

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

San Francisco, Feb 19: ChatGPT, Silicon Valley's latest app sensation, has investors rushing to find the next big thing in generative AI, the technology that some hail as the beginning of a new era in big tech.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been increasingly present in everyday life for decades, but the November launch of the conversational robot from start-up OpenAI marked a turning point in its perception by the general public and investors.

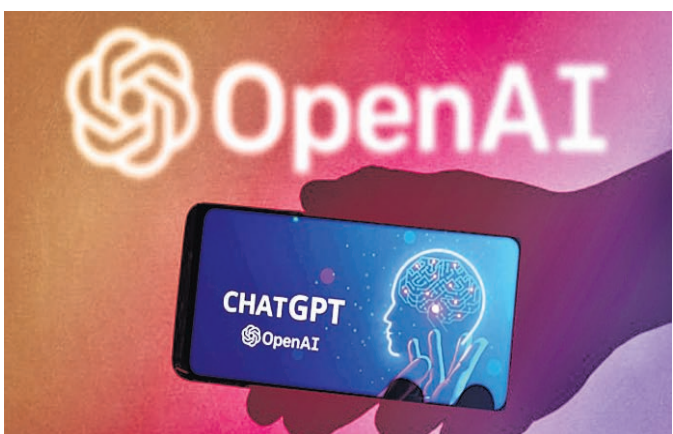
"Every so often we have platforms that come along and result in an explosion of new companies. We saw this with the internet and mobile, and AI could be the next platform," said Shernaz Daver of California-based Khosla Ventures. Generative AI, of which

ChatGPT is an example, wades through oceans of data to conjure up original content - an image, a poem, a thousand-word essay - in seconds and upon a simple request.

Since its discrete release in late November, ChatGPT has become one of the fastest growing apps ever and pushed Microsoft and Google to rush out projects that had until now stayed carefully guarded over fears that the technology wasn't yet ready for the public.

"Just five days after its release, a million people used ChatGPT - about 60 times faster than it took Facebook to reach one million users," said Wayne Hu, a partner at SignalFire, another venture capital firm.

"Suddenly investors are all talking about how ChatGPT might eliminate millions of



knowledge worker jobs, disrupt trillion-dollar industries, and fundamentally change the way we learn, consume, and make decisions," he said.

The explosion of generative AI

comes at an otherwise morose time for the tech sector, with tens of thousands of layoffs cascading through the world's biggest companies as well as smaller ones that are struggling for survival.

"While other categories are facing a contraction in valuations and raising capital, generative AI companies are not," said Daver.

Hu said that the market valuations for generative AI companies have been sky high, while they have contracted for everything else. OpenAI, the ChatGPT creator, is valued by Microsoft at nearly \$30 billion despite still burning through money at a high speed, he said.

Entrepreneurs specialising in generative AI say they no longer need to scream out for attention when hunting for cash or walk through the details of what they are trying to offer.

"It's helped us a lot," said Sarah Nagy, founder of Seek AI, a start-up that allows nonspecialists to extract technical data from a database using queries in everyday

language. "Before ChatGPT... I had to explain what generative AI is, and why it matters," she added.

Now the appetite for ChatGPT-like capabilities is seemingly limitless, and not only from investors.

"The demand from customers has increased a lot," said Nagy. "It's even hard to keep up, because we're still a small company."

The entrepreneur wants to grow her team and, according to Daver, while the trend is to downsize, "we are currently hiring" in generative AI.

In the last few weeks, it is mainly the giants that have been in the news, first and foremost Microsoft, OpenAI's partner and investor, followed by Google, which is trying to keep up.

But in their shadow, a galaxy of start-ups have ideas on offer too.



# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

### ARIES

Today is just another busy day. You may remain hassled sorting out problems at office and then at home. Your bosses may allow you certain concessions and this will ease things to some extent. Ganesh says you will gain valuable guidance from elderly people.

### TAURUS

There will be a positive surge in your career prospects today. However, this progress may not be in the direction that you expected. Financial opportunities and success will knock at your door, a rare combination of guests. You will also achieve material progress, predicts Ganesh.

### GEMINI

A fantastic day to enter into all kinds of partnerships. A day to bond with your close friends, open joint accounts, strike deals, and make plans for a bright future, says Ganesh. You will be at the top of your game in almost everything you do. Some of you, who want to go for further studies, may take a well-informed decision today.

### CANCER

Today, you may find yourself marooned in a sea of emotions, and the tides of turmoil will keep on getting stronger as the day progresses. However, such dire circumstances bring out the best in you, and you will be able to wade through the storm with nothing but patience on your side.

### LEO

Some promises are like whispers in the wind — never meant to be realised. Today holds something similar, in that you shall be so close and yet so far from what you desire most. Ganesh advises you to be a generous winner and a graceful loser. Remember, every day is not Sunday; also, you cannot win each time. Lower your expectations in order to avoid disappointments. Wait for the winds to change — it won't take long.

### VIRGO

The extraordinary way in which you do things will earn you many admirers. Superiors at work will laud you for your commitment. Evenings will be fun-filled and entertaining. Look to relax with some meditation or music... or both.

### LIBRA

If ever there was a time when that industrious nature of yours was to listen to your conscience, it is today. Call it a positive day to embark upon new business adventures, particularly for freelancers. It is mighty hard to go wrong when you listen to your inner voice and back it up with zeal. The hard work of the morning and the pressure of the afternoon will give way to pleasure in the evening.

### SCORPIO

Better get down to serious business if you want to reap the benefits of your past actions. You are liable to treat subordinates as equals when deciding the best course of actions to achieve your goals. A golden favourable day for you, says Ganesh.

### SAGITTARIUS

The horizons of your thoughts are open and serene. Forgive and forget will be your mood today — even for the most serious mistakes. Generosity was never your Achilles' heel, says Ganesh.

### CAPRICORN

Drag yourself out of the house, do some shopping, or better still, appoint an interior designer. You are very likely to move into a new house very soon, foresees Ganesh. This, of course, may also eat into your savings and force you to be thrifty by the end of the day, but you won't regret this once-in-a-while extravagant outing. It's all for a reason, after all.

### AQUARIUS

It's a busy day at work, and you're probably involved in some pending project work. It's advisable that you don't get complacent. Keep an eye on your opponents to have an edge over them, suggests Ganesh. Colleagues will be supportive, and so will family.

### PISCES

Being a graceful loser is just about as important as being a generous winner, for success does not come by every day. Lowering your expectations will help steel you against disappointments today. There are indications you will embark on a pleasure trip with your soul mate, says Ganesh.



## MEGAN, MGK SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP TO 'SALVAGE RELATIONSHIP'

Actress Megan Fox and rapper Machine Gun Kelly are said to be doing everything they can to save their relationship. Meghan sparked break-up rumours last week when she deleted all pictures of her rapper fiancée, whom she has been dating since 2020.

## BLONDE GIRL ANA CREDITS INSECURITY FOR HER SUCCESS

Spanish actress Ana de Armas, who has been nominated for an Oscar for playing the titular role in the film *Blonde*, credits all the success to her insecurity about being under international scrutiny. The *Bond* girl said that it led her to have an affinity for Hollywood icon Marilyn Monroe.



## MULTILINGUAL DRAMA FEST KALINGA NATYA MAHOTSAV KICKS OFF

### Court Martial keeps viewers on edge of their seats

**Bhubaneswar:** Kalinga Natya Mahotsav, a five-day multilingual theatre festival, organised by Satabdira Kalakar, one of the oldest theatre troupes in Odisha, began here at Rabindra Mandap, Sunday.

A joint collaboration of Union Culture Ministry, the Culture Department of Odisha, the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the troupe, the event kicked off with a Hindi play, *Court Martial* presented by Ujjain-based Abhinav Rang Mandal.

The play's plot was woven around an Indian military court trial. The trial is that of the central character, Ramchander, played by Yash Rai, who is accused of attacking two of his officers, leading to the death of one. The trial concludes with the defence counsel proving to



A scene from Hindi play *Court Martial*

OP PHOTO

the court that Ramchander resorted to the crime not due to a murderous intent but because of the mental trauma and unethical torture exercised by these officers towards him. The play was written by

Swadesh Deepak, while it was designed and directed by Sharad Sharma.

Needless to say, the drama kept the viewers on the edge of their seats till the curtains came down.

Apart from Yash, others who performed included Girijesh Vyas, Satish Rajput, Sanjay Sharma, Sharad Sharma, Meena Jain and Sudha Sharma.

Eminent playwright Braja Kishore Mohanty was conferred with Sumitra Samman while Nibedita Jena, playwright and director, received Pramila Pratibha Samman.

Troupe's President Gourahari Das presided over a meeting held on the occasion and secretary Dhira Mallick coordinated the proceedings.

The dignitaries who were present on the occasion included Rajya Sabha MP Munna Khan, ex-Chief Secretary Sahadev Sahoo and Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi Vice-President Manmath Satpathy. PNN

## Sunny lends helping hand

**Mumbai:** Actress Sunny Leone and husband Daniel Weber have been reportedly doing their bit for the victims amidst the world uniting to offer help to Turkey and Syria's earthquake survivors.

The couple has decided to donate 10 percent of the sales of the February earnings of their cosmetic brand, 'StarstuckbySL' towards relief and recovery efforts for earthquake-affected people in Turkey and Syria. Sunny Leone stated that it was essential that everyone lend a helping hand and urged people to do their bit to help the 'survivors rebuild their lives'. The couple will donate their earnings working for those living in the affected areas of Syria and Turkey.

Previously, Priyanka Chopra had urged people to extend a helping hand for those suffering after the tragic earthquakes. The actress, who is a Global UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, had penned, "A week later, the pain and suffering continues for the people of Turkey and Syria after the devastating earthquake. Rescue operations are relentless, which leads to some hopeful moments like these,

where a 3-month-old baby was pulled from the rubble. There are many who still remain trapped, waiting and hoping to be saved, their families praying for a miracle. It's heartbreaking. Mother nature's wrath spares none, but we can all help." AGENCIES



## UNICEF names Ayushmann Nat'l Ambassador for Child Rights

**Mumbai:** Actor Ayushmann Khurrana, who is known for his knack for off-beat scripts and roles, was appointed as the National Ambassador of Child Rights for UNICEF India.

As a part of his duties, Ayushmann will work with UNICEF to ensure the rights of every child to survive, thrive, and be protected, as well as promote their voice and agency in decisions that concern them.

"It is truly an honour to further my advocacy for children's rights with UNICEF India as a National Ambassador. I am passionate about the issues facing children and adolescents in India. As UNICEF's Celebrity Advocate, I have interacted with children and spoken on internet safety, cyberbullying, mental health, and gender equality. In this new role with UNICEF, I will keep up a strong voice for children's rights, especially for the most vulnerable, and support solutions to issues that impact them the most," Ayushmann said.

Ayushmann was appointed as UNICEF India's Celebrity Advocate in September 2020 to advocate on ending violence against children and the broader child rights agenda.

Most recently, he focused on inclusion and non-discrimination through gender inclusive sports on World Children's Day 2022 with Sachin Tendulkar, Regional Ambassador for UNICEF South Asia, and girls and boys participating in the event from across India. IANS



## Vidya questions modern woman stereotype

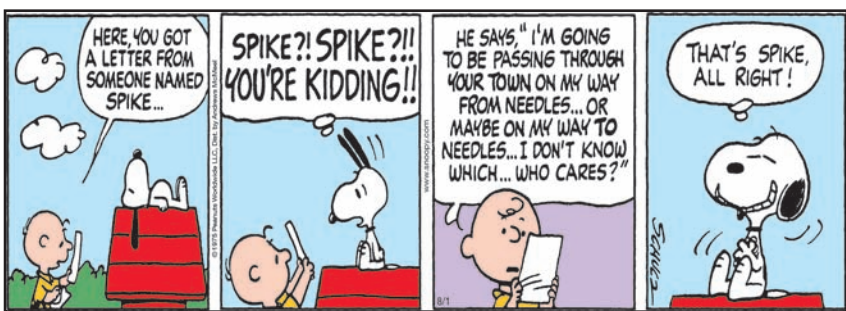
**Mumbai:** In a recent interview, bold and beautiful Vidya Balan raised questions about modern women being stereotyped. According to sources, the actor asked, "Why can't a strong woman, a feminist, have a partner, also wish to enjoy traditional things, and also wish to take a step back? Why is the modern woman being used as a typical example of what every woman must be? Why is the modern woman being stereotyped?" She questioned the exclusivity between empowerment and wanting to live as one pleases.

Recalling her 2021 film in Amit Masurkar-directed drama *Sherni*, she said, "That's why I loved Sherni so much. She took on these men, but in such a subdued manner, not needing to indulge in any chest-thumping. Why do we need to pigeonhole women in order to see them as empowered?" She played the role of an upright forest officer who is tasked with resolving the man-animal conflict in the film. She said it would take 'a very long time' for society to achieve equality and end the conversation around women's empowerment. She was last seen in *Jalsa*,



AGENCIES

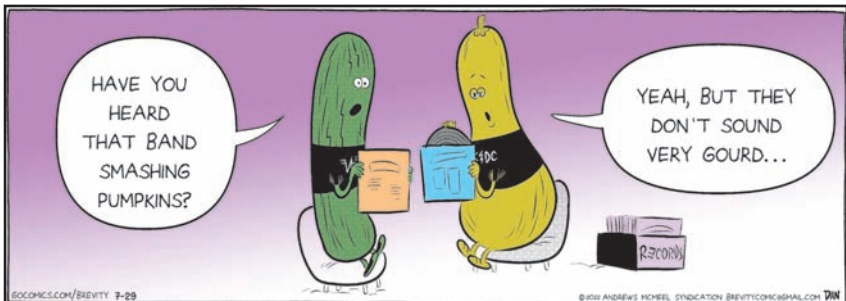
## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

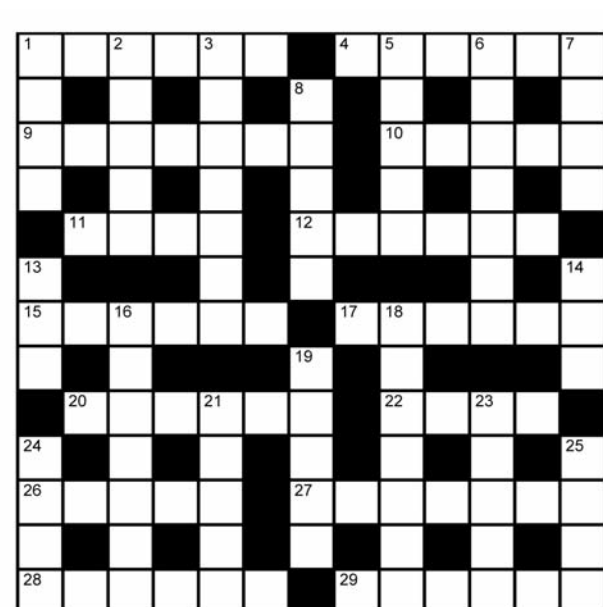


## BREVITY



## FUN post

## CROSSWORD

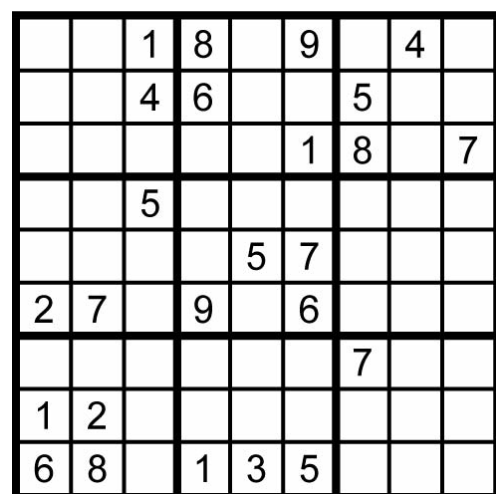


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- Across**
- 1 Sharp Japanese condiment
  - 4 America's *Last Frontier*
  - 9 Billiard item (3,4)
  - 10 Wall painting
  - 11 Supplication
  - 12 Scammers and cheaters (3,3)
  - 15 Accumulated knowledge or enlightenment
  - 17 Effulgence
  - 20 Japanese robe
  - 22 Fellow standards for a job
  - 26 Not up to
  - 27 Honesty
  - 28 A chore for James Bond
  - 29 Method
  - 6 Snake
  - 7 Friend
  - 8 Pie division
  - 13 Possess
  - 14 Not many
  - 16 Cook in a wok (4,3)
  - 18 Extraordinary feature
  - 19 Kangaroo
  - 21 Frequently
  - 23 Underway, as Sherlock Holmes might say
  - 24 Vats
  - 25 Tambour, e.g.
- Down**
- 1 Candle part
  - 2 Clam cover
  - 3 Swaggering show of courage
  - 5 Lime buddy

## 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.

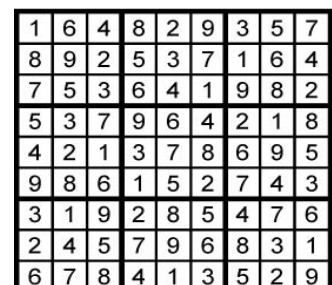


## SOLUTIONS

### CROSSWORD



### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

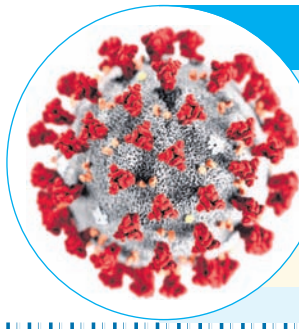


# downtown



## TALENT FETED

Tabla maestro Guru Kishore Kumar Sahu being felicitated by Gopinath Behera Foundation at Kala Vikas Kendra in Cuttack, Sunday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	67,86,52,119	65,12,57,162	67,90,827
India	4,46,84,917	4,41,52,258	5,30,760
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

# STF nabs interstate drug peddlers in City

Following a tipoff, the STF team with the help of Commissionerate Police intercepted two four-wheelers in Ghatikia area and unearthed cannabis weighing more than 185 kg from the vehicles



The accused arrested by STF



OP PHOTOS

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** The Special Task Force (STF) of the Odisha Police has arrested two interstate drug peddlers during a raid in the City here.

The accused were identified as Mansingh Yadav of Gorakhpur district from Uttar Pradesh and Mukesh Kumar

Yadav of Siwan area in Bihar. The duo was staying at Ganeswarpur under Balasore Industrial police limits in

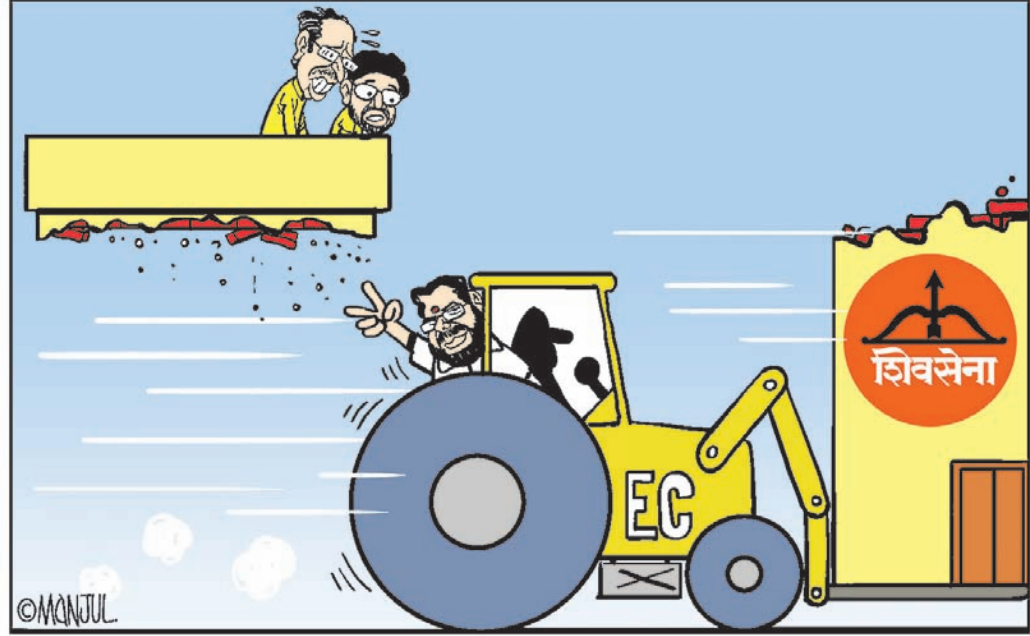
Balasore district. Following a tipoff, the STF team with the help of Commissionerate Police had intercepted two four-

wheelers at Ghatikia near Odisha University of Technology and Research under Bharatpur police limits here Saturday. The cops later had unearthed cannabis weighing more than 185 kg concealed in the car.

Police arrested the accused persons and seized the contraband along with the four-wheeler by registering a case (79/23) in this regard. The accused were Sunday produced before the court that sent them to judicial custody.

"Special drive against narcotic drugs is on in the state. Since 2020, the STF has seized more than 68 kg of brown sugar/heroin, 202 gram cocaine and more than 113 quintals of ganja/marijuana, 750 gram opium and have arrested more than 168 drug dealers/peddlers," claimed STF sources.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



# 'Innovate Odisha' presents a platform for creativity



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** To promote innovation and entrepreneurship among creative thinkers, Atal Incubation Center-Nalanda Institute of Technology Foundation (AIC-NITF) and Karkhana makerspace have organised a two-day event 'Innovate Odisha' at Nalanda Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar, starting Sunday.

The event aims to provide a platform for engineers, non-engineers, students and professionals to collaborate and build innovative solutions to challenging problems of society.

The themes for this 24 hours hackathon are decided to be futuristic technologies like Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), future mobility, applied robotics, metaverse and web 3.0.

The first day of the event, which was attended by more than 15 speakers and 30 plus corporates, saw participation of 300 participants.

Vedanta Aluminium Limited (Odisha and Chattisgarh) president Tapan Kumar Chand in his address to the gathering said, "We must encourage such product hackathons as this will speed up implementation of Industry 4.0 prod-

**The two-day hackathon is based on themes of futuristic technologies like IoT, cloud computing, AI, future mobility, applied robotics, metaverse and Web 3.0**

ucts and services".

He further added that the list of all innovations made during this hackathon should be shared with industry associations and other relevant bodies to ensure seamless integration between innovations by incubators into the industry.

AIC-Nalanda CEO Devyoti Mohanty said, "We at AIC-Nalanda have strongly believed that fresh minds create better innovation which is why we as an incubator have always encouraged students across all levels of education to think and innovate."

Karkhana makerspace founder and CEO Siddharth Bhattar said, "This hackathon, focused on learning rather than winning, shall be an exciting opportunity for all creative thinkers to meet and develop impactful solutions to re-write India's growth story."

# BJP, BJD LOCK HORNS AS POLLS NEAR

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** With the assembly and general elections in Odisha due next year, BJP - the principal opposition in the state - has dialled up its aggressive posture against the Naveen Patnaik-led BJD government.

Following the completion of Presidential poll, BJP has started attacking the BJD government by raising several issues including the lady blackmailer Archana Nag honey trap case and the suicidal death of prime accused in lady teacher Mamita Meher murder case.

Notably, in both the cases, involvement of ministers and senior BJD leaders were alleged.

The attack of the saffron party against the BJD government has sharpened even further in the past one and half months following the visit of BJP national President JP Nadda as it has been strongly criticising the state government on every issue, that too targeting the Chief Minister.

Demanding the CM's resignation, the Odisha BJP hit the street recently over deteriorating law and order situation in the state.

Because of three major incidents happening in the state in a short span of time, the BJP is claiming that the law and order situation has collapsed in Odisha.

Cabinet minister Naba Das was killed by a police officer in broad daylight January 29 this year while a young IAS officer and his driver were attacked by the sand mining mafia in Balasore February 3. Besides, the party is demanding action against BJD MLA Bijay Shankar Das for allegedly harassing a girl, to whom he was supposed to marry. In this case, the police reg-



BJD's women wing staged a protest in the City against BJP leader Jayanarayan Mishra for his misbehaviour towards a lady police officer

The aggression of the saffron party is evident in Leader of Opposition Jayanarayan Mishra continuously targeting the government over the Health minister's murder, demanding a CBI probe into the case

The ruling BJD has also shown its readiness by coming up with strategies to counter BJP's every move like launching demonstrations over reduction in budgetary allocation for paddy procurement and discontinuation of 5 kg free rice distribution under PMGKAY

However, BJD has till now limited its attack to the state BJP and its leaders, being careful in not making any critical comments against national BJP leaders like PM Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and JP Nadda

istered a case against the MLA following intervention of the Orissa High Court.

Stating such violations of law and order are not common in Odisha, the party is holding demonstrations and road blockades in different parts of the state including

But the BJP has to raise all such issues. It is a challenge before the BJP to maintain its aggressiveness and tempo against the state government till next election," said political observer Prasanna Mohanty.

On the other hand, the ruling BJD, which has always countered BJP, has shown its readiness with balancing strategies for BJP's every move. When the BJP launched three-day state-wide demonstrations, the BJD also hit the streets over reduction in budgetary allocation on paddy procurement and



Members of BJP Yuva Morcha demonstrated in Baramunda area of Bhubaneswar against the alleged deteriorating law and order situation in Odisha

in the Capital city.

Apart from trying to tarnish the image of the government over the law and order issue, the party is also highlighting Centre's free rice scheme to woo the voters.

The aggression of the saffron party is evident in Leader of Opposition (LoP) Jayanarayan Mishra continuously targeting the government over the Health minister's murder, alleging involvement of important people, while also demanding CBI probe into the case.

"There are a lot of issues against the BJD government and party.

discontinuation of distribution of 5 kg free rice under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). The regional party has been demanding an apology from the LoP for his alleged misbehaviour to a lady cop during a protest.

However, the Naveen Patnaik-led BJD has till now confined its attack on the Odisha BJP and its leaders. They are not making any critical statement against the top-level BJP leaders like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and JP Nadda.

# Daily wagers hurt in attack; 1 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** Two daily wagers sustained severe injuries in an attack by the employee of a chicken counter located at Aiginia under the Khandagiri police limits here Saturday evening. The victims were identified as Manoj Kothia alias Baya, 40, of Buguda area and Santosh Dakua alias Mankada, 44, of Sarada in Ganjam district.

**Khandagiri Police have arrested the 30-year-old accused who worked at the chicken counter where the victims used to sleep during night**

Both the victims are undergoing treatment in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of AIIMS, Bhubaneswar. Meanwhile, Khandagiri Police has arrested the 30-year-old accused, Kishore Behera of Phiringia in Kandhamal who was trying to escape the spot. Behera worked at the chicken counter where the victims used to sleep during night.

"The accused and the victims both under the influence of alcohol engaged in heated argument over some petty issues Saturday night. The arguments soon turned violent as Behera in a fit of rage assaulted the duo with the meat cutting knife (chappada)," said a local witness. The victims were immediately rushed to AIIMS for treatment. Police have launched a probe into the matter registering a case on the basis of complaint lodged by owner of the chicken shop.

# Now, central univ students can join 2 courses together

Pupils will have an option that they can opt for a regular course and another via distance learning

From new academic year, students of the central universities can pursue two courses together.

After the central universities accepted this proposal, students studying in their facilities will be able to perform studies for other course simultaneously.

Students will have an option that they can opt for a regular course and another via distance learning. The provision of two courses simultaneously from central universities has been provided under the National Education Policy. The University Grants Commission has made a new provision for it. According to UGC Chairman, Prof M Jagdish Kumar, from new session, internship will be mandatory for graduation students. On the basis of this internship, the students will develop their skills as per market expectations. Besides that, the students will have to work on community outreach after going to fields, and projects.

Internship programme can be run by working with business houses. Students of graduation



## FROM NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

- From new session, internship will be mandatory for graduation students
- On the basis of this internship, the students will develop their skills as per market expectations
- Besides that, the students will have to work on community outreach after going to fields, and projects.
- Students of graduation and post graduation will have multiple choices of courses

and post graduation will have multiple choices of courses. More and more certificate courses and diploma courses have to be started so that students have more options. The Education Ministry has made it clear that admission for undergraduate courses in Central universities will be done based on merit list of Common University Entrance Test (CUET). It is believed that besides 45 central universities, over 60 state and private universities will also enrol

students for undergraduate courses based on merit of CUET. Central universities across the nation are trying to encourage Indian languages. These varsities have adopted the guidelines of the UGC to run two educational courses simultaneously: Central Universities have started appointing Professor of Practice in various domains. Professor of Practice will be those people whose first occupation is not teaching and they do not hold a PhD.



SETTING STAGE: Preparation for Adivasi Mela 2023 at Adivasi Ground in Bhubaneswar nears end, Sunday

PICS: BIKASH NAYAK



# Higher crop yield our top priority: Padhee



Dignitaries during the OUAT Alumni Meet-2023 organised at MS Swaminathan Hall of the university campus in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), Bhubaneswar in collaboration with OUAT Alumni Association celebrated its OUAT Alumni Meet 2023 Sunday at the university campus. The programme was attended by former vice chancellors, members of board of management, former deans and directors of OUAT, directors of ICAR institutes, alumni working in various organizations, some of which are settled abroad in USA and UK. Addressing the audience, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment department principal secretary Arabinda Kumar

“Currently, the state is focusing upon diversification of crops from paddy to remunerative non-paddy crops, farm mechanization and small scale infrastructure development suiting to the needs and priorities of farmers”

ARABINDA KUMAR PADHEE | PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FARMERS' EMPOWERMENT

Padhee said, “Currently, the state is focusing upon diversification of crops from paddy to remunerative non-paddy crops, farm mechanization, promotion of livestock & fishery sectors and small scale

infrastructure development suiting to the needs and priorities of farmers.” He presented a paper on ‘Roadmap for agricultural development in Odisha’, wherein he underscored the key initiatives of the state government. “Correction of acidic soils of the state to leverage higher crop yield is one of our top priorities” he added. OUAT vice chancellor Pravat Kumar Roul, while speaking to the gathering, highlighted the cardinal elements of success during the six decades of OUAT and hinted at the necessity to make the activities of the OUAT more farmer-centric in order to enhance the overall rank of the university at national level.

## Mobile Health Dispensary for western Odisha people

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** TP Western Odisha Distribution Limited (TP-WODL), Burla through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes has taken up various initiatives to facilitate the healthcare needs of the communities it operates in. These communities are spread across the remote, inaccessible and impoverished areas of Western Odisha.

One such successful initiative is the Mobile Health Dispensary (MHD). Under this programme, over 17,400 people across Western Odisha have benefited so far as they were offered free of cost primary healthcare facilities.

The programme began in January 2022 where the first MHD was flagged off. The initiative initially covered Junagarh and Golamunda Blocks of Kalahandi district. The project since its inception has successfully covered 50+ villages in 4 blocks of the district namely Junagarh, Golamunda, Thaumal Rampur and Bhawanipatna, said an TPWODL official.

The MHD has benefited over 15,131 patients by giving free treatment and medicines to the poor and needy within a span of one year in Kalahandi.

After getting overwhelming response in Kalahandi, the second instalment of MHD started operating in Deogarh district in December 2022. As of February 2023, it has served 30 underserved and remote villages of all three blocks in the district namely Barkote, Reamal and Tileibani.

# META inks MoU with KIIT-TBI to promote AI in healthcare

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** Meta Health, Singapore signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the KIIT- Technology Business Incubator (TBI) to promote health-tech startups in India.

KIIT-TBI is a major innovation hub of Eastern India for technology ventures and a site for interfacing with the industry, academia, government bodies, and cross-border agencies. KIIT-TBI has been recognized as Center of Excellence by the National Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board (NSTEDB), Department of Science and Technology, government of India to strengthen and scale up KIIT-TBI activities and support potential start-ups working in digital health.

Meta Health Limited (META), formerly known as Metal Component Engineering Limited, was founded in 1987 in Singapore and listed on Singapore Stock Exchange (Singapore Stock code: 5DX) Meta has recently diversified into healthcare technology and services with investment into Gain Health Private Limited a direct-to-consumer and high growth Omni channel health and wellness platform. Meta Health had invested in the KIIT-TBI digital health start-up company MedTel Healthcare in the year of 2021.

The partnership focuses at promoting start-ups in the sector of digital health and artificial intelligence in healthcare. Meta Health & KIIT-



TBI will launch a health-tech accelerator where they will select health-tech start-ups from India, give them access to investment, mentorship and provide a gateway to launch products in South-East Asian countries. Mrutyunjay Suar, CEO, KIIT-TBI said, “With the fast-paced digital transformation in healthcare that’s happening in the country right now, there could not be a better time for health-tech entrepreneurs to consider taking their innovations directly to the consumers globally. This partnership will show the country’s prowess in technology innovation and accelerate the growth of a Digital India.” “At Meta Health, we focused on improving health outcomes through technology and innovation. Our partnership with KIIT-TBI is aimed at bringing the benefits of strategic investments and market access to promising healthtech companies. Data driven care will play a key role in the healthcare transformation in India. We are in discussion with various state governments in India to execute digital health projects through public-private partnership model and provide them out based health analytics through command centres in India,” said Vas Metupalle, Chief Medical Officer, Meta Health. Achyuta Samanta, Founder of KIIT & KISS congratulated KIIT-TBI for executing the important MoU which will help the health tech startup to scale up KIIT-TBI activities.

## Dry weather across state

**Bhubaneswar:** Dry weather will prevail in most places in Odisha during the next five days, the Bhubaneswar office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said, Sunday. At the same time, there is unlikely to be any marked change in the minimum (night) temperature in the state in the coming days.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of affidavit before Executive Magistrate, Digapahandi, I declared Smt. Sasmitha Martha, W/o. Sri Santosh Kumar Sahu, D/o. Debaraj Martha myself declared that Sasmitha Martha and Sasmitha Sahu both are same and one person i.e. myself.

## LOST

Sale Deed No.2905, Dated 23.08.1997 of Khagendra Das, LIC Policy Original Certificate No. 596771173, Dated 26.02.2015 of Rukmani Behera have been lost since long. If anyone has found these documents may be contacted the given address. Khagendra Das, Kharida, Soro P.S., Mob:6371806203

By virtue of the affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Sinapali on dtd. 02.01.2023, I Debarchan Meher, aged about 65 years, Son of Late Sanu Meher, Resident of Vill/Po- Gandabahali, P.S. Sinapali, Dist- Nuapada solemnly affirm and declare that the original copy of R.o.R. vide Khata No.-286/199, Plot No.593/2059, Area Ac.0.06 dec. which stands recorded in my name has been lost some where while I was travelling from my village to Sinapali Tahasil office. If any body found the above document kindly contact - Debarchan Meher, Mob-9556300315, 9668830942.



**VENTING ANGER:** Members of All Odisha Students' Voice scuffle with police as they protest outside the residence of BJP MLA Jaynarayan Mishra in Bhubaneswar, Sunday against his alleged assault on a lady cop

# Parents share tips on how to manage stress during exams

Since it is exam season, thousands of kids and their parents are experiencing sleepless evenings as they worry and stress about tests and results. Anxiety, stress and tension work as barriers, affecting concentration and performance during the exams. Even for the most intelligent pupils, fear and anxiety frequently manifest as physical and psychological symptoms that make learning more challenging. The pressure of the exam is genuine! Additionally, worry and anxiety, if not treated in a timely manner, can actually result in issues that persist long after exam season. While students are now vocal about these stress inducers and the overall exam pressure, not every student is comfortable talking about it. Parents play a critical role here both for the vocal as well as the quiet sufferers. From ensuring access to therapists and counselors who can address the mental health concerns of their children to simply taking the time



to talk to their children and help them align expectations, parents are integral to a child's stress management journey. Often the fear begins at home, thus making it essential for parents to communicate with children and assure them that just results alone do not in any way determine their capabilities to abilities to succeed in the future. It is essential to acknowledge a child's strengths and unique abilities and play them up, in order to build inner confidence and conviction. A parent is a child's first validation, which goes a long way in shaping his or her attitude toward life. Here are some tips shared by experienced parents on ways to reduce stress among children: Rajnee Sinha, mother of a 14-year-old girl who works at a leading IT firm said, "I used to be worried about my child's grades and enforced strict study hours. Even after hours spent with his books, he was not scoring well. That was when I thought that I might be fol-

lowing the wrong approach. I was searching on the internet when I found @getsetparentwithpallavi, an amazing page on parenting. Dr. Pallavi Rao Chaturvedi is India's leading Parenting Coach, Educationist, Entrepreneur and Founder of India's fastest-growing Parenting resource organization-Get Set Parent with Pallavi. The page instantly became my parenting bible. Dr. Pallavi says that while every parent wants better

grades for their children, it is important for them to understand that the children are often equally anxious and stressed about their exams and results. So, as a parent, I now try to create a more supportive and empowering studying environment that is engaging rather than daunting. I allow my child to participate in the decision-making by allowing him to create his own timetable. The accountability and relaxed approach have made my child more responsible and he is not only scoring better but also enjoying the learning journey." Sangita Gopinath, a communication professional, said, "Just keeping the study desk and environment clean helped my daughter. Often cluttered and dirty environment blocks the mind which induces stress. Apart from the clean environment, it's really important to prevent your kid from all kinds of germs and infections. My daughter is appearing for 12th boards this year and her big fear was that she will fall sick during exams. To prevent that I clean my house twice a day to be extra careful during the exams to ensure my daughter's environment is germ-free." Ajit Asthana, Principal of a renowned school in Uttar Pradesh and father of two kids, said, "Every child is different and they have their own way of grasping knowledge. So, even a slow learner is still a learner. Be patient and ensure

you celebrate every little achievement and unleash innocent joy. The feel-good moments can go a long way in making exams less distressing." Swati Srivastava, a homemaker from Lucknow said, "The power of soft music is well-established as it affects our emotions and can be an extremely effective stress management tool. Soothing music can slow the pulse and heart rate, lower blood pressure, decrease stress hormone levels, and distract us from our worries. When people are feeling stressed and overwhelmed, there is a tendency to avoid actively listening to music. Perhaps because it feels like a waste of time when there's so much to do and to worry about. But adding music to our day is a small effort that can produce great rewards since our productivity actually increases when stress is reduced. So, I have created a playlist on Spotify called Exam Fever with some soothing tunes and songs for my kids." IANS

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# Ganjam villagers ostracise two families over defunct streetlight



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Purusottampur, Feb 19:** Villagers have socially boycotted members of two families allegedly after the lineman mistakenly cut-off the connection of a street light at Bhatakumarada village under this police limits in Ganjam district, sources said here Sunday. The families of Yudhisthir Nahak and his maternal uncle Uma Das are facing the wrath of the villagers. Sources said that the local power office had installed a street light in October 2021 at Bhatakumarada

village near the house of Yudhisthir for the benefit of villagers. However, finding some errors in connection, Yudhisthir called the lineman and asked him to rectify those. The electrician however, did just the opposite. Instead of rectifying the problems, he cut off the connection. Only in the evening, villagers came to know about the development when the light did not glow.

The villagers convened a meeting and held Yudhisthir responsible for their ordeal and fined him ₹30,000 as penalty. Left with no option, Yudhisthir paid some money

as fine to the villagers but failed to pay the outstanding amount as his father was unwell.

Angry over non-payment, the villagers socially boycotted him. They warned other residents not to talk with Yudhisthir or his family members or else face consequences. The village committee engaged a person to announce the order by beating gongs in all parts of the village.

However, members of the committee which had ostracised Yudhisthir came to know that the family of Uma was in touch with the former. They decided to boycott him also February 15 onwards.

Later, Yudhisthir and Uma visited the Purusottampur police station and lodged a complaint. Purusottampur police registered a case and SDPO Rajanikant Samal and IIC Piyush Ranjan Chhotray called both the groups to the police station and asked them to resolve the dispute amicably. The villagers have promised to sit down together and resolve the issue within a week.



**BOOK EXPO ON WHEELS:** Students and teachers of Kendriya Vidyalaya in Sonepur pose outside a mobile book van launched by National Book Trust after its arrival on their school premises, Sunday

# Anandapur barrage to be operational by June: CS



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Anandapur, Feb 19:** The Anandapur barrage project in Keonjhar district will become operational by June. This was stated here by Chief Secretary (CS) Suresh Chandra Mahapatra during his visit for reviewing the barrage project work here, Saturday. He also reviewed the work on other projects in Keonjhar district and held discussions with officials of various departments. After his arrival, the chief secretary visited the under-construction bridge on Kusei river at Belbahali connecting National Highway-20. Then, he visited the barrage site and announced that it will become operational by the month of June after reviewing the right and left dykes of the canal. Mahapatra also announced the

construction of a lift irrigation project here at a cost of ₹600 crore. He said that the project when constructed, will help in providing irrigation to 50,000 hectare of farmland in Anandapur area. Over 6,000 hectare of farmland will get irrigation water from the month of July after completion of the canal works.

The Anandapur barrage project when completed will help in providing irrigation facilities to 80,000-90,000 hectare of farmland. Later, the chief secretary left for Mayurbhanj district to review the Deo irrigation project.

Notably, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had laid the foundation stone for Anandapur barrage project at a plan outlay of ₹475 crore, January 9, 2009. The project was unveiled January 31, 2020 but is yet to become operational

# Geo-heritage tag for Nomira

GEO-HERITAGE SITES ARE VERY RARE AND HAVE UNIQUE GEOLOGICAL, GEO-MORPHOLOGICAL, MINERALOGICAL, PETROLOGICAL, AND PALEONTOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Joda, Feb 19:** The lesser-known pillow lava formation found in Nomira village under this block in Keonjhar district, which was declared as a national geological monument by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) in December 1976, has been designated as a geo-heritage site.

In a public meeting Friday at the site, GSI Deputy Director General Dr Saibal Chandra Mitra along with director KK Nayak, Keonjhar divisional forest officer (DFO) Dhanraj HD and geologist Himanshu Patra made the announcement and cleared apprehensions among local residents.

According to reports, the rare formation came into existence 2.8 billion years ago, when the area was covered by oceans and provides an important clue to the evolution of Precambrian peninsular India.

The pillow lava outcrops look like small buns or pillows, a feature formed when hot molten basaltic magma slowly erupted under water and solidified rapidly. The well-preserved pillow structures are roughly ellipsoidal and closely packed. The site was discovered by British geologists Brian Jones and Thomas Dunne in 1942. It was the second place in India where such formations were found, the other being Maradhahalli, a small vil-



**ROAD CLEAR TO MAKE IT A TOURIST SPOT**

lage situated in Chitradurga district of Karnataka.

Keeping in view the research work by geologists and to develop the site as a tourist destination, the Ministry of Mines is working on a draft Geo-Heritage Sites and Geo-Relics (Preservation and Maintenance) Bill. The Bill will be implemented after it is passed by both the Houses of the Parliament, Mitra Said.

Once the Bill is implemented, an area of 100 metres radius from the spot will be out of bounds for public and will be declared a prohibited zone. An area of 200 metres surrounding the site will be declared a 'controlled' zone, informed Nayak. Local residents are hopeful that



once the site is declared a tourist destination, footfalls in the locality will increase. DFO Dhanraj said that it will usher in economical development of the locality. Sarat Chandra Barik, a local residing near the site said, "The place

had been declared a 'research' site when Nandini Satpathy was Odisha's Chief Minister."

Many geology students from Barbil College were present at the meeting. Lecturer Prafulla Panda described how the site was formed in ancient times and why it is called 'pillow lava'.

Nomira is located about 18 km south of this town, on the Barbil-Lahunipada state highway. The monument can be approached from here by following the Joda-Nayagarh road up to Bamebari village and then trekking two kilo-

metres eastward. Nestled in an unapproachable terrain which was dense jungle till a few decades ago, Nomira is one of the best preserved pillow lava sites in the world because of its remote location.

# 4 kids injured in wall collapse

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhanjanagar, Feb 19:** Four children including three siblings were injured after an abandoned wall collapsed on them when they were playing at Krushnanagar village here in Ganjam district, Sunday. They were identified as Rushan (4), Rahu (12), his younger brother

Kanhu (4), and younger sister Lipi (10) of Nandiniipalli village. The children were admitted to Bhanjanagar sub-divisional hospital and were discharged after treatment, a doctor said.

The incident occurred when the children with their parents had gone to their relative's house at Krushnanagar village.

# Drone deposits pension at 'divyang's' doorstep

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nuapada, Feb 19:** A drone was deployed Saturday to deliver a disability pension to a beneficiary in Bhutkapada village in Nuapada district. Officials decided to use a drone to send the pension amount to Hetaram Satanami, a 'divyang',



who was finding it extremely difficult to walk two kilometres to

the panchayat office every month to collect the money.

Keeping in mind, Hetaram's problem, sarpanch Saroj Agarwal decided to send the money to the beneficiary by using a drone. A visibly-elated Hetaram received the pension from the device while the villagers witnessed the

incident with awe.

"Hetaram is a 'divyang', it is difficult for him to come to the panchayat office. When I came to know about his predicament, I decided to send the money to him by using a drone. I am happy that he has received the money without any inconvenience," Agarwal said.

# Cybercriminals using ChatGPT to steal money

NEW METHODS OF HACKING VIA ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE-BASED TOOLS NOW BEING USED BY FRAUDSTERS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** Forget Jamtara that has kept on inspiring cyber thugs to steal your data or money via traditional, OTP-based methods till date. Brace yourself for a new age of hacking via artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools.

A new crop of con artists is now thriving by utilising newer means – from social media platforms to UPI-based frauds and from operating fake gambling websites to now working on AI chatbot ChatGPT – to rob you of your hard-earned money.

A woman was duped of ₹27 lakh last week by a lady fraudster who promised her handsome returns on investment in digital marketing on WhatsApp. "The task was to like and subscribe to YouTube accounts," the victim said in the FIR.

The Delhi Police's Crime Branch last week busted a racket involved in forging documents including Aadhaar cards, PAN cards, and driving licence for obtaining SIM cards, opening bank accounts and taking loans.

On interrogation, police found that the con group used profiles of ordinary persons who don't have any ID documents. They made fake identity documents and used them to defraud people.



REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

Cyber-security researcher Rajshekhara Rajaharia has unearthed a new type of fraud online. "Every day from 5.00pm, several 'satta' (gambling) websites start trending on Google, which offer quick money upon playing the game that starts from as little as ₹100 and goes into thousands," he said.

"These websites start appearing in the evening and every website guarantees profits. These gambling websites are being run using names like 'Delhi Satta King', 'Disawar gali Satta', 'Shri Ganesh Chart', 'Satta King Delhi Bazar' and more," Rajaharia told this agency.

Those who place satta (bets), using

various UPI payment platforms, get nothing in return as the winning prize always goes to people these websites had already selected.

"There are thousands of such fake gambling websites now operating in the country. They also have Telegram groups and each group has more than 25,000 members," informed Rajaharia.

"Satta owners announce the only number with the lowest targeted number to make maximum profits and there are hundreds of websites related to one satta market," Rajaharia explained.

In January, a Lucknow woman who had saved ₹1 lakh for her daughter's

surgery was duped by fraudsters who offered her prize money in a lucky draw. She said she paid the money through 'Google Pay' app.

According to cyber experts, scammers operating high-yielding investing scams called 'pig butchering' have found a way to compromise 'Google Play' and Apple's 'App Store'. Pig butchering scams are those which involve fake websites, malicious advertising and social engineering.

According to 'Sophos' researchers, scammers are targeting victims on Facebook or Tinder and convincing them to download the fraudulent apps and 'invest' large sums of money in assets that appear to be real. The fraudsters target male users over 'Facebook' and 'Tinder' using women's profiles with stolen images from other social media accounts.

The next big challenge for cyber authorities is to tackle ChatGPT-based cyber crimes. Cybercriminals have already started using ChatGPT to create Telegram bots that can write malware and steal your data.

So what is the best way to protect your money? Experts said that the time has come to minimise digital footprints to stay away from the new breed of hackers.



## भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक

केंद्रीय स्थापना अनुभाग (मा.सं.प्र.वि.)  
भुवनेश्वर

**भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक, भुवनेश्वर के सेवानिवृत्त लाभार्थियों को दवाओं की डोर-स्टेप डिलीवरी के लिए केमिस्ट/स्टॉकिस्ट/दवा विक्रेता के चयन के लिए ई-निविदा**

भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक (इसके बाद "बैंक" के रूप में संदर्भित किया जाएगा), भुवनेश्वर प्रतिष्ठित और अनुभवी केमिस्टों / स्टॉकिस्ट / दवा विक्रेताओं, जो भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक, भुवनेश्वर के सेवानिवृत्त लाभार्थियों को दवाओं की डोर-स्टेप डिलीवरी के लिए बैंक द्वारा चयन के लिए पात्रता मानदंडों को पूरा करते हैं, से दो भागों (तकनीकी और वित्तीय बोली) में ई-निविदा के लिए आवेदन आमंत्रित करता है। निविदा के विवरण के लिए, कृपया आरबीआई की वेबसाइट (<https://www.rbi.org.in>) के "निविदाएं" खंड पर जाएं और निविदा अपलोड करने के लिए, कृपया <https://www.mstcecommerce.com> एमएसटीसी ई-पोर्टल पर पंजीकरण करें। अनुबंध के लिए वापसी योग्य ईएमडी का विवरण निम्नलिखित है।

<b>२०२३-२०२४ के लिए कार्य की अनुमानित लागत</b>	<b>बयाना जमाराशि</b>
₹२,००,००,०००/-	₹४,००,०००/-

कृपया ध्यान दें कि भविष्य में परिशिष्ट/शुद्धिपत्र केवल आरबीआई की वेबसाइट/एमएसटीसी ई-पोर्टल पर प्रकाशित किया जाएगा।

**क्षेत्रीय निदेशक, भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक, भुवनेश्वर**



Widen your consciousness to the dimension of the earth and you will have a place for everything.

THE MOTHER



## Only What Suits

For the past few years, all of us have noticed how the Union Gov't, State Gov'ts, almost all large corporate entities and even individuals of any relevance in this country seem to be talking about growth or otherwise of the nation's financial system only in US Dollars. Rarely does one come across mention of the poor Indian National Rupee (INR) when the topics under discussion are the Budget or corporate growth or some such high sounding issues. Such acts seem to display the desperate wish of Indians to be 'internationally acceptable' and so they take great pride in talking in foreign currency, foreign collaborations and even foreign managing directors.

When a nation is so very hell bent on being international, it should also understand that there is the other side of the coin. The other side, obviously, is the downside. Corporate transparency and resilience are the first to be tested for a business that is trying to go beyond the borders.

To see a 'foreign hand' whenever there is sharp criticism of the government for its acts of omissions and commissions by agencies and people outside India is a bogey often raised by ruling parties. The same thing is being witnessed now in the wake of allegations of share market manipulations by the "biggest conman in corporate history" Gautam Adani, caustic comments on Prime Minister Narendra Modi by billionaire financier-philanthropist George Soros and the BBC's two-part series on the pogrom in Gujarat in 2002.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference on 17 February 2023, 92-year-old Soros said, "Modi and business tycoon Adani are close allies; their fate is intertwined." He went on to say the conglomerate's troubles would "significantly weaken Modi's stranglehold on India's federal government" and "open the door to push for much needed institutional reforms."

This opened floodgates of bitter criticism of Soros by BJP supporters and two Cabinet Ministers of the Modi government who described the billionaire as an agent of "subversion" and "regime change", out to pull down the Modi government to further his own personal economic interests. They also called into question the motive of Soros' foundation - The Open Society Foundations - that has billions of dollars at its disposal to fund activities to uphold democracy and free society across the globe. One minister went a bit far and termed Soros as an "old man" which could be termed as gerontophobia, an unwelcome adjective for any responsible person who himself is a retired government executive, now a minister.

The most significant remark made by Soros is that Modi is "silent" on the revelation of Adani's alleged manipulations and that the PM "will have to answer questions from foreign investors and in Parliament." It could be that Soros is expecting too much when he said he hoped for "a democratic revival in India" out of the turmoil in the Adani conglomerate's financial reverses following the expose by the US-based Hindenburg Research on January 24. In fact, the seven listed companies of the apples-to-airports Adani group have together lost about \$120 billion in market value since the allegation that the conglomerate improperly used offshore tax havens and manipulated stocks.

The aphorism, "speech is silver, silence golden," may not always be sagacious enough, especially when silence runs the risk of being construed as a tacit approval or admission of wrongdoing. In this sense, Soros' charge of Modi's silence on the tsunami of sorts in the share market caused by the Adani group's losses does tend to strengthen the suspicion of the crony capitalism the Modi-Adani alliance seemingly represents. It is anybody's guess how much funds of the public sector Life Insurance Corporation of India and State Bank of India have been invested in the Adani group's companies thereby putting the common man's money kept in the two government agencies at tremendous risk.

The PM's silence is deafening and it only lends itself to criticism by people both inside and outside the country. It is also preposterous for the BJP leaders and ministers to go after Soros this way. They need rather to answer why their supreme leader is still maintaining a studied silence on his links with Adani and how the latter has seemingly held the Indian economy at ransom for his personal gain, apparently taking advantage of his connection with Modi.

The government has also to answer for setting IT officials to search for alleged tax-related offences by the BBC at the latter's offices in Delhi and Mumbai. But this is not new. One is reminded when Twitter started flagging tweets emanating from BJP sources as "manipulated media" in May 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Well known for its lethargy and unwillingness to act, the Delhi police immediately swung into action and raided Twitter offices at Delhi and Gurgaon in the late evening when offices were all closed and staff working from home. That time also the intention was to send a message of threat. The same method was followed against several other media outlets for their criticism of the Modi-government.

On the other hand, in its efforts to gain international stature, India started organizing the Goa International Film Festival. It is perfectly fine to want to be something like Cannes or Berlin in matters of film fests. But when a whole committee of international and Indian jurists headed by Israeli filmmaker Nadav Lapid scrapped The Kashmir Files movie as "vulgar propaganda" then the saffron brigade should not have lost its cool. It is presumptuous to consider that because Lapid is an Israeli therefore he will, per force, hate Moslems. The Kashmir Files told a story of how Kashmiri pundits were persecuted by Moslems. Similarly, during the farmers' protests in 2021, when pop star Rihaana had tweeted in favour of the protesting Indian farmers, all hell broke loose and she was abused by BJP trolls in the filthiest of language. Such reactions seem like we as a nation are undecided whether to put ourselves up for deep scrutiny or not. When India gets even a small international acknowledgement, the media and government blow the trumpets loud enough to turn everyone deaf. The moment the international voice is unpleasant to the ears of the powers that be, the poisonous bile comes out in every vulgar manner possible.

### WISDOM CORNER

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart. **HELEN KELLER**

The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible. **ARTHUR C. CLARKE**

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant. **ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON**

### WORDSWORTH

#### Galimatias

The word means gibberish, meaningless talk, or nonsense. It appears in English first in 1653 in Sir Thomas Urquhart's translation of the works of the French author François Rabelais: "A Galimatia of extravagant conceits." It is in French that we must look for any enlightenment about its origins, since the word still exists in that language with the same sense. The number of theories about its origin is dauntingly large, however, strongly suggesting little firm information. We do know it's first recorded in that language in 1580 in a work by Montaigne, but in the sense of an obscene song. For this reason, the most common view of its origin is that it's from the low Latin ballematia, which had the same sense (old Italian had this last word, too, but for songs or melodies in a dance style). Some writers point to an even older French word, gale, enjoyment, which joined up with a verb meaning to eat too much to create galimafree for an unappetising dish (English gallimaufry, a jumble or confused medley, is from the same source). It has also been said galimatias was originally a disparaging slang term of the sixteenth century for the disputations prescribed for doctoral students at the University of Paris (Latin gallus, cockerel, plus the Greek ending -mathia, learning). Another writer has suggested a link with a Provençal word for an imaginary country. The experts now dismiss all of these out of hand. The same word appears in Russian, presumably borrowed from French.

# DARK SIDE OF NEUTRALITY

FOCUS UKRAINE WAR

Last May, before being newly re-elected as president of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva claimed that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, bear equal responsibility for the war in Ukraine. Yet whether the refusal to pick sides comes from Brazil, South Africa, or India, claiming to be "neutral" on Russia's war of aggression is untenable.

The same is true of individuals. If a passerby saw a man relentlessly beating a child on a street corner, we would expect the witness to try to stop it. Neutrality is out of the question. On the contrary, we would deplore the moral turpitude of inaction.

How, then, should we respond to Roger Waters' recent remarks to the United Nations Security Council? In a video call, the activist and Pink Floyd co-founder claimed to be speaking for "four billion or so brothers and sisters" around the world. He acknowledged that Russia's war in Ukraine is illegal and should be condemned "in the strongest possible terms." But then he hastened to add:

"The Russian invasion of Ukraine was not unprovoked, so I also condemn the provocateurs in the strongest possible terms...[T]he only sensible course of action today is to call for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine. Not one more Ukrainian or Russian life is to be spent, not one, they are all precious in our eyes. So the time has come to speak truth to power."

Is Waters' "truth" really an expression of neutrality? In an interview earlier this month with Berliner Zeitung, he said: "Maybe I shouldn't be, but I am now more open to listen to what Putin actually says. According to independent voices I listen to, he governs carefully, making decisions on the grounds of a consensus in the Russian Federation government." As an independent voice who fol-



Those who would claim neutrality forfeit their standing to complain about the horrors of colonisation anywhere

lows Russian media very closely, I am well acquainted with what Putin and his propagandists "actually say." The major TV channels are full of commentators recommending that countries like Poland, Germany, or the United Kingdom be nuked. The Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov, one of Putin's closes allies, now openly calls for "the fight against Satanism [to] continue throughout Europe and, first of all, on the territory of Poland."

Indeed, the official Kremlin line describes the war as a "special operation" for the de-Nazification and de-demonization of Ukraine. Among Ukraine's "provocations" is that it has permitted Pride parades and allowed LGBTQ+ rights to undermine traditional sexual norms and gender roles. Kremlin-aligned commentators speak of "liberal totalitarianism," even going so far as to argue that George Orwell's 1984 was a critique not of fascism or Stalinism but of liberalism.

One finds nothing like this in the Western media, where the main

motif is that we should help Ukraine to survive. As far as I know, nobody has demanded that Russia's borders be changed, or that some part of its territory be seized. At worst, one finds counterproductive demands to boycott Russian culture, as though Putin's regime somehow represents the likes of Pushkin, Tchaikovsky, and Tolstoy. Just as we are supporting Ukraine against an aggressor, so should we defend Russian culture against its abuser in the Kremlin. We also should avoid triumphalism and frame our objective in positive terms. The primary goal is not for Russia to lose and be humiliated, but for Ukraine to survive.

"Neutral" countries outside the West contend that the war is a local conflict that pales in comparison to the horrors of colonialism or more recent events like the US occupation of Iraq. But this is an obvious dodge. After all, Russia's imperialist war is itself an act of colonialism. Those who would claim neutrality forfeit their standing to complain about the horrors of colonisation anywhere.

Waters is a vocal exponent of the Palestinian resistance to Israeli colonization. Why is Ukrainian resistance to Russian colonization any less worthy of support?

Sometimes, things really are as simple as that, especially now that Russia is preparing to celebrate the anniversary of its war with a new offensive. It is obscene to blame Ukraine for Russian acts of destruction, or to mischaracterize the Ukrainians' heroic resistance as a rejection of peace. Those, like Waters, who call for "an immediate ceasefire" would have Ukrainians respond to redoubled Russian aggression by abandoning their own self-defense. That is a formula not for peace, but for pacification.

It bears mentioning - once again - that Russia is counting on the "neutralist" argument eventually to prevail. As the military historian Michael Clarke explains, "the Kremlin's plan will be to keep fighting until the West gets fed up and pressures Kyiv into appeasing them with whatever territory they have taken by then." Russia is digging in for a protracted war that will include the quiet mobilization of some 600,000 soldiers every year for the "indefinite future."

Waters is almost right: Ukraine is indeed "provoking" Russia by refusing to submit to its imperial ambitions, even in the face of desperate odds. At this point, the only way that it could stop provoking its aggressive revisionist neighbor would be to lay down and surrender. The same, Waters would agree, is true of Palestine.

But surrendering to imperialism brings neither peace nor justice. To preserve the possibility of achieving either, we must drop the pretense of neutrality and act accordingly.

The writer is Professor of Philosophy at the European Graduate School.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

### SPECTRUM WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

## Inequality manifestation of social injustice

February 20 is celebrated as the Day of Social Justice all over the world. It is a day to raise voice against social injustice, to mitigate poverty, and to eradicate all types of discriminations. The decision to celebrate the World Day of Social Justice was taken by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2007 and the formal celebrations started from 2009. The member nations pledged to promote economic growth with equity and social justice. Social justice implies equal treatment of all citizens and provision of equal opportunities without any social distinction.

The concept of social justice is a central and integral part of the Indian Constitution. It is found in the Preamble, the Directive Principles of State Policy, and the Fundamental Rights. The Constitution ensures justice: social, economic, and political, to all citizens. The 42nd Amendment Act introduced the word "Socialist" in the Preamble and has reinforced our commitment to provide social and economic justice.

Several Articles of our Constitution have extended the frontiers of social justice. Article 14 guarantees to every person equality before law or equal protection of the laws. Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race,

caste, and place of birth. Article 16 provides equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. Article 46 obligates the State to promote the educational and economic interests of weaker sections.

Several scholars of international repute praised this aspect of our Constitution. The well-known scholar Dr Granville Austin described the Indian Constitution as a great social document having huge transformative power. The present Chief Justice of India and his predecessors also have been continuously reminding us the importance of social justice to protect the very fabric of our democracy.

Justice Chandrachud stressed that judicial institutions will sustain in the long run only if they have a sense of compassion, empathy, and the ability to answer the cries of citizens. Justice Ramana, the former Chief Justice, had said that modern India was built around the goal of removing the disparities in society and stressed that democracy is about providing a space for participation of all in decision making at different levels.

The UN recommends a theme for commemorating the day around which several activities are undertaken by both government and non-government organisations. This year's theme focuses on

strengthening global solidarity and to re-build trust in the government by "Overcoming Barriers and Unleashing Opportunities for Social Justice."

The theme gains more importance in the wake of our recent pandemic experience and the ongoing Ukraine war. COVID has widened the fissures of inequality in society. We can see social and economic inequality more clearly now. Unemployment and poverty increased in the post-pandemic world. It has also brought to the fore another form of poverty based on the access to the digital world. A large chunk of our society is still deprived of basic digital facilities. Such deprivation has created a new dimension of injustice: digital inequality.

Even though we are celebrating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav we are struggling to cope with serious social, economic, and financial exclusion. According to the latest inequality report of OXFAM, 5% of Indians own more than 60% of the country's wealth, while the bottom 50% of the population possess only 3% of the wealth. The report also mentions that the poor are paying disproportionately higher taxes and are spending more on essentials items and services as compared to the rich.

The rising cost of healthcare and education is affecting the poor

very hard. The OXFAM report further states that millions of people are pushed into poverty because of healthcare costs.

Economic inequality is a manifestation of social injustice. Will it be possible to ensure social justice with such economic disparity? One cannot expect to achieve the goal of building trust in the government when the government is failing to safeguard the promised social justice.

With rising economic disparity, increasing cost of education and healthcare, increasing unemployment, and increasing restrictions on all facets of freedom it seems we are drifting away from the grand goals of our Constitution of ensuring social justice to one and all. On this World Day of Social Justice, let us revisit the relevant Articles, re-examine our policies, reflect on the impact of our actions, and re-dedicate ourselves to the cause of mitigating prevailing social injustice. We need to work hard to remove injustice in every walk of life since injustice anywhere, as said by Martin Luther King, Jr., is a threat to justice everywhere.

Let us make injustice so obscure that the celebrations of the World Day of Social Justice will be remembered as a practice of the past.

The writer is a Professor at XIMB.



DV Ramana

ONE CANNOT EXPECT TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF BUILDING TRUST IN THE GOVERNMENT WHEN THE GOVERNMENT IS FAILING TO SAFEGUARD THE PROMISED SOCIAL JUSTICE

### Predicting quakes

Sir, After devastating earthquakes, many discuss earthquake predictions. But, it is a known fact that neither scientists nor geologists can predict earthquakes. They have a pretty good idea of where an earthquake is most likely to hit, but they still can't tell exactly when it will happen. In fact, Michel Bruneau, Professor at the University at Buffalo, in New York, who is also an expert in earthquake engineering, has said: "There is no science, magic or wizardry right now that exists that makes one able to predict an earthquake within a certain window." But, in spite of these facts, it is still an enigma how the Dutch expert Hoogerbeets Frank was able to make the impossibly exceptional 'prediction' of the recent tremor in the twin nations of Turkey and Syria, noting in Twitter that "sooner or later there will be M-7.5 earthquake in South-Central Turkey, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon." His prediction, of course, earned him tonnes of recognition over social media. If his name rings a bell, it might be because Hoogerbeets also famously claimed in 2015 to even know the exact date that California would be hit by a big quake - May 28, 2015.

Ranganathan Sivkumar, CHENNAI

### Killer stress

Sir, All stakeholders of the IITs and other higher educational institutes of excellence across India should wake up to the stark reality haunting the students after two IITians, one each from Madras and Bombay, ended their lives and one survived an attempt. Stress is the biggest cause of suicides but other contentious issues cannot be swept under the carpet. IIT-Madras has the dubious distinction of witnessing 14 suicides in the last ten years - highest among all the IITs. Psychological counselling, friendly and transparent faculty: student interaction and relaxation of rigid rules should go some way in alleviating minds. Abuse is the greatest possible form of bias. By all accounts, caste and communal abuses apart, gender and economic humiliations too are known to be heaped on students of the IITs and other centres. Biggest roadblock to solving the emotional issues is the stakeholders' reluctance to admit that problems do exist in the IITs. Once that roadblock is overcome, things should slowly fall in place.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

**Orissa POST**  
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010





**J-K was divided into two Union Territories against the wishes of the people and they are now being denied their democratic rights by the BJP aiming to hide its wrong policies and utter failure**  
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

## PRESIDENT'S COONOOR VISIT CANCELLED

President Droupadi Murmu's visit to the Defence Staff College, Wellington in Tamil Nadu on Sunday was cancelled due to inclement weather, officials said. The President was supposed to reach Coonoor Sunday morning, lay a wreath at the War Memorial in Wellington and then, deliver a talk at the college



## of the day quote

Mostly in state boards or NCERT books, we have been taught wrong history. (In these books) Mughals are glorified. This has to be changed. Akbar, Babur or Aurangzeb are not our heroes. Our superheroes are Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Rana Pratap, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh and those who sacrificed their lives for the nation

Artificial intelligence can help arbitrators in tasks such as document review and analysis, legal research, and drafting of awards

The BJP promised to give jobs to 1 lakh youths in Assam last year. Already 50,000 people have been given appointments, and the remaining will get appointments by May this year

## SHORT TAKES

### Two killed

**Ghaziabad (UP):** Two labourers were killed, eight injured and some others feared trapped after the roof of an under-construction building collapsed here on Sunday, police said. The incident took place in the Roop Nagar industrial area in Loni, neighbouring Delhi. Deputy Commissioner of Police Ravi Kumar said that 10 labourers were pulled out from the debris. Two of them were declared dead and eight are injured. A rescue operation is underway for the others.

### Jawan ends life

**Dantewada:** A jawan of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself with his service weapon in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district, police said Sunday. The incident took place Saturday night at the headquarters of the CRPF's 195th battalion in Barsoor police station area, around 400 km away from capital Raipur, an official said. The jawan succumbed to injuries at a hospital in Raipur at 1.40 am on Sunday, he said.

### Internet restored

**Medinagar (Jharkhand):** Internet services were restored from 10 am on Sunday in clash-hit Palamu district of Jharkhand, after a four-day shutdown, the police said. The services were suspended and prohibitory orders imposed on Panki town in the district on February 15 following a clash between two groups of people over the erection of a decorative gate on the occasion of Shivratri. Palamu Superintendent of Police (SP) Chandan Kumar Sinha said that the decision was taken to check all attempts to circulate misinformation and rumours.

### Tremor hits MP

**Bhopal:** A tremor of 3.0 magnitude hit some western districts of Madhya Pradesh on Sunday afternoon, but there was no report of any casualty and damage to property due to it, officials said. The National Centre for Seismology said in a tweet that an earthquake of magnitude 3.0 occurred at 12.54 pm with its epicentre 151 kilometres west southwest of Indore. A scientist of the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) Bhopal centre said the tremor was recorded at a depth 10 kilometres, and affected areas including Barwani, Alirajpur, Dhar and neighbouring Jabhua, Khargone and Indore districts.

## DELHI EXCISE POLICY CASE

# CBI defers Sisodia's questioning

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** The CBI Sunday deferred the questioning of Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in connection with the Delhi Excise policy scam case after he sought time from the probe agency citing the city government's ongoing budget exercise.

The agency had asked Sisodia to appear for questioning on Sunday. The central probe agency accepted Sisodia's application to defer the questioning and will give a new date soon, officials said. Sisodia Sunday said the BJP was using the probe agency to take "revenge" from him and expressed apprehension that he would be arrested.

The Aam Admi Party leader, who is also the Finance minister in the Delhi government, said he would be available for questioning after a week. During its probe into the money trail and links between liquor traders, AAP leaders, middlemen and politicians, the CBI has gathered elaborate materials on which it needs the clarifications from Sisodia who is the prime accused in the FIR, officials said.

The agency had filed its first charge sheet against seven per-



sons on November 25 last year in which Sisodia was not named as accused. The CBI has kept open the probe against Sisodia and other FIR named accused.

Three months later, the agency said it has stumbled upon details of meetings, message exchanges and transactions on which explanation could be sought from the deputy chief minister, who

hold the charge of the Excise department, they said.

The CBI is also armed with the concessional statement of Dinesh Arora, alleged to be Sisodia's "close associate" who is understood to have spilled the beans about how the excise policy was allegedly swung in favour of some liquor traders and "South Lobby"

The central probe agency accepted Sisodia's application to defer the questioning and will give a new date soon, officials said

## India records over 15K organ transplants in 2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** India has witnessed a fast resurgence in organ transplant activities post COVID-19 and, for the first time, achieved more than 15,000 transplants a year in 2022, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said Sunday.

Along with this, there was an annual increase of 27 per cent in the transplant numbers, Bhushan said at the "National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) Scientific Dialogue 2023", organised by the Union Ministry of Health.

The event was organised to bring all the stakeholders under one roof to brainstorm ideas about interventions and best practices in the field of organ and tissue transplant that can be taken up for saving lives.

Bhushan said there has been a fast resurgence in organ transplant activities post Covid, and for the first time, the country has achieved more than 15,000 transplants a year (2022). There was an annual increase of 27 per cent in the transplant numbers, he added.

The health secretary underlined three priority areas -- programmatic restructuring, communication strategy and skilling of professionals. Highlighting the need

to update the existing structures and guidelines, he said, "Though we have existing structures at various governance levels like NOTTO at the national level, SOTTOs at the state level and ROTTOs at the regional level, it needs to be ensured that they work as well-oiled machinery while performing their mandate."

Bhushan welcomed the changes that have taken place, such as updated guidelines and the domicile requirement being done away with. He stressed the need for a rational use of the country's technical manpower and training and channelising them efficiently, along with optimal utilisation of the physical infrastructure and equipment, such as in tertiary care facilities.

Underscoring the changing demography of the country, the health secretary noted that India has a growing geriatric population and to ensure quality of life for them, it is critically important to update the communication and awareness strategy, so that potential organ donors come forward.

He suggested wide orientation and re-orientation through training programmes, newly-designed courses and digital interventions for healthcare professionals and domain knowledge experts.



Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi with her husband Robert Vadra at snow-covered Gulmarg on Sunday

## Telangana is India's Afghanistan: Sharmila

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, Feb 19:** YSR Telangana Party (YSRTP) president Y S Sharmila Sunday attacked Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao by accusing him of acting like the "Taliban" and termed the state as the "Afghanistan of India".

Earlier in the day, Sharmila was taken into preventive custody in Mahabubabad district in connection with a case booked against her for making alleged derogatory remarks against BRS MLA Banoth Shankar Naik and brought to Hyderabad. Speaking to reporters here, she said: "He (Telangana Chief Minister) is a dictator, a tyrant. There is no Indian Constitution in Telangana. There is only KCR's Constitution. Telangana is the Afghanistan of India and KCR (as



Rao is known as) is its Taliban".

Sharmila was booked under the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act following a complaint by a local BRS leader, who accused her of "insulting" the legislator belonging to the tribal community, through her comments during her ongoing statewide padayatra 'Praja Prasthanam' in Mahabubabad district on Saturday.

Police said they have cancelled permission for the foot march citing law and order situation, as her statement triggered protests by

## BJP plans strategy to regain foothold in 14 LS seats in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, Feb 19:** In the run up to the 2024 parliamentary elections, the BJP has turned its focus to 14 seats in Uttar Pradesh where the party lost in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections with four Union ministers assigned the responsibility of assessing the party's strength and weakness in these areas.

The seats held by the non-BJP parties in the state are Bijnor, Amroha, Moradabad, Sambhal, Raebareli, Ghosi, Lalganj, Jaunpur, Ambedkar nagar, Ghazipur, Shravasti, Mainpuri, Saharanpur and Nagina. Of these, Raebareli is held by Sonia Gandhi.

The Samajwadi Party has three Lok Sabha MPs from Uttar Pradesh, including Dimple Yadav (Mainpuri) and Shafiqur Rahman Barq (Sambhal). The BSP has 10 Lok Sabha MPs from the state.

A senior leader of the BJP said, "The party has given responsibility to four Union ministers Narendra Singh Tomar, Annapurna Devi, Ashwini Vaishnav and Jitendra Singh to assess the strength, weakness, challenges and threats on the lost seats".

"These ministers have assessed these areas in the first phase and have submitted a report to the party. General secretary of BJP's state unit Amarpal Maurya has



The Samajwadi Party has three Lok Sabha MPs from Uttar Pradesh, including Dimple Yadav (Mainpuri) and Shafiqur Rahman Barq (Sambhal). The BSP has 10 Lok Sabha MPs from the state

been authorised to coordinate between the (party) organisation and the government on these 14 seats," the senior leader said.

According to party sources, Tomar has been given the responsibility of monitoring Lalganj, Ambedkarnagar, Shravasti and Rae Bareilly. Devi has been given Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Ghosi while Singh has been given the task of looking after Mainpuri, Sambhal, Moradabad and Amroha. Vaishnav has been given the task of assessing Saharanpur, Nagina and Bijnor Lok Sabha constituencies.

## BSF jawan injured in firing

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, Feb 19:** A Border Security Force (BSF) jawan was injured in the crossfire between the border guards and cattle smugglers at the Indo-Bangladesh borders in North Dinajpur in West Bengal.

The incident happened at Teంగాon border outpost in North Dinajpur district on late Saturday night while a team of cattle smugglers trying to cross the borders illegally were intercepted by the patrolling BSF personnel.

According to BSF sources, the cattle smugglers started firing indiscriminately towards the security personnel on being intercepted. The BSF team also resorted to counter-firing and in the crossfire BSF jawan Mukesh Chand Sharma, associated with battalion number 152 of BSF was hit by a bullet.

While the BSF personnel were able to nab one of the members of the smuggling team, five others escaped. The arrested Bangladeshi resident has been identified as Muhammed Suman, who is a resident of Thakurgaon district of Bangladesh. A pistol, two mobile SIM cards and other incriminating documents have been seized from his possession.

The injured BSF jawan was admitted to the Islampur sub-division hospital immediately. Although the bullet has been removed from his abdomen, his condition continues to be critical.



## Farmer takes on cybercriminal, recovers lakhs lost in fraud

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

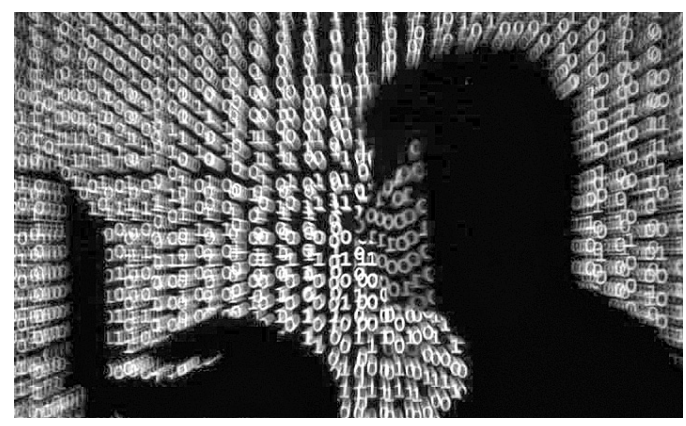
**New Delhi, Feb 19:** 55-year-old Pawan Kumar Soni, a farmer based in Sri Ganganagar City in Rajasthan, became a victim of a cyber fraud when his 26-year-old son Harsh Vardhan opened a link from a phishing message that flashed on his mobile phone. Within minutes, more than Rs 8 lakh was withdrawn from his account in four different transactions.

Vardhan, who lives in Dwarka in Delhi, had his phone number registered with his father's account at the State Bank of India branch of Sri Ganganagar City. The message, which was delivered on his mobile at around 3.45 PM on Saturday, January 7, said, "Your account is blocked, please update your KYC." Harsh already had a YONO ap-

plication but the moment he clicked on the link, another duplicate app downloaded on his phone. "I thought that I should update my KYC on this new app so I entered my user ID and password. Suddenly, I started receiving messages for the withdrawal of money from my father's account and in seven minutes we lost Rs 8,03,899," Vardhan said.

Later on, he realised that with the help of the duplicate app, his phone was hacked and the user ID and password that he had entered, were accessed by a cyber fraud sitting somewhere else. The money swindled was a loan that his father had taken under Kisan Credit Card Scheme for farming purposes.

Vardhan called his father in Ganganagar City who rushed to the bank to inform the manager. Vardhan went to the District Cyber



Cell in Dwarka where he was asked to lodge an online complaint and visit the office on any working day.

The bank manager, at the request of his father, acted swiftly and called the local cyber cell. The man-

my account to three accounts - Rs 5 lakh and 1.24 lakh went into PayU, 1,54,899 was transferred into CCAvenue, and the rest Rs 25,000 went into Axis Bank."

Both PayU and CCAvenue are digital payment companies that act as a bridge between customers and business ventures. They collect payments from buyers when they make online purchases and deliver these to the merchants' bank accounts.

"The bank manager informed me that PayU reverted to his email and said that it withheld the money. It also said that if it wouldn't receive any email from the cybercrime dept within two days for the reversal of the amount, it would release the money into the merchant's account," Soni alleged. CCAvenue said that it also responded to the cyber officials and provided all in-

formation on January 7, when the company came to know about the said fraud.

On the other hand, his son Vardhan made an online complaint and, two days later, on Monday, went to lodge an FIR which was denied. "Then I met the additional DCP who directed the SHO to lodge an FIR. Finally, it was lodged on January 10, three days after the fraud happened," he said.

Vardhan then requested the Dwarka Cyber Cell to email PayU asking it to remit the money back into his father's account. "The police personnel made only hollow promises and did nothing," Vardhan alleged. His father then approached the cyber cell of Ganganagar City. They wrote to PayU and he got back 6.24,000 money into his account.



# Euphoria as 'Raahgiri' makes a comeback

**AGENCIES**

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** Scores of people gathered at Connaught Place here Sunday morning to enjoy games and other recreational activities as 'Raahgiri' returned to the national capital after a three-year gap.

Dozens of fun activities, including drawing competitions, games and different kinds of dances, were organised. People in their colourful ensembles were seen doing Zumba.

The 'Raahgiri' has returned after a three-year Covid-19-induced gap.

"More walking and more use of the streets for pedestrians for the people will improve the social fabric of the society and that is why we (NDMC and Delhi Police) are contributing whatever we can towards the society," Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora said.

There were a lot of fun activities at the event including a puppet show. People also appreciated the artwork of several artists that were exhibited here.

The event was also attended by the officials of Delhi Police and New Delhi Municipal Committee (NDMC).

On the day, the streets of Connaught Place were transformed into a car-free zone, allowing residents to participate in a range of activities, including yoga classes, Zumba, sports zones, games, music, dance, and even educational programs on different issues such as



**I am happy that 'Raahgiri' has returned. It is a good initiative. It brings people closer. It brings us together. Dozens of fun activities have been designed**

ASHOK KUMAR | 'RAAHGIRI' ENTHUSIAST

road safety, walkability, and women safety. "I am happy that 'Raahgiri' has returned. It is a good initiative. It brings people closer. It brings us together. Dozens of fun activities have been designed," said Ashok Kumar, a 70-year-old 'Raahgiri' enthusiast.

Kumar said he used to participate in the Raahgiri before it was suspended due to Covid-19.

On the first day of its re-launch, the activities started at 7 in the morning and continued till 10 am.

A cycle school was organised for people who do not know how to cycle, especially women and children.

The children also participated in a game of 'road safety Ludo' created by the Delhi police to create awareness about road safety.

Traffic restrictions were in place on the Inner Circle of Connaught Place for three hours Sunday morning in view of 'Raahgiri Day', police said.

'Raahgiri' is part of the Delhi Police Week celebrations-2023, taking place from February 16 to 22 and aligns with the G-20 goal of creating sustainable and livable cities, with a focus on sustainable mobility.

## Air quality likely to improve from Feb 21

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** Delhi's air quality index Sunday remained into the 'very poor' category for the second consecutive day.

According to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), the overall air quality index of the city was recorded at 312 this afternoon. However, the air quality is likely to improve from Tuesday onwards.

Both the major pollutants PM 2.5 and PM 10 were recorded at 312 ('very poor' category) and 199 ('moderate' category), respectively, in the city Sunday. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

As per SAFAR data, the air quality index at Lodhi Road was reported 290 or 'poor', Pusa reported 304 AQI or 'very poor' and Mathura Road was most polluted at 358 or 'very poor' category.

As per the India Meteorological Department due to a change in wind direction to south-easterly, there has been an increase in moisture affecting air quality. The Met officials said that the wind speed suddenly slowed down from February 16. However, the air quality will remain in the 'very poor' category till Monday, but significant improvement is expected from Tuesday.



# Water woes major poll issue in MP

AGENCIES

**Bhopal, Feb 19:** Both the major national parties, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress, have made the shortage of irrigation water in Madhya Pradesh a political issue as Assembly elections are to be held in the state this year.

Many areas in the state face a shortage of drinking water during summers along with the water for irrigation not being easily accessible to farmers.

The water crisis continues in the state despite the campaign to provide tap water in every household and several irrigation projects being underway.

About 43 lakh hectares area of the state has started getting irrigation water. Along with this, several pending projects can provide irrigation facility in another 20 lakh hectares in the next two years.

At present, an irrigation complex being built in Chhindwara Narmada, the Narmada-Malwa Gambhir Link Project, Pancham Nagar irrigation Project of Damoh-Sagar, Bahoti Project of Rewa-Satna, Badnawar Narmada Micro Irrigation, Maa Ratangh Multipurpose Project of Chambal area, the proposed Hanota Irrigation Project on Bina river, Rajgarh's Kundalia Irrigation Project and the Mohanpura Major Irrigation Project can ensure a major increase in the state's irrigated area upon implementation. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had called the increase in the irrigation sector as his major achievement and said that in 2003, the total area under irrigation from government sources in Madhya Pradesh was seven lakh hectares, which has now crossed 43 lakh hectares.

Along with this, the government



**The water crisis continues in the state despite the campaign to provide tap water in every household and several irrigation projects are underway**

has set a target to increase it to 63 lakh hectares in the next two years, said Chouhan. On the other hand, the Congress has attacked the BJP government in the state many times regarding the crisis of irrigation water.

Congress leaders, on several occasions have called Chouhan a "declaration hero," and have alleged that he does not work on the issues at the ground level. Bundelkhand Congress leader Virendra Dave will start a Cycle Yatra to interact with the people and talk about issues related to health, education and water, among others.

Dave said that the Pancham Nagar irrigation project of Damoh district can bring a revolution in agriculture by providing water to the farmers and generating electricity.

Under this project, water will reach the fields without electricity. Dave alleged that a commercial cement company in the area had not been cooperating and was creating hurdles in the project's completion. The Cycle Yatra will initially cover villages in Damoh parliamentary constituency before traversing the entire Bundelkhand region. The leaders might campaign in the entire state on the instructions of former Chief Minister and state Congress president Kamal Nath.

Significantly, in the Assembly elections held in the state in 2018, there was a close contest between the BJP and the Congress.

The Congress had won and formed the government in the state, which was dissolved later due to the defection of MLAs under the leadership of Jyotiraditya Scindia, after which the BJP rose to power again. A close fight is also expected in the Assembly polls to be held this year, where water will be a big poll issue.

# 100 booked for dispute over entering Khargone temples

AGENCIES

**Khargone, Feb 19:** Police have registered cases against more than 100 people following two disputes over entering temples at different places in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone district, officials said Sunday.

One of the incidents took place on Saturday in Chhapra village under Sanawad police station limits when people reached the temple to offer prayer on the occasion of Mahashivratri, they said, adding both the sides pelted each other with stones.

Besides, a similar incident occurred on Saturday under Kasrawad police station limits in the district, the officials said.

In Chhapra village, the dispute occurred when some members belonging to the Dalit community tried to enter into the temple constructed by people of three other communities, Sub Divisional Officer of Police Vinod Dixit said.

Stones were pelted from both the sides during the incident, he said. The official said the dispute started two days back when the Dalit community members wanted

to set up a statue of Dr B R Ambedkar on a land near the temple and they also cut a tree. The district and police administration officials had later reached the spot and settled the issue, he said.

However, the Dalit community members alleged they were stopped from entering the temple on Saturday and beaten up by the other group, the official said. Following a complaint by one Premal, a case was registered against 17 named persons and 25 others under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Dixit said. Based on a complaint of Ravindra Rao Maratha from another group, a case was registered under relevant IPC provisions against 33 named people and 25 others for the alleged attack through weapons and stones by Premal and others, he added. In another case, a Dalit woman complained that she was not allowed to enter a temple under Kasrawad police station limits in the district, Sub Divisional Officer of Police Manohar Gawli said.

Later, the woman offered prayers at the temple under police protection, he said.



**TULIP FEST:** Flowers in bloom at a lawn at Mandi House Circle, in New Delhi, Sunday. The New Delhi Municipal Council has started planting tulips as part of their 'Tulip Festival' for beautification of the national capital, ahead of the G20 Summit

# 8 cheetahs to be released into wild in a month

AGENCIES

**Bhopal, Feb 19:** The eight cheetahs brought from Namibia to Madhya Pradesh in September last year will be released into the wild at the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Sheopur district in a month, state Forest Minister Vijay Shah said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had released these eight cheetahs - five females and three males - into the KNP amid a lot of fanfare September 17 last year as part of a project aimed at reviving their population in India where these distinctively spotted cat species became extinct more than 70 years ago.

These big cats from Namibia are currently kept in hunting enclosures at the KNP before their full release into the wild.

Shah said these Namibian cheetahs will be released into the wild during the next one month.

Two cheetah brothers - Freddie and Elton - will be released initially and later the rest of them will be released, he said. Shah, however, said that the release date of these Namibian cheetahs will be decided by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

"The Centre has left it to the state government to take a decision about the release of these cheetahs," the minister said.

According to him, these felines from Namibia were kept in quarantine enclosures for initial two months. They are now hunting in big enclosures that are spread in 12 kilometres. It is like an open forest.

They are healthy and hunting, so they will be released into the wild soon, he said. These eight cheetahs were moved to acclimatisation enclosures from quarantine bomas in November last year. From there, they were later released into the hunting enclosures, an official said. On Saturday, the second batch of 12 cheetahs - seven males and five females - were brought to the KNP from South Africa.

With the addition of these members, the count of these fastest land animals at the KNP went up to 20. Their inter-continental translocation is part of the Indian government's ambitious programme to reintroduce these animals in the country seven decades after they became extinct. The country's last cheetah died in Koriya district of present-day Chhattisgarh in 1947 and the species was declared extinct in 1952. The South African big cats will be kept in quarantine enclosures for at least a month before they are moved into the acclimatisation bomas.

A decision on it will be taken by the task force on cheetahs, officials said.

# Historic Old Delhi station all set to get a facelift

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** Delhi Junction or the historic Old Delhi railway station will emerge as a modern facility in the coming days which will have various new age amenities such as luxury sleeping pods for passengers.

In 1854, Ronald MacDonald Stephens, the father of the East Indian Railway Company, envisioned a railway station in Delhi, and in 1864, the Old Delhi Railway Station opened from a small building. However, it was opened to the general public only after about a decade.

Initially, on January 1, 1867, after the construction of the iron bridge over the Yamuna, the first train arrived at Old Delhi station. Delhi's historic iron bridge is a reminder of the era when steam engines used to run trains. Although the steam engine trains were discontinued in 1994, the old Delhi station became grander with time.

The railway operation works were performed from a small building for 40 years. Gradually, when

the need for its expansion was felt, in 1893, the work of building a new station building started, which took about ten years to complete.

Only after this, the old Delhi station, rich in unprecedented history, was opened for common passengers in the year 1903 with just two platforms. This building, a unique example of Greco-Roman and Indian-Islamic architecture, was built on the basis of the ancient architecture of the Mughal period. Due to this, some glimpse of a mosque and a fort is also felt in its texture.

Initially red and now for a few years it has been changed to ochre color, the glimpse of Scottish elements in this building also enhances its beauty.

Today, this railway station is counted among the ten major stations of the country.

When the station was renovated in the year 2016, the grandeur remained the same, only there was a change in the colour of the building. Architect Ashish Ganju says that the design of the station is



soothing to the eyes, with Scottish elements in its design. For example, the kind of terraces and minarets that are found in Scottish buildings are also present in Old Delhi Railway Station. Another speciality of this construction is that there is no plaster over the bricks. This practice is prevalent in Europe.

Behind the construction of such a grand building, there are many interesting and conflicting stories related to that time.

In the year 1854, Ronald MacDonald Stephens, envisaged laying a rail line from Calcutta (now Kolkata) to Allahabad (now Prayagraj) and Delhi to Lahore. Later, while making changes in

this, instead of Delhi, there was a proposal to lay a railway line through Meerut, which was strongly opposed by businessmen and other citizens of Delhi.

In this connection, in a committee constituted in 1863. Narayan Das Nagarwala and other members appealed to the British Empire not to deprive Delhi of the railway line. They argued that the business of Delhi would be affected by the government's decision. It will also be unfair to the businessmen of Delhi who have invested money in the railway company. After the displeasure of the people of Delhi, finally Charles Wood, the Board President of the East India Company, decided to run the train via Delhi. Along with this, the existence of Old Delhi Railway Station also came to the fore. At present, where the Old Delhi railway station is located, there used to be a large population at that time - which was shifted to Paharganj, Sadar Bazar, Karol Bagh before the construction of the station.

According to historian Sohail

Hashmi, the railway line passed through the old city uniting the two parts. On the north side of which were the houses and churches of the British residents and on the south side was the residence of the local Delhiites.

Interesting stories are embedded in the veins of this station; another story is that why the old Delhi railway station was built in Shahjahanabad near the Red Fort.

The last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar (1837-1857) was deeply troubled by the prospect of introducing the railway in Delhi. He feared that the new invention of transport would disturb the peace of the city. This was the reason why Zafar requested to move the rail line to the north of the city.

It is worth mentioning that only after Delhi was completely captured in 1803, the East India Company started expanding the rail network in India in terms of earning profits and expanding their presence. The plan to bring Delhi on the rail map was the result of this.





I did not agree with most of what George Soros had said in the past and I do not agree with most of what he says now. But to label his remarks as an 'attempt to topple the democratically elected government in India' is a puerile statement

NADDA ON KARNATAKA VISIT

BJP president JP Nadra will be on a three-day visit to Karnataka starting Sunday during which he is scheduled to attend several party programmes, a saffron party leader said



of the day quote

First of all, there is no such thing as a liquor scam. We formulated the best and most transparent policy in the country

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM

The country has seen an 80 per cent reduction in violence from terrorism in Kashmir, insurgency in the Northeast and left-wing extremism under the Narendra Modi government

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

With nearly 49 per cent of Tamil Nadu's population living in urban areas, and ever increasing need for housing for families and commercial space, the state government is taking steps to meet the changing requirements

M K STALIN | TN CM

SHORT TAKES

Emergency landing

Thiruvananthapuram: An Air India Express flight from Dubai to Thiruvananthapuram (Flt no IX540) made an emergency landing at the airport here on Sunday morning after the flight developed a technical snag in the nose wheel of the aircraft. All 156 passengers on board the flight are safe. The Air India Aircraft made an emergency landing at 5.40 a.m. after the pilot contacted the air traffic control requesting for an emergency landing. The airport immediately declared an 'emergency' at the airport and made all the arrangements at the airport. The runway was cleared for emergency landing and the flight smoothly landed at the airport, sources in the airport said.

14-year-old raped

New Delhi: A 14-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a tantrik here on the pretext of exorcism in West Delhi's Baba Haridas Nagar, said police. According to information, the victim was ill and her mother took her to the accused for treatment. A senior police official said that her mother came to know that her daughter was two-months pregnant after which she decided to approach the police. The police said that after receiving a complaint from the victim's mother, a case under POCSO was lodged at Baba Haridas Nagar.

Houses damaged

Jammu: Five houses were damaged by landslides in J&K's Ramban district on Sunday, officials said. Officials said landslides hit Daksar Dal village of Sangaldan area, 45 km from Ramban district headquarters. "The incident occurred nearly a fortnight after 19 residential houses, a mosque, and a girls religious school had developed cracks due to land sinking at Nai Basti village of Doda district. "The affected families have been shifted and provided tents, ration, utensils and blankets as an immediate relief," an official said.

Eleven nabbed

Panaji: Goa Police have detained 11 people and one of them is alleged to be having links with banned Popular Front of India (PFI) for allegedly kidnapping two persons from Hyderabad and demanding ransom of ₹4 crore in connection with mining trade, police said. Crime branch Superintendent of Police Nidhin Valsan said that the accused persons and the victims have been handed over to the Hyderabad Police. He said that the one accused person, namely Altaf Shah Sayed from Margao-Goa, is suspected to be involved with a banned organisation, namely PFI.

Cong says no Oppn unity possible without it

THE PLENARY SESSION IN CHHATTISGARH'S NAVA RAIPUR WILL START FROM FEBRUARY 24 AND IS EXPECTED TO BE ATTENDED BY AROUND 15,000 DELEGATES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: Ahead of its plenary this week, the Congress Sunday said the party top brass will deliberate and give direction on ways to forge opposition unity during the three-day conclave, asserting that any such effort without it would be unsuccessful.

The plenary session in Chhattisgarh's Nava Raipur will start from February 24 and is expected to be attended by around 15,000 delegates. Congress general secretary organisation K C Venugopal said the party's steering committee would meet on the first day of the session and decide whether elections would be held for the party's top decision-making body -- the Congress Working Committee (CWC), a demand made by some from within the organisation.

The Congress knows its role in bringing together various opposition parties for forging an alliance ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections to take on the BJP and oust it from power, he said. "The Congress has already taken



The Congress has already taken the initiative and has been in touch with various political parties. There is a clear-cut initiative taken by the Congress in bringing opposition parties together and we will certainly bring them together against the BJP in the 2024 elections

K C VENUGOPAL | CONGRESS LEADER

the initiative and has been in touch with various political parties. There is a clear-cut initiative taken by the Congress in bringing opposition parties together and we will certainly bring them together against the BJP in the 2024 elections," Venugopal told a press conference here.

"The direction on opposition unity will come from the party's plenary session, where this issue will be deliberated upon," he said and added that the main job is to defeat the BJP in 2024. Venugopal said that this plenary is a reflection of the sentiments of the Bharat Jodo

Yatra and an extension of the Udaipur Chintan Shivir. The plenary has been given the tagline "Haath se Haath Jodo" as it is happening in the midst of the party's countrywide "Haath se Haath Jodo" campaign, he said.

Congress general secretary communications Jairam Ramesh said the party recognises that opposition unity is important and added that this issue will be deliberated upon at the plenary session.

"Nobody needs to give us a certificate that we have to lead because any opposition unity without the Congress will be

Abbas Ansari's life under threat: Brother

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, Feb 19: Uttar Pradesh MLA Abbas Ansari's younger brother Umar Ansari has written a letter to state government claiming that the life of his brother is in danger in Kasganj Jail.

Abbas Ansari, the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) MLA from Mau and son of jailed gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari, is currently lodged in Kasganj jail in connection with a money laundering case.

In his letter, Ansari's brother alleged that his brother's life is in danger from Kuntu Singh, who is also lodged in Kasganj jail. He has requested the government to transfer his brother from Kasganj jail to any other prison. He alleged that a conspiracy was being hatched to get Abbas Ansari killed with the help of Kuntu Singh inside the Kasganj Jail.

Kerala farmer goes missing in Israel

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 19: A farmer from Kerala, who was in Israel as part of a state government delegation to study the latest techniques of farming there, has been missing since February 17.

Biju Kurien (42), from Iritti in Kannur district was part of a delegation of 27 farmers led by state agriculture secretary B. Ashok, reportedly contacted his wife and informed her that he was safe and to look for him.

The farmer was selected for the Israeli trip as part of the state government programme after qualifying in an online selection process. Sources in the state government said that he seems to have gone underground in Israel where a large Keralite population was living and doing work like home care and nursing.



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Sources in the state government said that he seems to have gone underground in Israel where a large Keralite population was living and doing work like home care and nursing

Biju Kurien had paid for his and for air ticket to Israel, but he got the visa due to the recommendation from the state government.

Getting an Israeli visa is a tough proposition and once he landed in that country, he went underground. Sources in the immigration de-



A bird perches on a branch of a tree in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

Fifteen vehicles collide due to fog

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ghaziabad, Feb 19: About 15 vehicles collided on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway in Masuri area of Ghaziabad due to dense fog and poor visibility on Sunday morning.

Five people received minor injuries and one truck driver has been seriously injured.

After the incident, the local police, fire tenders and ambulances reached the spot. The injured were rushed to hospital. Later, the police helped to clear the traffic jam.

As per police, most of the vehicles that collided were cars. Initially, the occupants of the car that collided received minor injuries and they were released from hospital after treatment.



A senior police official said, "A police team reached the spot and took all the injured to a nearby hospital where some were discharged after first aid as they received minor injuries."

"The accident took place at around 8 a.m. At the time of the accident, the visibility was very poor due to fog on the highway. A truck suddenly slowed down after which one by one 15 vehicles including cars and small trucks collided with each other. A long traffic jam was cleared by police and it took almost two hours," the official said. Police have not received any complaint in the case and no casualties were reported.

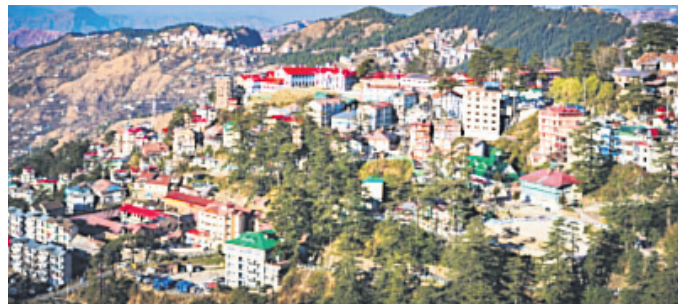
Shimla sees warmest February day in 17 yrs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, Feb 19: Himachal Pradesh's capital saw its warmest February day in 17 years on Saturday at 23.2 degrees Celsius, a Met official said, blaming the abnormally high temperatures on lack of precipitation.

The previous high of Shimla was 22.6 degrees on February 19, 2006. At 23.2 degrees on Saturday, it was 11.4 degrees higher than the average. The day's temperature in Shimla on Sunday was 21.6 degrees, whereas the minimum was 14 degrees, 10.6 degrees above the average.

A day earlier, Shimla recorded its highest-ever minimum temperature for the month at 14.4 degrees. The previous high was 14.2 degrees Celsius on February 23, 2015. However, the Met office predicted thunderstorms and lightning likely at isolated places in the state over mid hills on Monday.



This is for the first time in many years that the 'Queen of Hills', as Shimla was fondly called by the British, is almost bereft of snow cover and parched too.

Shimla's Mount Jakhu (the highest peak in the town) received mild snowfall this season, while commercial centre Mall Road, the historic Ridge and the US Club are yet to get snow cover.

However, even in the Jakhu area, the snow melted within a few hours. Under the guise of cli-

mate "skepticism", most of the locals narrate the tale of indiscriminate construction that has turned the summer retreat of the then British rulers into a concrete jungle in the past few decades. To highlight that climate change is already having visible effects on Shimla's precipitation patterns, old-timers have shared their photos posing with a cone of ice-cream in the backdrop of the British-era Christ Church on social media.

Corroded wires behind Morbi tragedy: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Morbi, Feb 19: The Gujarat government-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) has found in its preliminary probe that corrosion on nearly half of the wires on a cable and welding of old suspenders with new ones were some of the major faults that led to the collapse of the suspension bridge in Morbi last year in which 135 people were killed.

These findings are part of the 'Preliminary Report on Morbi Bridge Incident' submitted by the five-member SIT in December 2022. The report was recently shared with the Morbi Municipality by the state Urban Development Department. Ajanta Manufacturing Limited (Oreva Group) was responsible for the operation and maintenance of the British-era suspension bridge on the Machhu river that collapsed on October 30 last year.

The SIT had found several lapses in repairs, maintenance and oper-

ation of the bridge. IAS officer Rajkumar Beniwal, IPS officer Subhash Trivedi, a secretary and a chief engineer from the state Roads and Building Department and a professor of structural engineering were members of the SIT. The SIT noted that of the two main cables of the bridge, built by the erstwhile rulers in 1887 over river Machhu, one cable was having issues of corrosion and nearly half of its wires "may be already broken" even before the cable snapped on October 30 evening.

According to the SIT, the main cable on the upstream side of the river snapped, leading to the tragedy. Each cable was formed by seven strands, each comprising seven steel wires.

"It was observed that out of the 49 wires (of that cable), 22 were corroded, which indicates that those wires may have already broken before the incident. The remaining 27 wires recently broke," the SIT said in its report.



Modi's 60 seats gamble

The Prime Minister is known for doing the unthinkable and a big risk taker. He has the habit of surprising all and sundry by his decisions. If the mandarins in the corridors of power are to be believed, Modi is considering contesting from the South in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The gamble, if taken, is aimed at opening the doors of the

BJP in a big way. Insiders in the BJP say that the Prime Minister asked senior party leaders to give him a roadmap of how the party could win 60 Lok Sabha seats from five southern states. Currently, the BJP has a strong base in Karnataka where it won 25 seats out of 28 in 2019 Lok Sabha polls and 4 seats in Telangana out of 17. But it drew a blank in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The BJP high command is fixing nuts and bolts in these states and enhancing its Telangana tally.

Entering the southern dragon

The BJP's southern sojourn may take Modi to Ramanathapuram Lok Sabha constituency in Tamil Nadu. The BJP

leadership is aware that it has almost reached a saturation point in the Hindi heartland, West and North East and could add another 20 odd-seats in the kitty of 303 seats it won in 2019. Therefore, it must take unimaginable steps to conquer the South. An IPS officer has been given the command of TN BJP with Hindutva agenda. The month-long event held in November, 2022 was aimed at rediscovering the bond between Kashi and Tamil Nadu. Hundreds of delegates from Tamil Nadu participated in this month-long event. The PM has been traveling to TN wearing TN attire and even spoke in Tamil for a brief while.

Gehlot gets a breather

If the BJP high command reported to have given a breather to Madhya Pradesh

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan until the Assembly polls in November-December 2023, the Congress too has finally given up its plan to replace Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. The BJP has been unable to find an OBC leader capable of facing poll year challenges to replace Chouhan. Rahul Gandhi tried hard to bring a solution to the on-going bitter battle going on between Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot. On the contrary, a tripartite meeting among the three leaders ended virtually in a fiasco. Sachin Pilot has been left high & dry.

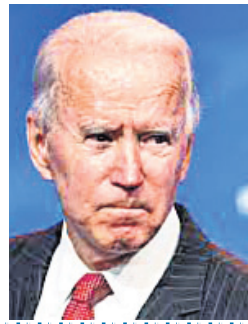
Eyes on two vacant RS seats

Of the 12 nominated MPs of the Rajya Sabha, two seats continue to remain

vacant for nearly a year. The government nominated five celebrities to the Rajya Sabha last year and the choice of each one of them gives a clue of PM Modi's astute thinking. If legendary athlete P T Usha was picked up from Kerala, Indian philanthropist Dr Veerendra Hegde was chosen from Karnataka. Music maestro Ilaiyaraaja Iyayaraaja from Tamil Nadu and screenwriter and director from Andhra V Vijendra was privileged one. All four from southern states. To top it all, Modi also nominated Gulam Ali, a ST leader from Jammu & Kashmir. But none of them joined the BJP as had been the trend in the past with nominated MPs like Sonal Mansingh and others. It is learnt that two remaining nominations may be from poll-bound states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh etc.



# international



We are 48 days into the year and our nation has already suffered at least 73 mass shootings. Thoughts and prayers aren't enough. Gun violence is an epidemic and Congress must act now  
JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

## HEATWAVE TO SNOWFALL

Argentina broke records for heat and cold within a short window of just five days this week, with temperatures plummeting a jaw-dropping 30 degrees Celsius as a heatwave gave way to historic snowfalls



## of the day quote

France did not begin with Macron, and the remains of Napoleon, revered at the state level, rest in the centre of Paris. France - and Russia - should understand  
MARIA ZAKHAROVA | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESWOMAN, RUSSIA

Last week Iran again attacked an oil tanker in the Persian Gulf and harmed the international freedom of navigation  
BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | PM, ISRAEL

We've realised through the pandemic; how dependent our supply chains have been on China. And when we are urging American companies to diversify their supply chains, India becomes a natural partner there  
AMI BERA | INDIAN-AMERICAN CONGRESSMAN, US

## SECOND YEAR IN A ROW

# Antarctic sea-ice cover hits record low

With a couple more weeks likely left in the melt season, the extent is expected to drop further before reaching its annual minimum

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Feb 19: Antarctic sea ice extent has been reported to have broken its last year record low, and has also recorded it sooner than when it did last year, according to a statement by the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC).

On February 13, 2023, Antarctic sea ice extent fell to 1.91 million square kilometers, it said.

This set a new record low, dropping below the previous record of 1.92 million square kilometers set February 25, 2022, it said.

This year represents only the second year that Antarctic extent has fallen below 2 million square kilometers, the statement said.

In past years, the annual minimum occurred between February 18 and March 3, so, further de-



cline this year is expected, it said.

Much of the Antarctic coast is ice free, exposing the ice shelves that fringe the ice sheet to wave action and warmer conditions, the statement said.

The NSIDC is a US information and referral centre in support of polar and cryospheric research.

NSIDC is part of the University of Colorado Boulder Cooperative

Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES), and is affiliated with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Centers for Environmental Information through a cooperative agreement.

The sea ice extent has tracked well below last year's melt season levels since mid-December, ac-

ording to the statement by NSIDC.

A positive Southern Annular Mode has led to stronger-than-average westerly winds. Along with a strong Amundsen Sea Low, the weather conditions have brought warm air to the region on both sides of the Antarctic Peninsula, the statement said.

"This has largely cleared out the ice cover in the Amundsen and Bellingshausen Seas, and reduced the sea ice extent in the north-western Weddell Sea," NSIDC said.

Sea ice is patchy and nearly absent over a long stretch of the Pacific-facing coastline of Antarctica, NSIDC said.

Earlier studies have linked low sea ice cover with wave-induced stresses on the floating ice shelves that hem the continent, leading to break up of weaker areas, the statement said.

Antarctic sea ice extent has been highly variable over the last several years. While 2022 and 2023 have had record low minimum extent, four out of the five highest minimums have occurred since 2008, NSIDC said.

Overall, the trend in Antarctic minimum extent over 1979 to 2023 is near zero, NSIDC said.

The current downward linear trend in the Antarctic minimum extent from 1979 to 2023 is 2,400 square kilometers per year, or 0.9 percent per decade, which is currently not statistically significant, NSIDC said.

Nevertheless, the sharp decline in sea ice extent since 2016 has fuelled research on potential causes and whether sea ice loss in the Southern Hemisphere is developing a significant downward trend, the statement said.

## PAK HAS ALREADY DEFAULTED, SAYS DEFENCE MINISTER



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 19: Defence minister Khawaja Asif has said that Pakistan has already defaulted amid looming fears that the cash-starved country may go bankrupt and blamed the establishment, bureaucracy and politicians for the prevailing economic crisis.

Addressing a ceremony in his home town of Sialkot, he said that standing on its own feet was crucial for Pakistan to stabilise itself.

"You must have heard that Pakistan is going bankrupt or that a default or meltdown is taking place. It (default) has already taken place. We are living in a bankrupt country," he was quoted as saying by The Express Tribune newspaper.

"The solution to our problems lies within the country. The IMF does not have the solution to Pakistan's problems," he said.

He said that everyone — including the establishment, bureaucracy and politicians — are to blame for the current economic mess as the law and Constitution are not followed in Pakistan.

The minister said that most of his time had been spent in the opposition camp and that he has witnessed politics being disgraced for the past 32 years.

Lashing out at the former government, Asif said that terrorists were brought to Pakistan two and a half years ago which eventually resulted in the current wave of terrorism.

The remarks come as the country faces a crippling economic crisis, with decades-high inflation and critically low foreign exchange reserves depleted by continued debt repayment obligations, the report said.

Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves are slightly above \$3 billion which is hardly enough for 10-15 days of imports.

## 'SPY' BALLOON SAGA

# Never again: US warns China

Relations between the US, China strained further after Washington said Beijing flew a spy balloon over America before US fighter jets shot it down on President's orders

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Germany, Feb 19: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned China not to repeat its "irresponsible act" of sending a spy balloon into American airspace, as he held rare talks late Saturday with China's top diplomat Wang Yi.

The highly anticipated meeting of the two senior officials came on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference amid growing tensions between Washington and Beijing.

The US has been in a state of alarm since a huge white balloon from China was spotted over a series of secret nuclear weapons sites, before being shot down just off the east coast February 4.

The incident led Blinken to abruptly call off a rare trip to China.

Beijing denies it uses spy balloons and says the craft was for weather research. Subsequently it accused Washington of sending its own espionage balloons over Chinese territory, which the US has denied.

During their encounter Saturday, Blinken "directly spoke to the unacceptable violation of US sovereignty and international law by (China's) high-altitude surveillance balloon in US territorial airspace, underscoring that this irresponsible act must never again occur," State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

He also warned Wang "about the implications and consequences if China provides material support to Russia or assistance with systemic sanctions evasion", Price said.

"During the meeting, Blinken made clear the United States will not stand for any violation of our sovereignty, and that the Chinese high-altitude surveillance balloon programme — which has intruded into the airspace of more than 40 countries across five continents



US WARNS CHINA AGAINST AIDING RUSSIA IN UKRAINE

There are many balloons from many countries in the sky. Do you want to down each and every one of them? We urge the United States not to do such preposterous things simply to divert attention from its own domestic problems  
WANG YI | TOP DIPLOMAT, CHINA

We have to manage this relationship responsibly. We have to make sure that the competition that we're clearly engaged in does not veer into conflict, into a new cold war. But at the same time, we will very resolutely stand up for our interests. We will resolutely stand up for our value  
ANTONY BLINKEN | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

Beijing is watching closely to see the price Russia pays, or the reward it receives for its aggression. What is happening in Europe today could happen in East Asia tomorrow  
JENS STOLTENBERG | CHIEF, NATO

— has been exposed to the world," he added.

In turn, Wang told Blinken that their countries' relations had been damaged by how Washington reacted to the balloon.

Wang "made clear China's solemn position on the so-called airship incident," and "urged the US side to change course, acknowledge and repair the damage that its excessive use of force caused to China-US relations," state news agency Xinhua reported.

### 'DON'T MAKE SAME MISTAKE'

After four years of antagonistic relations with China under his predecessor Donald Trump, Biden has made a priority of resetting relations with Beijing, which he describes as Washington's biggest competitor.

But tensions flared last year after

Nancy Pelosi, then leader of the US House of Representatives, visited Taiwan, the self-governing democratic island claimed by Beijing.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also led Western powers to cast a wary eye on the relations between Russian leader Vladimir Putin and China's President Xi Jinping, who call each other "friends".

US Vice President Kamala Harris underlined how Washington was "troubled that Beijing has deepened its relationship with Moscow since the war began".

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg also said Moscow's assault had exposed the dangers of Europe's over-reliance on authoritarian regimes. It should serve as a lesson as the continent pursued relations with Beijing, he argued. "We should not make the same mistake with China and other authoritarian regimes."

# NK fires missile to proof 'war capacity'

North's first missile launch this year came after US and its Asian allies geared up for their annual military exercises

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Seoul, Feb 19: North Korea said Sunday it had test-fired an inter-continental ballistic missile as a warning to US and Seoul, saying the successful "surprise" drill demonstrated Pyongyang's "capacity of fatal nuclear counterattack".

Leader Kim Jong Un ordered the "sudden launching drill" and a Hwasong-15 missile — a weapon first tested by the North in 2017 — was fired from Pyongyang airport that afternoon, KCNA reported.

South Korea's military said it detected an ICBM launch, which Japan said flew for 66 minutes before splashing down in its Exclusive Economic Zone, with their analysis indicating it was capable of hit-



ting the mainland United States.

North Korea's leadership hailed the test — the country's first in seven weeks — saying it showed "the actual war capacity of the ICBM units which are ready for mobile and mighty counterattack," KCNA said.

US, S Korea, Japan hold drills  
The United States held joint air exercises bilaterally with South Korea and Japan involving strategic bombers Sunday.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the exercise, in which South Korea's F-35A, F-15K and US F-16 fighters escorted American B-1B bombers, demonstrated the allies' "overwhelming" defence capabilities and readiness posture.

## SHORT TAKES

### Israeli airstrikes claim five in Syria

Damascus: Israeli airstrikes targeted a residential neighbourhood in the Syrian capital of Damascus early Sunday, killing at least five people and wounding 15, Syrian state news reported. Loud explosions were heard over a central area of the capital and SANA reported that Syrian air defences were "confronting hostile targets in the sky around Damascus." Syrian state media agency SANA, citing a military source, reported that five people had been killed, among them a soldier, and 15 civilians wounded, along with "destruction of a number of residential buildings."

### Carter to receive hospice care

Washington: Former US President Jimmy Carter has decided to receive hospice care and "spend his remaining time at home with his family" instead of additional medical intervention, the Carter Center said Saturday. Carter, 98, who has lived longer after leaving the White House than any former president in US history, was a Democrat who served from January 1977 to January 1981. "He has the full support of his family and his medical team. The Carter family asks for privacy during this time and is grateful for the concern shown by his many admirers," the center said.

### Thousands missing in NZ

Sydney: The death toll from Cyclone Gabrielle in New Zealand climbed to 11 Sunday as thousands of people remained missing a week after the storm struck the country's North Island. The cyclone hit the island's northernmost region February 12 and tracked down the east coast, inflicting widespread devastation. Prime Minister Chris Hipkins has called Gabrielle New Zealand's biggest natural disaster this century.

### From US bases to economic zones

Kabul: The Afghan caretaker administration has decided to change former US military bases into economic zones to bolster economic activities, the state-run Bakhtar news agency reported Sunday. The decision has been taken at a meeting of the Economic Commission with Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar on the chair, Bakhtar said in its report, adding that the pilot project would begin from Kabul and Balkh, and expand to other parts of the country.

# Myanmar landmine casualties soar after junta takeover

DESPITE INCOMPLETE NUMBERS, EXPERTS AGREE THE INCREASE IN CASUALTIES FROM LANDMINE IN MYANMAR IS THE LARGEST EVER RECORDED

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bangkok, Feb 19: The 3-year-old boy had taken only two steps from his mother's lap when a deafening explosion rang out.

The blast caught the woman in the face, blurring her vision. She forced her eyes open and searched for her son around the jetty where they'd been waiting for a ferry, near their small village in south-central Myanmar.

Through the smoke, she spotted him. His body lay on the ground, his feet and legs mangled with

flesh peeled away, shattered bones exposed.

"He was crying and telling me that it hurt so much," she said. "He didn't know what just happened." But she did.

The boy had detonated a landmine, an explosive device designed to mangle or destroy whatever comes into its path.

Landmines have been banned for decades by most countries, since the UN Mine Ban Treaty was adopted in 1997. But in Myanmar, which isn't party to the treaty, the use of mines has soared since the military seized power from the democratically elected government in February 2021 and armed resistance has skyrocketed.

Landmines are planted by all sides of the conflict in Myanmar, and they're responsible for surging civilian casualties, including an alarming number of children as victims, according to an AP analysis based on data and reports from nonprofit and humanitarian organizations, interviews with civil-



ian victims, families, local aid workers, military defectors and monitoring groups.

In 2022, UN figures show, civilian casualties from landmine and unexploded ordnance spiked by nearly 40%. Experts say this and other official tallies are vastly undercounted, largely due to diffi-

culties monitoring and reporting during the conflict.

Virtually no area is immune to the threat. Over the past two years, mine contamination has spread to every state and region except for the capital city, Naypyitaw, according to Landmine Monitor, a group that tracks global landmine use.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance have been a persistent issue in Myanmar for more than four decades. The problem has grown exponentially since the military takeover, with heavier use of landmines in more parts of the country  
KIM WARREN | LANDMINE SPECIALIST, UN

The military also uses civilians as human shields, a practice widespread in the country for decades but raising alarms with increasing mine incidents. AP's analysis found the military, known as the Tatmadaw, forced people to walk ahead of troops to detonate potential landmines in their path, protecting their own troops.

When the fighting moves on, landmines don't. Mines left behind can indiscriminately maim or kill those who happen upon them, years later.

It raises the specter of casualties

for years to come. In countries including Egypt and Cambodia, people continue to die from millions of mines left behind long after conflicts has ended.

"Leaving an activated mine like this is the same as releasing a monster," said a 26-year-old military defector who worked as a combat engineer platoon commander in Myanmar.

In 2022, 390 people were victims of landmines and unexploded ordnance in Myanmar, more than a 37% increase from 2021, according to figures compiled by UNICEF. Overall, 102 people were killed and 288 were wounded, with children making up some 34% of the victims, compared with 26% in 2021.

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## of the day quote

We don't do that (layoffs), we believe in grooming talent in the company... (there will be) no layoffs

**MILIND LAKKAD** | CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, TCS

The seventh round was on here while we were in India. It's encouraging to see negotiations progressing and also encouraging to see appetite on both sides to make sure that we do agree [a trade deal] and then utilise it well

**SYMA CULLASY-ALDRIDGE** | CHIEF CAMPAIGNS DIRECTOR, CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH INDUSTRY

In a country like ours, we are very high on domestic travel, and that will just continue increasing at a higher rate than what the inbound would increase

**SAMIR MC** | MD, FORTUNE PARK HOTELS

## SHORT TAKES

### FinMin to meet heads of banks

**New Delhi:** The finance ministry has called a meeting of heads of public sector banks and top four private sector lenders to review the progress of the emergency credit line guarantee scheme (ECLGS) to help businesses affected by Covid-19. The meeting is scheduled to be held February 22 to review progress on ECLGS and Loan Guarantee Scheme for Covid-Affected Sectors (LGSCAS), sources said. The meeting, to be chaired by Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi, would also see participation from top private sector lenders HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank. Extension of ECLGS and LGSCAS beyond March 31 as well as challenges related to these would be deliberated.

### Govt may auction 6 mineral blocks

**New Delhi:** The government is likely to put on sale six mineral blocks, including four iron ore mines, in the current month. The move would give a boost to mining sector's contribution to the country's gross domestic product. The four iron ore blocks, situated in Chhattisgarh, are likely to be auctioned Tuesday, according to the mines ministry.

## Twitter allows 2FA only for Blue users



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** The decision by Twitter CEO Elon Musk to no longer allow non-Blue users to use text messages as a two-factor authentication (2FA) method after March 20 has not gone well with a vast majority of users.

After March 20, non-Blue accounts with text or SMS-based 2FA still enabled "will have it disabled." Currently, the platform offers three methods of 2FA - text message, authentication app and security key.

Musk tweeted Sunday: "Use of free authentication apps for 2FA will remain free and are much more secure than SMS".

However, his decision angered the users who think the new move will strip them from a more secure

## ALL-TIME HIGH

# Banks' NII soars in Q3

**RBI HAS INCREASED THE KEY FUND RATE -- REPO RATE -- BY 250 BPS SINCE MAY 2022 AS INFLATION REMAINED ABOVE THE CENTRAL BANK'S TOLERANCE LEVEL OF 6 PER CENT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR**



**NET INTEREST INCOME OF BANKS GREW BY 25.5% TO ₹1.78L-CR**  
**NET INTEREST MARGIN ROSE BY 17 BPS TO 3.28%**  
**BANKS REPORTED A ROBUST 18.5% GROWTH IN ADVANCES IN Q3**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 19:** Net interest income of banks grew by a record 25.5 per cent to ₹1.78 lakh crore in the December 2022 quarter on-year, driven by a healthy credit off-take and higher yield on advances, according to an analysis. "The quarter saw banks booking higher yields on advances as the system-wide core profitability metric net interest margin (NIM) rose by 17 basis points (bps) to 3.28 per cent. This was possible as banks repriced existing loans higher at a faster rate and also increased the new loan pricing, but kept deposit rates almost unchanged, according to an analysis by Care Ratings' senior director Sanjay Agarwal.

But the rise in NIM was led by private sector banks, thanks to their operational efficiencies, at 4.03

### Mcap of 5 of top-10 most valued firms jump ₹95,337 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** Five of the top 10 valued firms together added ₹95,337.95 crore in their market valuation last week, with index major Reliance Industries Ltd contributing the most.

Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 319.87 points or 0.52 per cent. While Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank, HDFC, ITC and Bharti Airtel were the gainers from the top-10 pack, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever and State Bank of India were the laggards.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries rallied ₹70,023.18 crore to ₹16,50,677.12 crore. ITC's market capitalisation (mcap) jumped ₹14,834.74 crore to ₹4,75,767.12 crore. Reliance Industries continued to rule the chart of the most valued firms followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC, ITC, State Bank of India and Bharti Airtel.

per cent, up 15 bps on-year. State-owned banks registered NIM at 2.85 per cent, up 17 bps on-year.

Net interest income or NII is the main revenue head for banks and is the difference between interest earned on advances and the interest paid to depositors/funds raised from markets. NIM is the profit margin/profitability gauge earned from advances and other credit businesses as a percentage of cost. Agarwal expects the NIM to stabilise going forward due to repricing of liabilities -- of late major banks have begun to offer higher returns to depositors as credit demand continues to remain in high double-digits while deposits are hardly coming in.

The Reserve Bank of India has increased the key fund rate -- repo rate -- by 60 bps in the December quarter -- 35 bps in the October policy review and 25 in December --

and banks have quickly passed on the fund cost differences to borrowers. Cumulatively, the cost of funds have gone up by 250 bps since May 2022 as inflation remained above the RBI's tolerance level of 6 per cent throughout the year.

Even on sequential basis, NIM has improved from 3.11 per cent for the system -- from 2.67 per cent in case of state-owned banks and from 3.88 per cent in case of private banks. These figures stood at 2.96 per cent, 2.51 per cent and 3.79 per cent, respectively in the 12 trailing months. NIMs were the highest since FY21, he said.

Banks reported a robust 18.5 per cent rise in advances in Q3. This was led by public sector banks which reported net advances growth of 18.9 per cent in the quarter while private sector peers lagged a bit at 17.9 per cent.

## Shining outlook for gold in 2023

According to the report, gold started the new year on a cheery note, up about six per cent in January in dollar terms and about four per cent in rupee terms

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, Feb 19:** As in 2022, gold is expected to log double digit gains this year as per indications, said experts.

"The yellow metal has already posted over three per cent gains in the month of January, 2023. The current setup seems to indicate a rerun of 2022. Gold seems to be poised to open a new chapter in term of its price trajectory," Emkay Global Financial Services said in a report.

According to Quantum Mutual Fund report, gold started the new year on a cheery note, up about six per cent in January in dollar terms and about four per cent in rupee terms.

Underpinning the rally was annual inflation in the US slowing for a sixth straight month to 6.5 per cent in December, raising hopes of smaller rate hikes from the Federal Reserve in Q1'23 and rate cuts later



in the year, Quantum Mutual Fund said.

In the last one year, gold purchases in the international markets was about 4,000 tonne of which 1,400 tonne took place in the last quarter, said Emkay Global.

Apart from institutional buying, jewellery demand in China revived with the Covid restrictions being relaxed there. China is one of the biggest consumers of gold, accounting for over 30 per cent of global jewellery demand, Emkay Global said.

"The yellow metal benefited

from a softer USD environment and lower US Treasury yields. Physical demand from China during the Lunar New Year celebrations, central bank gold buying and increase in net long positioning in gold by global money managers also supported prices," a Quantum Mutual Fund said.

The general expectation that there will be a slowdown in economic activity in the major economies also is helping gold though the high inflation never propelled gold to higher levels, said Emkay Global.

In India, with a duty cut now out of the picture for the foreseeable future, down moves in gold on account of that are no longer expected. But prices could see some headwinds from developments on the US monetary policy front. Investors can stagger their purchases over the next few months to build their gold allocation, Quantum Mutual Fund said.

## GAIL IMITATES RELIANCE

India's largest gas firm GAIL is imitating billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd in planning to import ethane from the US to replace natural gas and naphtha as feedstock at its petrochemical plants



## FPIs shift focus back on Indian equity markets

FPIs HAVE PURCHASED EQUITIES WORTH A NET SUM OF ₹7,666 CRORE IN THE WEEK ENDED FEBRUARY 17



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** Foreign investors seem to have shifted their focus back on the Indian equity markets as they turned net buyers last week with an investment of over ₹7,600 crore.

This came following a net outflow of ₹3,920 crore by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) from equities in the preceding week (February 7-12), data with the depositories showed.

"As the markets began to recover from the Adani shock, the flows from FPIs also improved, suggesting their renewed interest in the prospects of the Indian equity markets," Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research at Morningstar India, said.

As per the data, FPIs have purchased equities worth a net sum of ₹7,666 crore in the week ended February 17.

Given a more stable economy, strong macros and prospects of higher economic growth, FPIs are now willing to look beyond valuation and other concerns, and pay a premium to the Indian markets, which has the potential to deliver better returns, Srivastava added.

FPIs have been net sellers since the beginning of the year and till February 10, they were net sellers

to the tune of ₹38,524 crore in 2023, including ₹28,852 crore in January amid concerns of the continuing rate hikes by the major central banks globally to curb in inflation.

Also, the outflows from Indian equities could be attributed to relatively higher valuations, which prompted the FPIs to shift their focus towards other markets having relatively attractive valuations.

Markets such as China, which saw significant erosion in their equity markets due to a series of strict lockdowns, attracted foreign investors after it opened up given its attractive valuation.

The distinctive feature of stock market performance this year is India's underperformance with NSE's benchmark index Nifty 50 down by 1.4 per cent so far. On the other hand, Taiwan index is up by 8.3 per cent and Shanghai composite is up by 3.4 per cent.

In terms of sector, FPIs have been buyers in autos and auto components and construction, while they were sellers in banking and financial services in which they are sitting on good profits, Vijayakumar said.

So far this year, foreign investors have pulled out a net sum of ₹30,858 crore from equities, while invested a net amount of ₹5,944 crore in the debt markets.

## Indian aviation market preps to spread its wings

**A RAFT OF FACTORS -- SURGING AIR TRAFFIC DEMAND, RISING MIDDLE CLASS POPULATION AND DISPOSABLE INCOMES, DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND, OVER 1,100 PLANES ON ORDER BY VARIOUS INDIAN CARRIERS AND IMPROVING AVIATION INFRASTRUCTURE -- ARE ALL FUELLING THE GROWTH OF THE MARKET**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 19:** From increased direct international air connectivity to being a showpiece of investment programme to job creation in faraway US, Air India's mega 470 aircraft order has ignited myriad expectations in and about the world's fastest growing aviation market -- India.

Out of the 470 firm aircraft order, 250 will be supplied by Airbus and 220 by Boeing, while there is also the option to buy another 370 planes from the two plane makers. The firm order includes 70 wide-body aircraft. Aircraft & Air Traffic

Indian airlines have placed orders for more than 1,100 aircraft that are to be delivered in the coming years. The country's largest airline IndiGo is to take deliveries of around 500 planes, Go First is to receive 72 aircraft, Akasa Air is to get 56 planes and Vistara is to take 17 aircraft. Besides, SpiceJet has air-

craft on order. All of them are narrow-body planes. Together with Air India, the domestic carriers have at least 1,115 planes on order.

Around 700 commercial aircraft are flying in India and majority of them are narrow-body planes. About 470 aircraft of Airbus and around 159 Boeing planes are in commercial service.

GE Aerospace's Country Head, South Asia & Indonesia, Vikram Rai said India has the potential to grow both on the wide-body and narrow-body side.

Providing a perspective, he said that in India, pre-Covid traffic was around 75 million international passengers and out of them, 60-65 per cent used foreign carriers.

"With the economy growing and disposable income growing, there is a huge opportunity for Indians to travel abroad... This 75 million passengers is likely to go to 120-125 million over the next 7-10 years," he said.



**From a connectivity perspective, Indians have been relying a lot on Emirates, Etihad and Qatar since last few years, and Air India's latest order means strengthening the star alliance community, which in turn would offer more options to Indian as well as South East Asian passengers into Europe and US, and probably on better pricing points**

AJAY SAWHNEY | PARTNER, CYRIL AMARCHAND MANGALDAS

India is the world's third largest and the fastest growing aviation market in the world.

### AIRPORTS

At present, India has at least 147 operational airports and the number of airports have jumped from 74 nearly nine years ago, especially on the back of the government's ambitious regional air connectivity scheme UDAN.

While talking about Air India's plane order, V Thulasidas, who was Air India's chief from December 2003 to March 2008, said that now the country has world class airports which can act as hubs.

"In terms of size, India should have not just one hub but several hubs like the EU. The hubs can be Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Kochi and others," he said.

### AVIATION EXPERTS

A key takeaway once Air India starts operating the new aircraft is that the international travel of Indians will be catered to mostly by the Indian carrier.

"Some 125 planes out of the 470 will be for replacement... They have secured their growth plans for at least next 10 years," an aviation industry expert, who has been associated for long with the airlines sector, said.

According to him, the induction of wide-body planes will help in expansion of fleet as well as operations on both the East and the West coast. "They (Air India) can provide more direct connectivity up to 8-10 hours and 16 hours non-stop flights as long as they are able to meet customer expectations, other parameters in operations. It will be a game changer for them. It will also aid in getting back India's international traffic from overseas carriers. They (Air India) can also create international traffic hubs across the country, which was not possible in the absence of a strong player," the expert said on the condition of anonymity.

Currently, around 60 per cent of the Indians travelling on international routes are carried by foreign airlines. It means that out of 100 such passengers, only about 40 are carried by Indian carriers.



**INDIA RETAIN BORDER-GAVASKAR TROPHY WITH SIX-WICKET WIN AGAINST AUSTRALIA**

# Jadeja, Ashwin decimate Aussies

## We panicked, but stuck to our strategy: Rohit

**INDIAN SKIPPER ALL PRAISE FOR SPINNERS WHO DOMINATED SHOW**

**Kohli fastest to 25K runs**

**New Delhi:** Virat Kohli added another feather in his cap Sunday as he became the sixth and the fastest batter in the world to score 25,000 runs across formats during the second Test against Australia here. Kohli achieved the feat when he reached eight during India's run chase of 115 as he flicked Nathan Lyon for a boundary in the 12th over in the second innings. He had come into his 492nd match overall with 52 runs needed to reach the milestone. He made 44 in India's first innings and was out for 20 in the second essay to end at 25012 runs. "Milestone Unlocked. Congratulations @imvKohli on reaching 25000 runs in international cricket! Simply sensational," the BCCI tweeted. The other stalwarts to have scored more than 25,000 runs across formats are Sachin Tendulkar (34,357), Sri Lankans Kumar Sangakkara (28,016) and Mahela Jayawardene (25,957), Australian Ricky Ponting (27,483) and South African Jacques Kallis (25,534).



**NOBLE GESTURE:** Skipper Pat Cummins presents Sunday an Australian jersey signed by all players to Cheteshwar Pujara on the latter's milestone of 100 Tests

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** Skipper Rohit Sharma was the first to admit Sunday that India had panicked a little at the end of the second day (Saturday) of the second Test against Australia. It was for this reason Rohit had a discussion ahead of the game Sunday with Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel.

"Yes, we did panic a little at the end of the second day," Rohit said after India's six-wicket victory over Australia. "Today (Sunday) morning we had a discussion with the three spinners. I just told them that irrespective of the way the Australians bat, we would stick to our plans. And the results are

there for everyone to see," Rohit pointed out.

Rohit stated at times the Indian bowlers will be put under pressure because Australia are a quality side. "Sometimes you got to keep it simple and not complicate too much about what is happening. We adopted that approach today and won the match," Rohit said.

Rohit, who himself was swift with his feet movement in his two innings, felt sweep was not the best shot to play in the prevailing conditions. "You need technique to defend as well as attack, including the shots down the ground, sweep and reverse sweep. On pitches like these, it is very important to have confidence in your own technique," Rohit asserted.

Jadeja, who made a comeback from injury with the first Test in Nagpur, once again showed the immense value he brings to the side. "He (Jadeja) has been brilliant. Comebacks are not easy but the confidence that guy has in his ability that is massive and you can see it on the field. There were times he was put under pressure but there was no sense of panic. He just kept relying on what he is good at, and he kept doing that," Rohit stated.

Rohit also asserted that the team continues to back KL Rahul despite his poor show with the bat in the ongoing series.

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Feb 19:** Ravindra Jadeja (7/42) thoroughly exposed a technically ill-equipped and mentally messed up Australian batting unit with career-best figures as India won the second Test by six wickets to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy here Sunday.

The Australian batters paid the price for some atrocious shot selection as Jadeja, who enjoyed a 10-wicket match haul, along with Ravichandran Ashwin (3/59) decimated the visitors in the morning session, bowling them out for 113 in 31.1 overs. The last nine wickets fell for 52 runs.

KL Rahul (1) cut a sorry figure but Indian batters showed how to play spin as the target of 115 was completed in 26.4 overs. Cheteshwar Pujara (31 n o) had something to cheer about

on his 100th Test appearance as he remained unbeaten and fittingly hit the winning boundary. India have now put one foot in the final of the World Test Championship in England in June, having taken an unassailable 2-0 lead in the four-match series.

The win was India's 100th against Australia across formats. The third Test will be played in Indore from March 1.

Starting the day at 61 for 1, Jadeja's arm balls became a lethal weapon with as many as five Australian batters getting out trying to play sweep shots of deliveries that kept low on a

**BRIEF SCORES**

Australia 263 and 113 (Travis Head 45, Ravindra Jadeja 7/42, Ravi Ashwin 3/59) lost to India 262 and 118 for 4 (Cheteshwar Pujara 31 n o, Rohit Sharma 31) by six wickets.

typical third day Ferozshah Kotla track. Steve Smith, Matt Renshaw, Alex Carry, Pat Cummins and Matt Kuhnemann were all guilty of playing the slog sweep off deliveries bowled on either middle or leg stump line. They were either bowled or adjudged leg before in the process as the deliveries started keeping low.

Ashwin also played the supporting act to perfection as eight Australian batters failed to reach double figures save the overnight pair of Travis Head (45) and Marnus

Labuschagne (35), who had briefly counter-attacked Saturday evening with some degree of success.

However, it all changed in the morning session once Head got an off-break from Ashwin and the edge was picked up by Kona Bharat behind the stumps.

It is a cardinal mistake to play a sweep or reverse sweep off straighter ones or sliders if there isn't enough bounce. The ball that trapped Smith plumb in-front was on leg-middle and it was a fair call.

The only delivery that was classic left-arm orthodox one was bowled to Peter Handscomb (0), the best batter in the first innings. Jadeja, for a change, tossed it up and drew him forward before it turned away enough to get an outside edge into Virat Kohli's hands.

When India started the chase, skipper Rohit Sharma (31) showed how to tackle the Australian spinners before being run-out due to a mix-up.

**Ravindra Jadeja**  
3/68, 7/42; 26

**Ravichandran Ashwin**  
3/57, 3/59; 37



Teammates congratulate Ravichandran Ashwin after the dismissal of Steven Smith Sunday

**SHORT TAKES**

**Junior hockey girls thrash South Africa**

**New Delhi:** The India junior women's hockey team registered a big 8-0 win Saturday night against hosts South Africa in their second match of the tour. The juniors took the lead in the first minute of the match through Annu and never looked back after that. The others goals were scored by vice-captain Rujata Dadaso Pisal (9th), Jyoti Chhatri (26th, 27th, 30th), Deepika Soreng (29th), Annu (54th) and Deepika (59th).

**Easy for Odisha**

**Kakinada (Andhra Pradesh):** Odisha strengthened their chances of qualifying for the quarterfinals of the 13th Senior Women's National Hockey Championships by winning their match easily here Sunday. Odisha in their Pool A game hammered Rajasthan 13-1 with Poonam Barla (1st, 3rd, 29th, 46th, 47th) scoring five goals.

**Tomar bags bronze**

**New Delhi:** Teenager Varun Tomar bagged a bronze medal in the men's 10m air pistol competition, opening India's account at the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup Rifle/Pistol tournament in Cairo. The 19-year-old, competing on day one, got the better of teammate Sarabjot Singh in a shoot-off after both had tied for the third spot with a score of 250.6 in the ranking round. Seasoned Slovakian shooter Juraj Tuzinsky defeated upcoming Italian talent Paolo Monna 17-15, to win gold in the event.

**Aditi finishes 2nd**

**Kaec (Saudi Arabia):** India's Aditi Ashok continued her amazing run but fell one shot shy of winning for the second time in three weeks, finishing behind World No.1 Lydia Ko in the Aramco Saudi Ladies International golf tournament which ended here Sunday. Aditi, shot 4-under 68 and finished 20-under at the USD 5 million tournament. Lydia (68) saved a crucial par on the 72nd to win by one stroke. AGENCIES

## Karnataka in semis as Odisha bow out



Odisha's Prabin Tigga (in blue) tussles for the ball with a player from Karnataka

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 19:** Odisha ended their campaign in the ongoing Santosh Trophy with a 2-2 draw against Karnataka in an exciting game that was played at the Capital football ground here Sunday. The draw helped Karnataka top their group and enter the semifinals.

The goals for Odisha were scored by Prabin Tigga (21st) and Chandra Muduli (35th). However, it was Karnataka who drew first blood when M Sunil Kumar scored in the 17th minute. At the breather however, Odisha were leading 2-1. However, five minutes after the resumption of the game, S Frankin restored parity for Karnataka.

The hosts had a couple of chances late in the game, but failed to utilise those and they had to be satisfied with one point. However, it would have been good if Odisha had ended the tournament on a winning note.

In another game played VIIth Battalion ground here, Kerala and Punjab played out a lacklustre 1-1 draw. It was enough for Punjab to seal their place in the semis.

In the only decisive game of the day, Maharashtra defeated Goa 2-0. Both the goals for Maharashtra were scored by Stanley Peter (5th, 89th). Maharashtra dominated the game for long periods and could have won by a more emphatic margin had their forwards been a bit more opportunistic.

## Eves look to seal semifinal spot

**CRUNCH GAME FOR INDIA AGAINST IRELAND IN T20 WORLD CUP**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gqeberha (South Africa), Feb 19:** A defeat against England denting their confidence, India will look to bounce back with a big win against lowly Ireland to remain in contention for a semifinal berth in the Women's T20 World Cup, here Monday. India are in second spot in Group 2 with four points from three games while England head the group with an all-win record.

The Harmanpreet Kaur-led side will now need not only a win against Ireland in their last group match Monday but also by a big margin to have any chance of filling up the remaining semifinal spot from Group 2. They need to improve their net run rate from the current +0.205.

Pakistan, who lost to India in their opening match, have two points from two matches and they also have a chance to make it to the last four if they win their last two matches. In that case, they will also have six points. Currently, Pakistan, who play Sunday against the West Indies, have a better NRR of +1.542 than that of India, though they are yet to face England who have a NRR of +1.776.

To win big against Ireland, the Indian batters will need to fire, especially captain Harmanpreet and



**We have to forget the night against England and start in a positive frame of mind against Ireland**

HARMANPREET KAUR

opener Shafali Verma, as both have not played a significant knock so far. Harmanpreet's scores in the three matches so far have been 16, 33 and four; below par by her standards, while Shafali have made 33, 28 and eight.

Young Richa Ghosh has been the most consistent batter for India

with scores of 31, 44 and 47 not out while Smriti Mandhana showed her prowess with brilliant half century against Ireland.

In the bowling department, the 5/15 against England - her career-best - should spur pacer Renuka Singh to get more against Ireland while the seasoned Deepti Sharma had been the most consistent Indian bowler so far. India would expect a better show from left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad who is without a wicket after three matches while Pooja Vastrakar and Radha Yadav also need to contribute more than what they have done so far.

## 2ND RANJI TITLE FOR SAURASHTRA

**VETERAN PACER JAYDEV UNADKAT FASHIONS WIN FOR SAURASHTRA WITH 9 WICKETS IN THE MATCH**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Feb 19:** Left-arm pacer Jaydev Unadkat returned a match haul of nine wickets, including 6/85 in the second innings, as Saurashtra thrashed Bengal by nine wickets in the summit clash to clinch their second Ranji Trophy title here Sunday at the Eden Gardens.

Having given away a big first innings lead of 230 runs, Bengal, who were overnight 169/4 in their second essay, folded for 241, handing the visitors a mere 12 runs target to win the final.

Saurashtra lost their opening batter Jay Gohil (0) off the bowling of Akash Deep but eventually went past the target, reaching 14 for one in 2.4 overs, to wrap up the match with one day and two full sessions to spare.

Saurashtra's earlier triumph was



in 2019-20 season when they defeated Bengal on the basis of first innings lead. In the last 10 seasons, they have made the final in five occasions, underlining their consistency.

Earlier in the morning session, Unadkat showed the way after a freak run-out of Bengal batter Shahbaz Ahmed (27). The veteran

Saurashtra skipper added four wickets to his overnight tally of two.

The old Bengal warhorse duo of skipper Manoj Tiwary (68) and Anustup Majumdar (61) slammed scored 0 and 16 in the two innings. West Bengal Sports Minister-cum-cricketer Tiwary had delayed his retirement to win a Ranji title from his fourth final, and it remains to be seen whether he continue to play in the upcoming season.

Earlier, the overnight duo of Tiwary and Shahbaz Ahmed committed hara-kiri while going for a third run. Ahmed had to sacrifice his wicket to give Saurashtra their first breakthrough of the day. It also unsettled Tiwary as he followed suit and got out for 68 after chasing a wide delivery from Unadkat. The rest then just folded without a fight.

## Man U ride on Rashford strikes

AGENCIES

**Manchester, Feb 19:** Marcus Rashford showed Manchester United won't be distracted by the race to buy the Old Trafford club as his double inspired a 3-0 win Sunday against Leicester. There have been reports that Man United may be under new ownership within six weeks - but Erik ten Hag's side have kept their focus firmly on the pitch.

Rashford has been the key to United's impressive form in Ten Hag's first season and the England forward proved too hot for Leicester to handle at the Old Trafford here. Rashford has scored 24 times in all competitions for Man United this season, the highest goal tally he has ever managed in a single campaign. Remarkably, 16 of those goals have come in 17 appearances since he returned from the World Cup in December.

The 25-year-old is also the first



Marcus Rashford

United player to score in seven consecutive home league games since Wayne Rooney in 2010. He was simply unstoppable Sunday. The third goal for Manchester United was scored by Jadon Sancho off a pass from Bruno Fernandes. Rashford scored his goals in the 25th and 56th minutes. The win took Manchester United (49) to third in the Premier League points table, just five behind leaders Arsenal (54).