



LESSONS FROM FAILURES

Actor Sara Ali Khan says that it is important to fall down to get up every time in life

LEISURE P2



NEW FBI ALLEGATION

FBI director says that Covid-19 pandemic was caused by a 'potential lab incident' at a Chinese gov-controlled centre in Wuhan

INTERNATIONAL P10



AUSSIES IN COMMAND

Australia take control of the 3d Test after dismissing India for a paltry 109 in the 1st innings at Indore

SPORTS P12

SHORT TAKES

Museum ticket rates not to exceed ₹10

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik directed Wednesday that price of entry tickets in museums in the state should not exceed ₹10 per person. He added that students, weavers and artisans should be allowed entry into the museums free of cost. Patnaik directed the concerned officials to implement the rates as soon as possible as he felt that it will popularise museums in Odisha and attract tourists. The 'State Museum', 'Kala Bhoomi' and 'Tribal Museum' in the Odisha capital and 'Odisha Maritime Museum' in Cuttack are among the major museums in the state. Officials are hoping that the new rates will attract more footfalls to the museum.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We don't need handcuffs; I've a pistol

38 dead, 200 hurt in Greece train mishap

Tempe (Greece): A passenger train carrying hundreds of people collided at high speed late Tuesday night with an oncoming freight train in a fiery crash in northern Greece. The accident left 36 dead and more than 85 injured, officials said Wednesday. Multiple cars derailed and at least three burst into flames after the collision near this town. Rescue crews illuminated the scene with floodlights before dawn Wednesday as they searched through the wreckage for survivors. Transport Minister Kostas Karamanlis resigned after in the wake of the accident. P10

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	59411.08 ↑ 448.96
NIFTY	17450.90 ↑ 146.95
DOLLAR	82.79 ↓ ₹0.14
EURO	87.96 ↑ ₹0.56
GOLD	₹55,855 ↑ ₹99
SILVER	₹63,986 ↑ ₹203

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	36.6°C	36.2°C
TEMP MIN	19.9°C	19.8°C
Humidity	83%	81%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather most likely	



THE REAL TEST: Students appearing for the CHSE Plus-II exams display their admit cards while standing in a queue in front of Rama Devi Higher Secondary School in Bhubaneswar; (Right) A teacher supervises while students appear for the exams at Sailabala Women's Junior College in Cuttack, Wednesday



(Right) A teacher supervises while students appear for the exams at Sailabala Women's Junior College in Cuttack, Wednesday

Home LPG price hiked by ₹50

INCREASE IN BOTH DOMESTIC AND COMMERCIAL CYLINDER RATES COMES JUST AFTER THE ELECTIONS TO THE 3 NORTHEAST STATES

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 1: Consumers can get ready for another big hole in their pockets. Cooking gas LPG price was hiked Wednesday by ₹50 per cylinder – the first increase in rates in almost eight months. The price hike came within days of end of polling in three northeastern states and was sharply criticised by the Opposition.

A 14.2-kg LPG cylinder in Delhi will now cost ₹1,103, up from ₹1,053, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. In Bhubaneswar, the price of the same cylinder will now be ₹1,129. Earlier it was ₹1,079.

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL)

► 14.2kg LPG cylinders to now cost ₹1,129 in Bhubaneswar
► Commercial LPG prices hiked by ₹305.50 per 19-kg cylinder



LPG PRICES WERE LAST REVISED IN JULY 2022

and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) said ₹1,103 was the rate for a 14.2-kg non-subsidised LPG cylinder. However, prices will vary from state to state depending on local taxes.

State-owned fuel retailers are supposed to revise rates on a

monthly basis in line with costs but they have not done so since 2020 and were in October last year given a one-time grant of ₹22,000 crore to make up for losses they incurred between June 2020 and June 2022. They last revised domestic LPG price July 4, 2022.

With the latest increase, LPG now costs ₹1,102.50 for 14.2-kg cylinder in Mumbai, ₹1,129 in Kolkata and ₹1,118.50 in Chennai.

Oil firms also hiked the price of commercial LPG, used in hotels and restaurants, by ₹350.50 to ₹2,119.50 per 19-kg cylinder. Commercial LPG rates have more or less moved in tandem with cost which soared in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine a year back. Rates of commercial LPG were last hiked by ₹25 per cylinder in January.

The Opposition criticised the government for raising the fuel rates, particularly of domestic LPG ahead of Holi.

In a tweet, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the common man is suffering from back-

breaking inflation under the Modi government. Priyanka Chaturvedi of Shiv Sena-Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray said this was Modi government's Holi gift. The Trinamool Congress also criticised the decision to hike domestic LPG prices.

In a separate development, ATF price was cut by 4 per cent in line with softening international rates of the fuel. Accordingly, jet fuel rates were reduced by ₹4,606.50 per kilolitre to ₹1,07,750.27 per kilolitre in Delhi.

Petrol and diesel prices, however, continued to remain on freeze for a record 11th month in a row. The last time petrol prices were revised were May 22 when the government cut excise duty to give relief to consumers from a spike in retail rates.

Adenovirus claims 12 lives in Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 1: Seven children have died due to respiratory infection in West Bengal in the last 24 hours, a senior health official said here Thursday. The government, in a statement, said 12 Adenovirus (ARI) deaths have been reported in the state so far in the last few days and among them, eight had comorbidities.

However, the government did not term the deaths in the last 24 hours as due to Adenovirus. Instead it said that acute respiratory infections (ARI) were common during the ongoing season. However, doctors informed that in children, Adenovirus usually causes infections in the respiratory and intestinal tracts.

The state health authorities asserted that 'there is no evidence of viral epidemic at present'. The government said it was prepared to deal with the situation and has kept ready 5,000 beds in 121 hospitals, along with 600 paediatricians.

"In the last 24 hours, five children have died in state-run hospitals in here and two at Bankura Sammilani Medical College and Hospital," a Health department official said. He added that the samples of those with Adenovirus symptoms were sent for tests and results are awaited.

The West Bengal government said that 5,213 cases of ARI were reported in the state in the last one month. "ARI due to different viruses is a common seasonal phenomenon. However, the number of ARI infections appears to be higher in the current year as the seasonal surges due to Adenovirus were taken over by the surges of Covid-19 in the previous years (2021 and 2022). "However, there is no evidence of viral epidemic at present," the official informed.

Children in the age group of 0-2 years are considered most vulnerable to the infection. Older children are less susceptible to the virus, doctors said, maintaining that most of the cases are treatable at home. Health officials said they were keeping a watch on the development.

CENTRE SUSPENDS CPR'S FCRA LICENCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: The Ministry of Home Affairs has suspended the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licence of prominent public think-tank 'Centre for Policy Research' (CPR) over violation of laws, officials said Thursday. The CPR was under scrutiny after Income Tax surveys on it and Oxfam India in September last year.

Oxfam's FCRA licence was suspended in January last year, after which the NGO had filed a revision petition with the Home Ministry. With the suspension of its licence, given under the FCRA, CPR will not be able to receive any funds from abroad.

The donors of CPR included the

'Foreign Cos must follow Indian laws'

NEW DELHI: All entities operating in India must fully comply with relevant laws, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar told his British counterpart James Cleverly here Wednesday after the latter raised BBC tax surveys issue during a meeting with him. "The UK Foreign Secretary brought up the BBC tax issue with EAM today. He was firmly told that all entities operating in India must comply fully with relevant laws and regulations," a source informed.

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the University of Pennsylvania, the World Resources Institute and the Duke University, officials informed. Contd...P4

BJP seeks action against police

Even as the BJP leaders condemned the police 'attack' on BJYM members, the BJD hit back stating that 'goonda raj' cannot be allowed in garb of protests

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 1: Opposition BJP members Wednesday created a ruckus in the Assembly in protest against the police excesses on the BJP youth wing workers during a protest rally Tuesday over the murder of Minister Naba Das murder.

BJP youth wing activists were engaged in a scuffle with the police while marching towards the state Assembly. Several police personnel and BJP workers were injured in the clash. Later, the police arrested 22 BJP youth wing workers including the state BJYM president Irash Acharya.

As soon as the House assembled for the day, the BJP members, carrying posters and newspapers,



BJP members stage a dharna in front of the Capital PS Wednesday

rushed into the Well and raised slogans against the police action on youth wing workers. The BJP legislators demanded action against the police officials and a debate on the issue.

Speaker Bikram Keshari Arukha

first adjourned the House till 11.30am. When the situation remained the same after the adjournment, the Speaker called an all-party meeting adjourning the proceedings for 15 minutes.

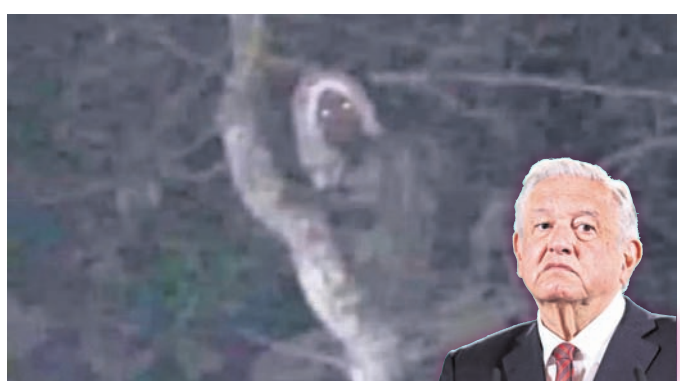
Contd...P4 MORE P3

Mexican Prez's 'woodland elf' photo draws flak

CRITICS OF OBRADOR HAVE POINTED OUT THAT THE 'FAKE' PICTURE HAS BEEN USED TO DIVERT ATTENTION OF THE PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTESTORS

AGENCIES

Mexico City, March 1: Mexico President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's sharing of a couple of photos amid pro-democracy protests across the country has invited severe criticism. Obrador has claimed that a creature in one of the photos is an 'woodland elf'. However, many have termed the photo as 'fake' and an 'old photo' and that it has been uploaded intentionally to divert the attention of the public from the protests. Obrador has termed the picture, 'Everything is mystical'. "I share two photos of our supervision of the Mayan Train works taken by an engineer three days ago," Obrador captioned the pic-



Blurry image of the woodland elf; (Inset): Under fire Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador

tures. Obrador claimed that one of the image resembled a sculp-

ture from an archaeological site on the Yucatan peninsula while

the other was an elf. The photo, taken at night, is of an unidentifiable creature at the top of a tree with white eyes and hair. According to traditional Mayan belief, 'aluxes' are small, mischievous beings similar to elves that live in forests and fields. They are tricky spirits, and are said to prank people.

Many protestors said that Obrador is branding them as 'mischievous' as they have resorted to agitations.

Obrador's social media post came at time when there is a furore in the country. Thousands gathered here Tuesday in the largest protest against Obrador's administration yet, as campaigners opposing the government's drive to destroy the inde-

pendent electoral authority said that 'democracy is being threatened'.

Some social media users who commented on the post, pointed out that the engineer is lying and the photograph had been originally published in February 2021. They said that the picture had been previously 'used in Indonesia, Thailand and other countries'.

One of the users, Mauricio Schwarz, said: "Yes, Andrés, an engineer three days ago took a photo that has been doing the rounds in Nuevo León since February 2021 and in Thailand since December of that year. If you believe it, you are stupid... if you know you are lying, you are malicious." Contd...P4

Mega recruitment of primary teachers soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 1: The Odisha government will soon launch a mega recruitment drive to fill up vacant teaching and non-teaching posts in primary schools across the state, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash told reporters here Wednesday. "We are going to fill up 40,000 teaching and non-teaching staff posts," the minister said.

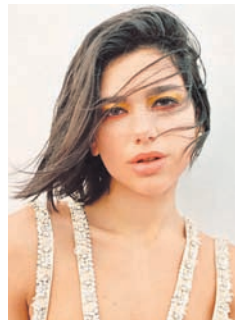
"Extensive steps have been taken by the School and Mass Education (S&ME) department for the recruitment of teaching and non-teaching staff. About 20 thousand vacant posts of junior teachers in

primary schools will be filled up very soon," the government said in a tweet Wednesday.

Sources informed that the Odisha government has also approved the relaxation of residency period to facilitate promotion of 54,000 senior teachers and headmasters in the state. Similarly, the process to fill up the posts of 7,540 secondary teachers is being undertaken by the Odisha Staff Selection Commission (OSSC).

Sources also stated that the, the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) has begun the process to recruit 335 teaching staff in higher secondary schools in the state.

leisure



DUA LIPA CAUGHT MAKING OUT WITH ROMAIN GAVRAS

The *Levitating* hitmaker, Dua Lipa was spotted making out with Rita Ora's filmmaker ex-boyfriend after they were seen hitting BAFTA Awards' after-party together, reports *aceshowbiz.com*. The clip made its rounds on social media Twitter. The singer has further fueled rumours that she is dating Romain Gavras.

KEVIN TAFT WANTS TO TAKE FITNESS TIPS FROM NTR JR

During the recent HCA awards in Los Angeles, Hollywood filmmaker Kevin Taft praised Indian actor NTR Jr's physique. Taft said he was bouncing in his seat and desperately wanted to share the experience with his friends, after watching NTR's performance as Komaram Bheem in *RRR*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today you will have an eye for beautiful and outlandish things. There is a possibility that you may even contemplate starting a business related to these things. Ganesha feels, though, that you will not be able to reach any conclusion about it. But you will keep the option open.

TAURUS
Today, you are likely to be more reckless than ever in splurging your hard earned money. Ganesha strongly advises you to leave your credit card at home today. Using it for making purchases will only make matters worse. Money wise, be very careful in your business dealings, about the commitments you make.

GEMINI
You will feel physical and mental excitement and emotions today. You may take part in some competition and will seek to improve your self-esteem by performing physically in it. Your intellectual capacity will be on display in the work that you do, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Lack of support from family members will disable your efforts. Children also disappoint you. Discord or difference of opinion in family is indicated. Beware of neighbours. Yet, says Ganesha, face circumstances with a smile.

LEO
You want to make your personal relationships conflict free and hence will attempt to resolve the conflicts which are within you. You will need to adopt a compromising attitude in life. It is best to stay away from risky financial investments today. An event which will make you happy will occur at the end of the day, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Ganesha says today you will be highly motivated. Your creative talents and abilities set you apart as an excellent artist. Words will flow if you give vent to your creativity, and if you choose to sing or dance, you will be the focus of attention. Ganesha advises you to pursue the performing arts or writing as hobbies.

LIBRA
Ganesha says the inner artist in you will come to the surface today and you will showcase your imagination powers too. You will be able to focus on topics of interest today. Those of you in the field of interest will find themselves moving ahead. There may be signing of beneficial legal deals today for you.

SCORPIO
Your account balance may suffer suddenly as you decide to loosen your purse strings. You are all set to splurge on your loved ones today, according to Ganesha. However, it is important to remember that the value of money is precious, and once spent it never returns; spend wisely.

SAGITTARIUS
Suddenly, you discover that you are fully dedicated to your family. Kith and kins form the crux of your life, says Ganesha. Showing your love and affection to your kids will give you a feeling of satisfaction. Spend some quality time with your partner!

CAPRICORN
You can't bear the weight of the heavy work load any more. Very cleverly, you will complete your tasks and slowly but steadily you take the load off your shoulders, predicts Ganesha. Attentive and observant, you meticulously plan your actions and minimise the chances of errors.

AQUARIUS
You are talented, hard working, confident and down to earth. These four characteristics are the pillars of success. Now, it is time build the building. Your curiosity and desire to achieve your goals will help you with it, feels Ganesha.

PISCES
A reckless attitude is the root cause of any downfall. Ensure responsible behavior and actions at every step at your workplace, today, suggests Ganesha. Be alert and focused and you will be able to dodge any incoming trouble. Today is a day of materialization and the projects and other things that you have been working on since a long time will draw close to completion and begin to pay off.

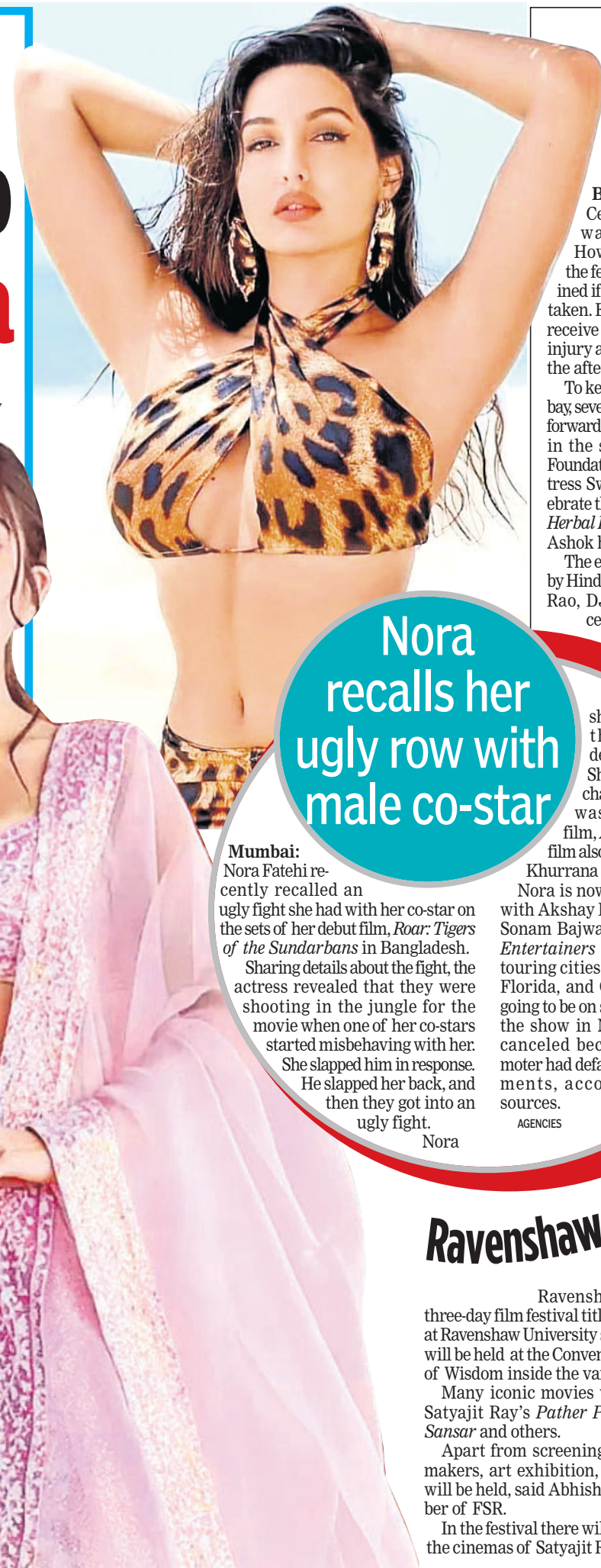
It's important to fall down to get up: Sara

Mumbai: Sara Ali Khan marked a promising entry into the Hindi film industry with *Kedarnath* and *Simba* in 2018. The celebrity kid has earned a lot of popularity with her work and social media game. However, her five-year-long journey till now has also been punctuated with a few flops like *Love Aaj Kal* and *Atrangi Re*.

Not someone to give up so easily, Sara recently opened up about learning from the failures in her career. Speaking about making mistakes, the actress said that she has done films that have not been loved by the audience and that it is her age to make mistakes. Taking it in stride, Sara expressed that it was important to fall down and get up every time and that she has dealt with her own set of setbacks.

Looking ahead, Sara has a promising line-up of films in her kitty. She is in Laxman Utekar's next untitled film with Vicky Kaushal, as well as *Gaslight* with Vikrant Massey. Sara has also signed up to play the lead in the patriotic drama *Ae Watan Mere Watan*. She plays the role of a freedom fighter in this film, which will be released directly on OTT.

AGENCIES



Nora recalls her ugly row with male co-star

Mumbai: Nora Fatehi recently recalled an ugly fight she had with her co-star on the sets of her debut film, *Roar: Tigers of the Sundarbans* in Bangladesh. Sharing details about the fight, the actress revealed that they were shooting in the jungle for the movie when one of her co-stars started misbehaving with her. She slapped him in response. He slapped her back, and then they got into an ugly fight.

Nora

Bhubaneswar: Celebrating Holi is always a great fun. However, the spirit of the festivity often gets ruined if precautions are not taken. Every year hospitals receive several cases of eye injury and skin infection in the aftermath of Holi. To keep such incidents at bay, several outfits have come forward to celebrate safe Holi in the state. Swapna Pati Foundation, set up by film actress Swapna Pati, will celebrate the 12th edition of its *Herbal Holi* at Hotel Kalinga Ashok here March 7. The event will be attended by Hindi film actress Amrita Rao, DJ Venus and other celebrities, said Pati. "There will be live

shared this incident on Kapil Sharma's comedy chat show while she was promoting her film, *An Action Hero*. The film also starred Ayushmann Khurrana and Jaideep Ahlawat. Nora is now all set to tour cities with Akshay Kumar, Disha Patani, Sonam Bajwa, and others for *The Entertainers Show*. They will be touring cities like Atlanta, Texas, Florida, and Oakland. They are going to be on schedule. However, the show in New Jersey was canceled because the promoter had defaulted on payments, according to sources.

AGENCIES

Eco-friendly Holi bash in the offing



music show, performances by a few visually challenged kids, Odissi recitals and a special show by Amrita Rao and DJ Venus to engage the viewers. This year we have planned a colour foam dance which used to be a rain dance. We are doing a fundraiser as well for people living in slums," she added. Like every year, chandan, multani mitti, and tomato juice will be used to celebrate the festival, said film producer Rakesh Mohanty on behalf of the foundation. While Swapna will keep the event purely herbal, here is another organisation who has planned to celebrate Holi using only fruits.

Aptly named *Phal Rasiya*, the festival

will be organised March 7 and 8 by Help Hands Foundation and Glamour77 at Blue Splash Water Park along Puri-Konark Marine Drive. "We shall use only extracts of orange, watermelon and milk with rose petals to celebrate the festival," said Rudra Narayan Behera of Help Hands Foundation.

The star attraction of the event will be actress Tejaswini Prakash of *Bigg Boss* and *Nagin* fame. Odia film actors like Priya Choudhury, Surpriya Nayak, Sasmita Panda, Manaswini, Abhijit Das and others will also be present.

There will be great music shows, fashion shows, games and comedy at the event also, said the organisers.

PNN

Ravenshaw Film festival starts today

Bhubaneswar: In a first, the Film Society of Ravenshaw (FSR) is organising a three-day film festival titled *Ravenshaw Film Festival* at Ravenshaw University starting Thursday. The event will be held at the Convention Centre of Seven Pillars of Wisdom inside the varsity.

Many iconic movies will be screened including Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali*, *Charulata*, *Apur Sansar* and others.

Apart from screening of films, talks with filmmakers, art exhibition, and cultural performance will be held, said Abhishek Parija, a founding member of FSR.

In the festival there will be a paper presentation on the cinemas of Satyajit Ray by Prof. Moinak Biswas,

Head, Department of Film Studies, Jadavpur University and a talk by Padma Shri Pablo Bartholomew, an independent photographer and photojournalist, on his creative collaboration with Satyajit Ray in the film *Shatranj Ke Khilari*.

There will also be Nirad Mohapatra Memorial Lecture by Biswas.

Parija said FSR is committed to cinema as an art and a social force. It aspires to work towards this through regular film screenings, reading sessions, seminars, research and scholarship, he added.

PNN



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

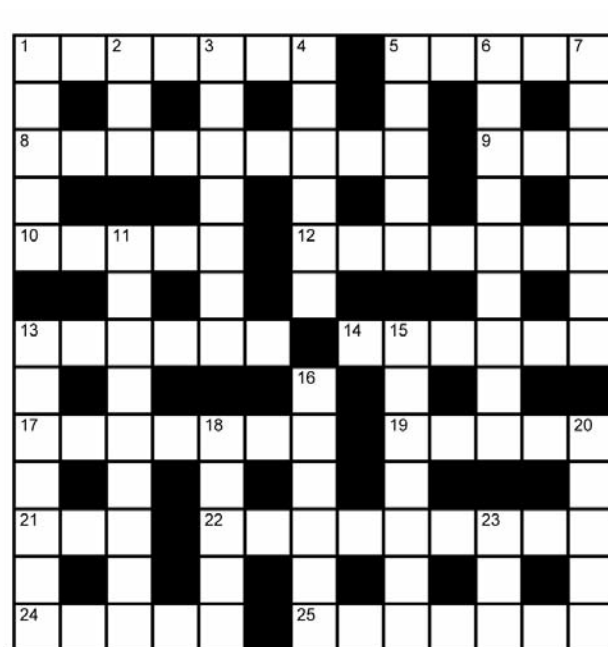


BREVITY



FUN post

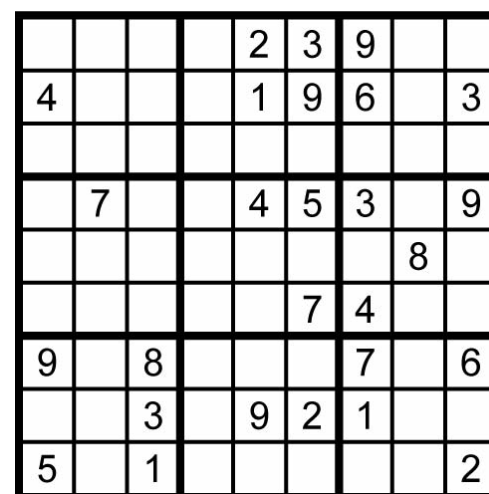
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Acts of kindness
 - 5 Military trainee
 - 8 Cleansing accessories (4,5)
 - 9 Fixed charge
 - 10 Expunge
 - 12 Attitude of high esteem
 - 13 Sincere
 - 14 Sing like a bird
 - 17 Trendy
 - 19 Spurred on
 - 21 Roadhouse
 - 22 Large powerful dog (5,4)
 - 24 Upright
 - 25 Verbalise vociferously
- Down**
- 1 Character attributes
 - 2 Liquid storage container
 - 3 Foul weather gear
 - 4 Stipend
 - 5 Broken bone holders
 - 6 Sailor's tote (6,3)
 - 7 Opera house
 - 11 Irritation
 - 13 A bit more than unfriendly
 - 15 Like some plants
 - 16 Ricotta, e.g.
 - 18 Gold bar
 - 20 Sleeper's vision
 - 23 Alias initials

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.

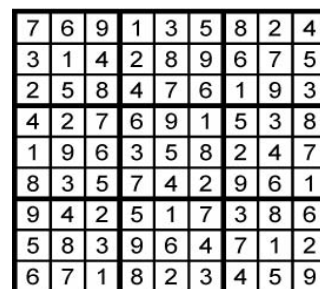


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



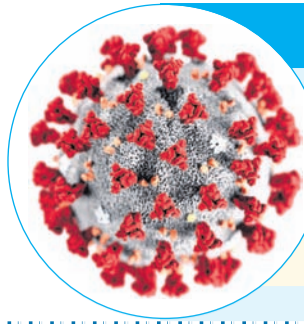
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



MOMENT TO CAPTURE

Guides, teachers and awardees pose for a photo at an event organised by Bharat Scouts and Guides at Khannagar Govt High School in Cuttack, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,00,57,341	65,29,09,937	68,00,571
India	4,46,86,611	4,41,53,504	5,30,772
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

₹75K cr to be invested in water infra in 5 years

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 1: The state government is aiming at investing ₹75,000 crore for creation of water infrastructure in the next five years, said Water Resources Minister Tukuni Sahu, Wednesday.

Addressing the media on budgetary allocation to the department, the minister said, "The state government has made a budgetary allocation of ₹11,655 crore for the Water Resources (WR) department in 2023-24 as against ₹9,374.46 crore in 2022-23, an increase of ₹2,280.54 crore."

Sahu said the allocation to the department, which was ₹3,258.45 crore in 2011-12 and ₹9,374.46 crore in 2022-23, has now increased to ₹11,655 crore in 2023-24. According to Sahu, the state government aims at investing ₹75,000 crore for creation of water infrastructure in the next five years. ₹3,355.78 crore has been allocated for execution of major and medium irrigation projects.

"Six major and medium projects - Nabarangpur Lift Irrigation project in Nabarangpur, Upper Lanth in Bolangir, Brutang in Nayagarh, Samakoi in Angul, Pipalpanka in Ganjam and Khairibhandan in Mayurbhanj - will be grounded soon. Three ongoing major and medium irrigation projects - Ghatakeswar Dam in Ganjam, Kusumi Barrage in Nayagarh and Manjore extension in Angul will be completed soon," she said.

As many as 20 new in-stream storage structures (ISS) will be taken up in addition to 46 approved ISS for conservation of water. "Saptamatruka ISS in Jajpur will be completed this year. Budgetary outlay of ₹854.41 crore has been made under this scheme. Additional irrigation potential of 2.33 lakh



Water Resources (WR) Minister Tukuni Sahu, Development Commissioner & WR ACS Anu Garg, WR EIC Bhakta Ranjan Mohanty and I&PR director Indramani Tripathy at the press meet in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Gangadhar Mehar Lift Irrigation Project would be completed and dedicated to the people this year

₹3,355.78 crore has been allocated for execution of major and medium irrigation projects

As many as 20 new in-stream storage structures to be taken up in addition to 46 approved ISS for conservation of water

ha has been proposed to be created during 2023-24," the WR Minister pointed out.

As part of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's commitment to western Odisha, Gangadhar Mehar Lift Irrigation Project would be completed and dedicated to the people this year. ₹500 crore has been allocated for construction of mega lift irrigation projects. Similarly, 170 new mega lift irrigation projects have been approved under Parbati Giri Mega Lift Irrigation Scheme (Version 2.0) for farmers in upland areas.

Considering the demand of farmers, 1 lakh deep bore wells (DBWs) have been proposed to be installed during 2021-22 to 2025-26. ₹300 crore

for 20,000 DBWs, ₹400.00 crore for 1500 community LIPs and ₹190.50 crore for revival of defunct LIPs has been allocated during 2023-24.

Rs 763 crore has been approved for Mukhyamantri Cyclone Resilient Saline Embankment Project for strengthening of around 200 km of saline embankments in Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara and Puri districts with the technical support of National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) in Chennai. Likewise, ₹150 crore has been allocated for the purpose during 2023-24.

Moreover, ₹961 crore has been proposed in the budget for strengthening of the flood control embankments and drainage improvement works in the vulnerable areas. ₹181 crore has been allocated for construction of 500 check dams under Mukhyamantri Adibandha Tiari Yojana (MATY). Rs 270 crore has been allocated for lining of canals. Besides, ₹180 crore has been allocated under Command Area Development (CAD) for construction of field channels and ₹125 crore under Nabakrushna Choudhury Secha Unayan Yojana for effective utilisation of created irrigation potential.

Museum entry fee won't exceed ₹10

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 1: Entry ticket to any museum in the state will not be more than ₹10, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said Wednesday.

Patnaik also directed the officials/staffers concerned not to collect any entry fee from students, artisans and weavers.

The direction was given to make the museums more popular and help more tourists visit the museums.

"Museums play an important role in the conservation and promotion of our great heritage, and the objective of the direction to keep the entry fee at ₹10 is to help people, particularly the youths well acquainted with our art and culture," Patnaik said.

Besides Odisha State Museum, the state has other museums including the Maritime Museum at Cuttack, Kalabhumii, and Tribal Culture and Research Museum.

Curtains down on Adivasi Mela-2023

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 1: State Level Adivasi Exhibition and Cultural Festival, which commenced February 20 at Adivasi Exhibition Ground in Unit 1 here, concluded Wednesday.

ST & SC Development Minister Jagannath Saraka joined the valedictory function as the chief guest and expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik "for his humble steps taken for the development of tribals".

He said that the development of tribal means conservation of culture. In this function, 18 tribal achievers were felicitated and four alumni of Eklavya Model Residential School from Sundargarh district who have cracked Odisha Civil Services Examinations were also felicitated.

The best houses awarded by the mela committee were also felicitated on the occasion. They were: Lanjia Saora House, Gunupur (1st), Chuktia Bhunjia House, Nuapada and Paudi Bhuyana House, Jamardihi (2nd) and Kutia Kandha House, Belghar (3rd). Annual souvenir 'BANAJA' was released on the occasion.

Tribal self-help groups (SHGs) made a turnover of around ₹2.50 crore during the festival, said sources.

Tribal SHGs made a business turnover of around ₹2.50 crore during the festival

Huge demand to propel housing sector: Sureka

The adage 'Experience is the best teacher' is attuned well to **Suresh Kumar Sureka**, designated partner of Springville Greens LLP, who entered into real estate business after having over two decades of experience in stock market.

Sureka, who completed his degree from Bhawanipur Education Society College in Kolkata, started his career as a stock broker and worked in his family business at a very early age before venturing into real estate sector. In an interview with **Orissa POST**, Sureka speaks about the outlook of real estate business in Odisha:



■ **How do you see the growth of real estate sector in Odisha in coming 5 years?**

■ Odisha's real estate market will remain strong as it is one of the fastest growing states of India with a stable government. Investments are coming. Apart from capacity expansion of existing industries, new industries are also being set up. Odisha, particularly Bhubaneswar, is gradually becoming the health and education hub of eastern India. This means that in coming years we are expected to see a boost in demand for housing and other services.

■ **Will property prices fall this year?**

■ Property prices will not fall in 2023. The prices may remain stable for the next 12-18 months if raw material prices do not shoot up. In last one year, construction cost has gone up substantially. Again, due to work from home option in many sectors, there have been huge savings with the working class which has created a huge demand in housing sector. The higher demand is keeping the prices stable. From 2013 to 2021, property prices have not appreciated and remained on the lower side. Post-Covid, property demand in tier 2 and tier 3 cities has gone up due to remote working.

■ **What is Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act and how does it help a builder and a buyer?**

■ Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act seeks to protect homebuyers while boosting investments in real estate industry. Post introduction of RERA, the grievances are addressed and re-

solved more rapidly. The Act provides a standard of carpet area measurement and gives the homebuyers the right to get property information. One of the most significant advantages of the Act is that it prohibits the builder from taking more than 10 per cent of the cost of the flat as an advance or an application fee. It also makes the builders more accountable as far as deadline of the proposed construction is concerned. It imposes several clearances that a builder must adhere to before engaging in a sales agreement. While the Act imposes penalty on developers for delaying projects, it also penalises the buyer for delayed instalments. Incessant payment delays despite prior notice empower the developer to cancel the booking and refund the amount to the buyer after deducting booking amount and interest. Overall, the Act not only safeguards the rights and interests of the homebuyers but developers as well.

■ **How was your journey as a realtor?**

■ After spending around 20 years in stock market (from 1991 to 2010), I decided to diversify my assets and capital investment strategy. I saw huge potential and opportunity in Odisha, owing to the developmental

plans in Bhubaneswar alongside a very stable government. This nudged me to enter the real estate market in 2011-12 by acquiring land in Bhubaneswar for the real estate project. I joined hands with SUREKA Group and Merlin Group for development of projects in Odisha. The first project was Springville Homes (between 2014 and 2019) in Jajpur Road, spanning over 5 acres and having 494 accommodation units. The second and ongoing project is Springville Greens, spanning over 10.645 acres in Tamando, Bhubaneswar with 728 accommodation units.

■ **Tell us in brief about your education and work experience.**

■ After completing B.Com from Bhawanipur Education Society College in Kolkata, I started my career as a stock broker with Bhubaneswar Stock Exchange. I had learnt the business acumen from having worked in my family business in Kolkata at a very early age. I have a lot of experience in the capital market and 18 plus years' experience in real estate business.



NEW BEGINNING



Governor Ganeshi Lal greets newly-appointed Chief Secretary PK Jena in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Jena takes over as Chief Secy

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 1: Senior IAS officer Pradeep Kumar Jena Wednesday took charge as the new Chief Secretary.

The 1989-batch IAS officer assumed office after the superannuation of Suresh Chandra Mahapatra from service.

Before taking charge, Jena paid obeisance to the Trinity at Srimandir in Puri.

Jena was accorded a warm welcome by senior officers of the state

administration.

After paying obeisance to the sibling deities, they offered prayers to the subsidiary deities on the shrine premises.

They later had 'Mahaprasad' before leaving for Bhubaneswar. During the day, he discussed various issues discussions with senior officers.

Meanwhile, Anu Garg, a 1991-batch IAS officer, took charge as the new Development Commissioner of Odisha in place of Jena.

Odisha sees 10% jump in GST mop-up for Feb

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 1: The Union Ministry of Finance Wednesday said there was a 10 per cent increase in goods and services tax (GST) collection in Odisha in February 2023 as compared to the same month in

the previous year.

In February 2023, GST collection in the state was ₹4,519 crore, which was 10 per cent more than ₹4,101 crore collected in February 2022.

Gross GST revenue collected in February this year was ₹1,49,577 crore of which Central GST was

₹27,662 crore, State GST ₹34,915 crore, IGST ₹75,069 crore (including ₹35,689 crore collected on import of goods) and cess ₹11,931 crore (including ₹792 crore collected on import of goods), the ministry stated.

The Union government has set-



targeted ₹34,770 crore to CGST and ₹29,054 crore to SGST from IGST as regular settlement, the Finance Ministry said, adding that the total revenue of Centre and the states after regular settlements in February 2023 was ₹62,432 crore for CGST and ₹63,969 crore for the SGST.

State to finish OBC survey by July 12

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 1: Ahead of 2024 elections, the state government has decided to resume the survey for enumeration of other backward classes (OBCs) in the state and complete it by July 12 this year.

Odisha State Commission for Backward Classes (OSCBC) member secretary VV Yadav has recently written a letter to all Collectors and commissioners of municipal corporations, in this regard.

"The state government is pleased to accept the proposal of the OSCBC to resume the survey of social and educational condition of people belonging to backward classes in Odisha. Various activities under the survey shall be carried out as per the revised schedule," Yadav said.

The Collectors and commissioners of municipal corporations will be in overall charge of the survey and hence they have been asked to personally ensure timely completion of survey activities, he informed.



CONSERVATION BID: Former chief minister Biju Patnaik's iconic Dakota aircraft fell down while being installed through a crane at Bhubaneswar airport, Wednesday. Two persons sustained minor injuries in the incident

NABA MURDER PROBE

Congress moves breach of privilege notice against CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 1: Opposition Congress has moved a breach of privilege notice against Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Minister of State for Home TK Behera, accusing them of misleading the Assembly while giving information on the investigation into the killing of minister Naba Kishore Das.

In a letter to the Assembly secretary, Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Narasingha Mishra said that Behera, representing the Chief Minister, stated in the House February 27 following the precedents of Lakhimpur Kheri killings in Uttar Pradesh and the order passed by the Supreme Court after that, the state government urged the Orissa High Court to name a judge to monitor the probe.

The court then nominated Justice (Retired) JP Das for the job.

"The chief minister through the MoS has intentionally misled the House to escape from the criticism of the Opposition. The facts stated in the reply are not true and knowing it to be untrue, a statement has been made," Mishra claimed in the

letter. He said that the Supreme Court had passed a judicial order constituting the SIT and appointed Justice (Retd) Rakesh Kumar Jain of the Punjab & Haryana High Court in the UP case.

However, in the Naba Kishore Das killing case, "The order has been passed from the administrative side and not the judicial side," the Congress leader said in the letter.

The Chief Minister and the MoS for Home thus committed a breach of privilege, Mishra claimed.

The CLP leader raised the issue in the Assembly during the Zero Hour and sought a ruling from the Chair for asking the CM and MoS to tender an apology for allegedly misleading the House. As Speaker BK Arukha said that he would examine the matter before giving any ruling, Congress MLAs staged a demonstration in the well of the House.

Mishra also alleged that there was a bid to shield dismissed assistant sub-inspector of police Gopal Das, who according to the state government, has confessed to killing the minister. He claimed that the statement of the accused before the magistrate was not done properly.

In Lakhimpur Kheri case, the order for court-monitored probe was passed by the Supreme Court but in Naba Das murder case, it was from administrative side, says Mishra

Automated driving test in 19 RTOs soon



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 1: The State Transport Authority Wednesday (STA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with M/s Akshara Nipun JV for development, operation and maintenance of Automated Driving Testing System (ADTS) in the state. The agreement was signed in the presence of Commerce and Transport Minister Tukuni Sahu, department secretary Usha Padhee and commissioner Arun Bothra. Sahu said that under the government's 5T initiative the Commerce and Transport department plans to introduce ADTS in the state to test the driving skills of aspirants before issuing them driving licence. It should be noted as per the current practice, to obtain a driving li-

AFTER IMPLEMENTATION OF ADTS, THE APPLICANT'S DRIVING ABILITY WILL BE JUDGED THROUGH COMPUTERISED SYSTEM

THE PROJECT WILL BE COMPLETED AND IMPLEMENTED WITHIN 10 MONTHS AS PER THE MOU

cence (DL), the person has to give a test in the presence of a Motor Vehicle Inspector. After the test this officer decides whether the person has the ability to drive or not. But after implementation of ADTS, the applicant's driving ability will be judged through computerised system, without any human intervention. The implementation of ADTS will also ensure transparency in the process. "M/s Akshara Nipun JV has been selected through tender process to implement the ADTS

through private-public-partnership mode. CIRT, Pune, has been appointed as consultant to conduct periodic audit of the system," said a department official. The project will be completed and implemented within 10 months as per the MoU. In the first phase, ADTS will be set up in driving testing tracks of 19 RTOs in Angul, Baripada, Bhadrak, Bolangir, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Nayagarh, Phulbani, Rairangpur, Rourkela, Sundargarh, Talcher, Keonjhar, Malkangiri, Nuapada, Bhanjanagar, Nabarangpur and Sonapur.

The system will feature a state-of-the-art setup, including video analytics technology and an array of sensors. From the entry of the vehicles to its inspection and driving test, everything will be conducted digitally. The sensors fitted at the track will monitor it and judge the applicant. Hitting these sensors during test will result in loss of mark. The driving skill of an applicant will be judged on parameters like seat belt, path change, lane driving, stop line, up-gradient, forward-8, reverse-S and traffic junctions.

The applicants will come to know about the outcome of the test on the spot and the driving skill testing process will complete the formalities swiftly.



STAGE PRESENCE: Artistes perform a play 'Shree Ganesh' at the 31st Nikhila Utkal Natyotsav organised by Arohana at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

'Mandia song' to take people back to roots

The lyrics of the song reflect how mandia has been a traditional food commodity in the state and how its revival can deliver a lot of health benefits



Naveen Patnaik @NaveenOdisha

#OdishaMilletMission is a pioneering initiative to bring back climate resilient grain in our fields & plates. Thank #GrammyAward winner & composer-producer Mr. @rickykej & @krushibibhag for the beautiful song on #Mandia to popularize the planet friendly, nutritious millet. @FAO



8:57 AM · Mar 1, 2023 · 24.1K Views

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 1: To celebrate the International Year of Millets and the success of millet cultivation in the state, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday released a special Mandia (as millet is known in Odia) song composed by the three times Grammy winner Ricky Kej.

Through his Twitter account the CM said, "Odisha Millet Mission is a pioneering initiative to bring back climate resilient grain in our fields and plates. Thank Grammy award winner and composer-producer Ricky Kej and department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, Government of Odisha, for the beautiful song on Mandia to popularise the planet

friendly, nutritious millet." Kej, who is known for advocating for social change, be it in the area of climate activism or universal cooperation, through his work also took to social media saying, "Thrilled to have met the Hon'ble Chief

Minister of Odisha - Naveen Patnaik. Presented our song on millets, as part of his massive initiative. We discussed music and the huge benefits of millets, for our health and for the environment. The lyrics of the song, which is

produced by veteran filmmaker Nila Madhav Panda, reflect how mandia has been a traditional food commodity in the tribal belts of Odisha with people integrating it into their diet for time immemorial. The song also carries the message that millets are good for the planet and for our health, so we should adopt them wholeheartedly going back to our roots.

Earlier, the CM had met the composer Kej in Bhubaneswar February 25 and had thanked him for his contribution towards the mandia song. The year 2023 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of the Millet, following a proposal by India, which wants to position itself as a global hub for millets.

"Millets can play an important role and contribute to our collective efforts to empower smallholder farmers, achieve sustainable development, eliminate hunger, adapt to climate change, promote biodiversity, and transform agrifood systems," the FAO director-general QU Dongyu has been quoted saying about millets.

BJP seeks action...

Continued from P1

Later, after proceedings resumed, BJP members stalled the House again when Treasury Bench member Arun Sahoo blamed the BJP leader for Tuesday's violence. Condemning the alleged police excesses during the BJP rally, Leader of Opposition (LoP) Jayanarayan Mishra wanted to know the identities of people in black and white shirts, who brutally attacked the BJP Yuva Morcha activists. "Police have refused to lodge an FIR on the basis of a complaint filed by the BJP while the workers have been booked under different sections of the IPC, including 307 (attempt to murder)," he said. "The

Centre suspends...

Continued from P1

CPR, a non-profit organisation, which also receives grants from the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR), is a recognised institution of the Department of Science and Technology. The think-tank has been asked to give clarification and documents regarding FCRA funds received by it, officials stated. The FCRA licence of CPR was last renewed in 2016 and was due for renewal in 2021. According to CPR's website, it has been one of India's leading public policy think-tanks since 1973. It is dedicated to conducting research that contributes to high quality scholarship, better policies, and a more robust public discourse about the issues that impact life in India. It brings together India's best thinkers and policy practitioners who are at the forefront of both research and engagement in the policy space, the website said.

Mexican Prez's...

Continued from P1

The matter however, did not end with some terse comments by netizens. Instead accused the president of spreading 'fake' news as the photo had been used 'multiple times' in the past. They alleged that the photo of the elf had been doing the rounds over the years. However, it should be stated here that the source of the image has still not been identified. Notably, in the past, Obrador had expressed his respect of indigenous cultures and beliefs for a while.



CELL TO JAIL: Dozens of smartphones seized by police put on display at the Cantonment Road police station in Cuttack, Wednesday; (inset: the accused duo)

OP PHOTO

Kerala ULB team on exposure trip

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 1: A group of 21 elected representatives and functionaries from urban local bodies (ULBs) of Kerala are on a three-day exposure visit to Odisha to learn about the widely acclaimed urban practices of the state. The Centre for Environment and Development empanelled by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has organised the visit from February 28 to March 2, as part of the Individual Capacity Building



Program under AMRUT 2.0.

ULBs from Kozhikode and Palakkad districts are here to learn about the best practices adopted by the state on sewage and septage management, solid waste management, drinking water supply, city beautification and heritage man-

agement in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Puri.

The team visited the sewage treatment plants, wealth centers (MCC, MRF) and Smart Janpath in Bhubaneswar February 28, following which they had an interactive session with Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das in the conference hall of State Urban Development Agency. Das said, "Urban transformation happening in Odisha under the leadership of Chief Minister is exemplary."

DAILY 11-MINUTE WALK CAN CUT EARLY DEATH RISK

Just 11 minutes, or 75 minutes a week, of moderate-intensity physical activity such as a brisk walk would be sufficient to lower the risk of diseases such as heart disease, stroke and a number of cancers, a new University of Cambridge led research has found.

In a study published Tuesday in the 'British Journal of Sports Medicine', researchers conclude that one in 10 early deaths could be prevented if everyone managed at least half the recommended level of physical activity by the UK's National Health Service (NHS). Physical activity, particularly when it is moderate-intensity, is known to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer, and the NHS recommends that adults do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity a week. "If you are someone who finds

the idea of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week a bit daunting, then our findings should be good news," said Soren Brage from the Medical Research Council (MRC) Epidemiology Unit at the University of Cambridge.

"Doing some physical activity is better than doing none. This is also a good starting position - if you find that 75 minutes a week is manageable, then you could try stepping it up gradually to the full recommended amount," he said. Cardiovascular diseases, such as heart disease and stroke, are the leading cause of death globally, responsible for 17.9 million deaths per year in 2019, while cancers were responsible for 9.6 million deaths in 2017. Seventy-five minutes per week of moderate activity was found to be enough to reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular disease by 17 per cent



RESEARCHERS LOOKED AT RESULTS REPORTED IN 196 PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES, COVERING MORE THAN 30 MILLION PARTICIPANTS FROM 94 LARGE STUDY COHORTS

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTES PER WEEK OF MODERATE ACTIVITY WAS FOUND TO BE ENOUGH TO REDUCE THE RISK OF DEVELOPING CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE BY 17 PER CENT AND CANCER BY 7 PER CENT

UK'S NHS RECOMMENDS THAT ADULTS DO AT LEAST 150 MINUTES OF MODERATE-INTENSITY ACTIVITY OR 75 MINUTES OF VIGOROUS-INTENSITY ACTIVITY A WEEK

and cancer by 7 per cent. For some specific cancers, the reduction in risk was greater - head and neck, myeloid leukaemia, myeloma, and gastric cardia cancers were between 14-26 per cent lower risk. For other cancers, such

as lung, liver, endometrial, colon, and breast cancer, a 3-11 per cent lower risk was observed. Professor James Woodcock from the MRC Epidemiology Unit said: "We know that physical activity, such as walking or cycling, is good

for you, especially if you feel it raises your heart rate.

"But what we've found is there are substantial benefits to heart health and reducing your risk of cancer even if you can only manage 10 minutes every day."

Moderate-intensity physical activity is that which raises the heart rate and makes us breathe faster but still able to speak during the activity such as brisk walking, dancing, riding a bike, playing tennis and hiking. To explore the amount of physical activity necessary to have a beneficial impact on several chronic diseases and premature death, researchers from the MRC Epidemiology Unit at Cambridge University carried out a systematic review and meta-analysis, pooling and analysing cohort data from all of the published evidence. In total, they looked at results reported in 196 peer-reviewed articles,

covering more than 30 million participants from 94 large study cohorts, to produce the largest analysis to date of the association between physical activity levels and risk of heart disease, cancer, and early death.

The researchers calculated that if everyone in the studies had done the equivalent of at least 150 min per week of moderate-intensity activity, around one in six (16 per cent) early deaths would be prevented. One in nine (11 per cent) cases of cardiovascular disease and one in 20 (5 per cent) cases of cancer would be prevented. However, even if everyone managed at least 75 min per week of moderate-intensity physical activity, around 10 per cent early deaths would be prevented. One in twenty (5 per cent) cases of cardiovascular disease and nearly one in thirty (3 per cent) cases of cancer would be prevented.

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NATURAL COOLANTS: A man checks earthen water pots and bottles sold by a street vendor on the footpath in Sambalpur Wednesday as mercury soars in the state

4 fire personnel critical as LPG cylinder goes off

Sambalpur, March 1: At least four fire personnel sustained critical burn injuries after an LPG cylinder suddenly exploded while they were trying to douse a fire that had caught a tea stall at Chanarpur village under Burla police limits in this district in the wee hours of Wednesday.

Tusker tramples woman to death

Sundargarh: A woman was trampled to death after a tusker attacked a motorcycle entering the forest Wednesday in Bargaon forest range near Kulasara village.

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PUBLIC NOTICE Notice is hereby given to all concerned that, Suresh Chandra Barik, S/o- Late Gupteswar Barik, R/o. Dharabgarh, Po- Goelbhadri, Ps- Sainatala, Dist- Bolangir has sworn an affidavit on dt. 23.02.2023 and has reported to OIC, Titlagarh P.S., on dt. 23.02.2023 regarding loss of original link Regd. Sale Deed No. 2034/80 dt. 04.07.1980 of Registering Officer, Titlagarh.

Wildlife fleeing Similipal

Constant threat from poachers leads to flight of wild animals from SNP

Baripada, March 1: Wild animals in Similipal National Park (SNP) in Mayurbhanj district are shunning their usual natural habitats and refusing to return after straying into human settlements due to constant threat from poachers, a report said Wednesday.



Seizure of three tiger hides from smugglers within a short span of two months is indicative that the SNP has become unsafe for the wild animals

are concerned as to how a Royal Bengal Tiger could escape from the core area and stray into the neighbouring district. Pintu Maiti, district president of a local outfit Bhanja Sena alleged that the wild animals are running outside to save their lives as the poachers are entering the core area in regular intervals tracking the movement of Royal Bengal Tigers.

Missing VSSUT student's body fished out; family cries murder

Sambalpur, March 1: A day after a former student of Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology (VSSUT) allegedly jumped into the Power Channel at Burla in Sambalpur district Tuesday, fire personnel fished out the girl's body after conducting a search operation, Wednesday.



Portrait of the missing student.

Leopard on prowl in Sundargarh village

Sundargarh: Panic sparked among the residents of Geleibahal village in the Bargaon forest range of Sundargarh district early morning Wednesday when a leopard strayed into the agricultural fields next to their hamlet.



Man dupes couple of ₹10L; arrested

Berhampur, March 1: Police Wednesday arrested a man on charge of defrauding a couple of ₹10 lakh after promising to provide a land for house construction under Bada Bazaar police limits here in Ganjam district.

Seven indigenous varieties of paddy seeds get govt approval



Raghunathpur, March 1: As many as seven new indigenous varieties of paddy seeds developed by the farmers here in Jagatsinghpur district have received the government's approval.

rying out series of examinations to develop these paddy seeds. Finally, the OIAT, IPR cell head Dayanidhi Mishra took up the matter and sent the newly-developed seeds for examination to the Plant Varieties Registry department of Centre in 2017.

EAST COAST RAILWAY Tender No.: MCSW-GAMC-ABCP-22-23-23 Name of Work: COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT OF AXLE BOX CLEANING PLANT FOR 03 YEARS AT CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP, MANCHESWAR.

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FOCUS POLITICS

CONGRESS IN NEW AVATAR



Rahul's reputation has successfully changed from a reluctant and part-time politician to one who can take to the streets when necessary and has the stamina to walk the distance

The 85th Plenary Session of the Indian National Congress, which recently concluded in Raipur was held at a time when the Bharat Jodo Yatra (BJY) had reached its destination, and the baton of Congress presidency was formally passed on to Mallikarjun Kharge from the Gandhi family.

The 1998 Panchmari Session of the Congress had adopted the strategy of 'Ekla Chalo' (walk alone), while the BJP was gaining popularity in the Hindi Heartland, and the Congress at that juncture didn't deem the rising BJP as a potential threat and also ruled out the politics of coalition. However, after suffering an electoral drubbing in 1999 which brought the NDA headed by the BJP at the helm, Congress had to do rethinking at the Shimla Session in 2003 where it mooted the idea of forming a coalition of like-minded parties and the resultant outcome was the formation of the UPA government which remained at the helm at the Centre and in many states as well.

The sudden rise of the BJP under the leadership of Narendra Modi and its handsome victory in 2014 Lok Sabha elections brought NDA at the helm at the Centre and in many states while Congress was humbled at the hustings and reduced to a limited number of seats in Lok Sabha. The 2019 Lok Sabha elections witnessed the BJP securing a landslide victory with Congress registering a minuscule gain in its total tally but still lagging behind to be acknowledged as the leading Opposition party in the House.

The period from 2014 to 2022 witnessed an incessant blitzkrieg campaign launched by BJP against Congress with slogans like 'Congress-Mukt Bharat' and alluring the elected representatives of Congress in Congress-ruled states to the BJP fold to form BJP-led governments in those states and using the national media to denigrate the image of Rahul Gandhi. Measures like demonetization and electoral bonds proved instrumental in drying up the financial resources of Opposition parties, especially the Congress. Recurring

incidents of humiliating drubbings at Assembly elections, desertions of many local/regional leaders and no hope of political revival in the immediate future left the party in disarray.

In the wake of these discouraging developments, the top brass had to embark upon some revolutionary programme that could prove instrumental in revitalising the party, boosting the morale of its workers at the grassroots, and the Udaipur Session charted a programme for the party to embark on a nationwide padayatra. Consequently, Rahul took the initiative of launching the BJY from Kanyakumari on 7 September 2022 which culminated on 30 January 2023 at Srinagar covering over 4000 km. During the course of over 150 days, Rahul often reiterated at press conferences that BJY was not an electoral exercise, it was an exercise to invent India and to protest the politics of "fear, bigotry and prejudice," and the growing economic inequality. In his final speech at Srinagar on 31 January, Rahul talked of 'Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb', of the sages of ancient India and the language of love, and held the BJP-RSS responsible for "violence, communal disturbances and hatred" in the country as well as the destruction of the economy.

Some political observers ask what Rahul expected to gain from

the BJY if not electoral victory or organisational resurgence. However, some experts believe that Rahul does not appear to be in a rush to win elections and that he is instead focusing on long-term benefits for Congress' rehabilitation in the eyes of the public. Another group of experts argues that much depends on the performance of Congress in the forthcoming nine state Assembly polls and if the Congress performs well in these polls, it will be a by-product of the BJY. For these experts, the avowed objective BJY is to build the discourse and momentum for Congress in the long run.

Rahul's BJY has the potential to accomplish for the Congress and the country what LK Advani's Rath Yatra did for the BJP and the country in the 1990s, but with the exact opposite result. While Rahul has pointed out multiple flaws in BJP's socio-economic, defence and foreign policies, the Raipur Session has also offered an alternative model and vision to administer the country. The party has spelt out its socio-economic and political vision at the Raipur Session; nonetheless, the real test lies ahead how far the party workers can carry out the message of this vision to the grassroots to win the trust of the masses and the better way to judge this would be the outcome of forthcoming elections to Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and

Rajasthan Assemblies and for this Congress has to gear up its organisation wherewithal at the state, district and village levels.

Rahul leading the BJY from the front has enabled the Congress to showcase that the party is capable of a sustained public outreach programme, demonstrating the logistical and organisational skills of Congress state units, even in states where the party is not in power. Rahul's reputation has successfully changed from a reluctant and part-time politician to one who can take to the streets when necessary and has the stamina to walk the distance.

The BJY has enabled Congress to position itself as the only national Opposition force against Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led BJP. Despite the Congress' invitation, other prominent Opposition figures like Mamata Banerjee, Nitish Kumar, Akhilesh Yadav, Tejashwi Yadav, and Sharad Pawar declined to attend the BJY's conclusion in Srinagar. Nevertheless, during the yatra, civil society groups that are opposed to the BJP-RSS system joined forces under the leadership of Congress.

In the post-BJY period when the Congress spelt out its political and socio-economic vision at its Raipur Session, many regional satraps seem to be inclined to come under the umbrella of the Congress to forge a united Opposition front to defeat the mighty BJP in the ensuing state Assembly polls in 2023 and the 2024 General Elections. The Bihar-style Mahagathbandhan comprising seven non-BJP parties offers a role model for the national level alliance of non-BJP Opposition parties, including the Congress, and the Congress has positively responded to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's call for such a national alliance.

The Congress in its new avatar has the potential of uniting regional satraps under its umbrella and much depends on the party's electoral performance in the ensuing Assembly polls due this year.

The writer is Executive Editor, India Ahead News Channel. Views are personal



Anil Singh

THE BJY HAS ENABLED CONGRESS TO REPOSITION ITSELF AS THE ONLY NATIONAL OPPOSITION FORCE AGAINST PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI-LED BJP



Havard Halland & Jessica Lovering

The urgent need to curb greenhouse-gas emissions, together with Russia's war in Ukraine and subsequent surge in oil and gas prices, has increased global demand for nuclear power

Embrace Nuclear Energy

Multilateral development banks (MDBs) have historically been reluctant to invest in nuclear energy, and the World Bank has not financed a nuclear power plant since 1959. In the absence of MDB funds, the majority of international financing for such projects has come from state banks in Russia and China, establishing Russian and Chinese companies as the primary suppliers of nuclear technology to low- and middle-income countries.

While this approach has allowed MDBs to avoid controversy, they must acknowledge that the world has changed. The urgent need to curb greenhouse-gas emissions, together with Russia's war in Ukraine and subsequent surge in oil and gas prices, has increased global demand for nuclear power. With the 2011 Fukushima disaster fading in the rearview mirror, even Japan is planning to restart its reactors.

France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom have all announced plans to build new nuclear power plants, Sweden is considering it, and the European Union now allows nuclear energy to be labeled as a green investment. In the United States, the federal government is expected to pump about \$40 billion into the sector over the coming decade, and private investment in nuclear energy is surging.

This change in sentiment coincides with rapid technological advances. The development of smaller and safer reactors has made nuclear power cheaper, faster to deploy, and easier to maintain. Whereas the construction of traditional nuclear power plants has historically been a major national undertaking, with costs frequently running into the dozens of billions of dollars, so-called small modular reactors allow for a more tailored approach and more manageable financing packages.

This is particularly important for developing countries, which must figure out how to expand their power supply while curtailing greenhouse-gas emissions as they become increasingly industrialised and urbanised. The International Energy Agency estimates that demand for energy in Africa will jump by one-third by the end of the decade, owing to population and income growth, as well as improved access.

While increased MDB support for renewable energy has helped put developing economies on the path toward carbon neutrality, most countries still rely on coal-fired power plants and natural gas for baseload electricity production. To complete the shift away from fossil fuels, governments must complement wind and solar energy with low-carbon sources that are not dependent on weather conditions.

But without nuclear power (or hydroelectricity, but not all countries have that option), governments will find it difficult to replace their fossil-fuel baseload. While it may be possible to achieve this by combining renewable energy with utility-scale battery storage, the costs are prohibitive, and modern batteries come with their own sustainability issues. Geothermal energy could also play this role, but currently it is limited to areas where geothermal heat is available close to the Earth's surface. New technologies could expand access to geothermal power, but they are costly.

By abandoning their reticence about nuclear power, MDBs could help scale up low-carbon energy supply while enhancing global security. Western countries' withdrawal from nuclear energy over the past few decades has enabled Russia to establish itself as the leading international provider of reactors, services, and financing for nuclear-power projects. At a time of heightened geopolitical tensions, it is in the interest of MDBs' democratic shareholders governments to establish an alternative for emerging countries interested in nuclear power but hesitant to make their energy security dependent on Russia. Simultaneously, MDBs would promote better safety and sustainability standards.

Given that international development agencies tend to follow MDBs' lead, and that private financing of energy infrastructure projects in developing countries often depends on multilateral lenders' risk-mitigation policies, MDBs should reverse their position on nuclear power. Otherwise, Russia and China will remain the world's primary suppliers of such projects.

To be sure, MDBs must carefully assess proposed nuclear energy projects to ensure that they meet appropriate technological and sustainability standards. While some under-resourced countries with weak institutions might not be ready to pursue nuclear power, MDBs are uniquely positioned to support emerging economies seeking alternatives to Russian and Chinese technologies and financing.

The climate crisis, too, has created unprecedented momentum for reform. The US, Germany, a G20 expert panel, and Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley have all called for strengthening MDBs' capacity to support developing countries in mitigating and adapting to climate change and in mobilising private financing for this purpose.

Meanwhile, the World Bank recently published an "evolution roadmap" that aims to increase its capacity to respond to climate change.

Reforming MDBs' financing structures and energy policies is crucial to supporting developing countries in mitigating the worst effects of climate change. Moreover, Russia's war against Ukraine has revealed the critical role of the multilateral financial system as a bulwark against tyranny. Since the start of the war, the World Bank has disbursed \$16 billion in financial support to Ukraine, with other multilateral finance institutions providing comparable amounts.

By explicitly permitting MDBs to finance nuclear power, their shareholders governments could weaken Russia's still-considerable influence in emerging countries.

The momentum generated by nuclear energy's renaissance, the geostrategic imperative to reduce Russia's role as the dominant international provider of nuclear energy infrastructure, and the looming climate crisis, has presented MDBs with a unique opportunity to update their nuclear energy policy. To fight climate change and achieve a safer, more sustainable future, they must seize it.

Havard Halland, Senior Economist at the OECD Development Centre, is a former senior economist at the World Bank. Jessica Lovering, Executive Director of the Good Energy Collective, is a fellow at the Energy for Growth Hub and the Fastest Path to Zero Initiative at the University of Michigan.

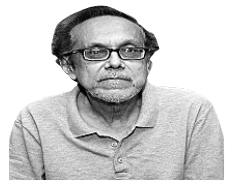
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WISDOM CORNER

- It is better to have your head in the clouds, and know where you are... than to breathe the clearer atmosphere below them, and think that you are in paradise.** HENRY DAVID THOREAU
- God is not willing to do everything, and thus take away our free will and that share of glory which belongs to us.** NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI
- Nature shows that with the growth of intelligence comes increased capacity for pain, and it is only with the highest degree of intelligence that suffering reaches its supreme end.** ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

SPECTRUM PRIMARY EDUCATION

Trends are not encouraging



Dhurjati Mukherjee

THERE IS A SERIOUS NEED TO INVESTIGATE THE CONDITION OF SCHOOLS IN BACKWARD DISTRICTS

Primary education in the country is neglected as the states do not have the resources to invest in schools and upgrade their standards. Though there has been some increase in budgetary allocation, experts believe that both school and higher education will stagnate and may actually decline in real terms, if inflation is taken into account. There has been a paltry increase of around Rs 13,000 crore from the current fiscal with about Rs 39,000 crore set aside for the National Education Mission.

This comes at a time when there is imperative need to spread education in villages and also improve its quality after the learning losses suffered during the pandemic. However, the promise of recruiting 38,000 teachers and support staff in the next three years for 740 Eklavya Model Residential Schools, serving 3.5 lakh students, appears quite encouraging. Experts expected that more such schools should be opened and each sub-division, if not each block, should get one such school.

The recently released Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) found that gender disparity prevails in education as there is a tendency to invest more to educate sons. There are many states where girls' enrolment still languished

at every level by over 10%. Needless to say, enrolment does not mean attendance. ASER found attendance at government schools to dip from 88.6% in Tamil Nadu to under 60% in Bihar, MP and UP. Any figure under 75% found in 12 states suggests habitual absence, dropouts, or ghost enrolments. Teachers are missing as well, sometimes because they play truant, chiefly owing to unified posts. In 2020, there were 17.1% vacant positions across India, 57.5% in Sikkim and around 40% in Jharkhand and Bihar and it is believed that the situation has worsened today.

Delving into the report, which based its findings on 2021 data, it was found that most states experienced large learning losses during the pandemic. However, once schools reopened, states made a concerted effort to build or re-build foundational competencies, which has resulted in a partial and in some cases, a full recovery. While the last few rounds of ASER did not capture the state of foundational learning, it is understood that the government conducted a study through the NCERT in 2022 to find out whether students were picking up basic skills on literacy and numeracy. The NCERT study found that 37% of students enrolled in Class-III have very limited founda-

tional numeracy skills such as identifying numbers and carry out simple mathematical operations, while even the most basic knowledge is absent in 11% learners.

The National Education Policy (NEP) speaks of "economically sub-optimal and operationally complex schools" - translated, those in remote areas with relatively few students. The People's Archive of Rural India (PARI) in a report about rural communities in Odisha, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh termed them as guinea-pig states for the acronym-happy Union government's SATH programme (Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital). PARI reported that under SATH, nearly 9,000 sub-schools were shut down in Odisha. From an unclear and undated Niti Aayog report, the tally seems to be 20,000 in MP and 6,000 in Jharkhand.

This being the state of primary education, there is a serious need to investigate the condition of schools in backward districts. Quality of education needs to be improved for which there has to be a sufficient number of teachers and their attendance has to be strictly monitored, either by panchayats or voluntary organisations. The infrastructure of schools needs to be revamped. Business houses, whether in public or private sector,

need to be involved and each of these should be asked to take up one or two schools in their area of operation for upgradation. Even religious organisations should be motivated to run schools, if necessary, with panchayats. The states lack financial resources to take up the task of school upgradation and, as such, financial resources must be made available from the Centre, in a mix of loan and also grant for at least one school in every block.

For all this to happen, a specific plan of action is possibly needed with experts on an all-India level. The attendance of teachers, their capability of teaching, the reasons for poor performance of students and financial requirement of each sub-division or district needs to be evaluated. There are many ways of running schools with good and dedicated teachers at low cost. Apart from part-time teachers, retired professional and voluntary organisation professionals could be used to teach and run schools.

Unless there is motivation, it is difficult to witness any change at the grassroots level with our leaders coming up with misleading statements about India's changing profile.

The writer is Sr. Consultant & Guest Faculty at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kolkata. @INFA

A new layer of Earth

Sir, So far, we have all read about the Earth having four layers - the crust, the mantle, the outer core, and the inner core. Surprisingly, it has now been revealed that there may well be a fifth layer. New insights about the deepest parts of Earth's inner core have been unveiled through seismic waves produced by earthquakes, which have been studied by a team of researchers from the Australian National University and published in the journal Nature Communications. According to them, there is a new layer in the Earth's inner core that takes the form of a solid, metallic sphere situated at the core's center. It is not molten, it is solid. In the study, the researchers examined the anisotropy of the iron-nickel alloy that makes up the Earth's inner core. Anisotropy refers to the variation in seismic wave speed through the material of the inner core, which depends on the direction of wave travel. The researchers found that seismic waves were bouncing at various angles near the Earth's center repeatedly. By examining the variation in travel times of seismic waves caused by different earthquakes, the team discovered that the crystalline structure in the innermost region of the Earth's inner core is distinct from that of the outer layer. The researchers suggest that a significant global event during the Earth's evolution may have caused a notable alteration in the crystal structure of the inner core.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Setback for Kejriwal

Sir, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's arrest was imminent once the CBI took over investigations into the Delhi liquor scam. No amount of breast-beating or cries of vendetta politics from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) cadres would take away the fact that the CBI would have found solid proof to apprehend Sisodia. In fact, collecting foolproof evidence against Sisodia could have delayed the CBI action. Of course, the law will take its own course, but for Arvind Kejriwal, Sisodia's arrest is a body blow for his future plans. The Delhi Chief Minister was in an expansion mode, and mood. His penchant to focus on his party saw him entrust as many as 18 portfolios to Sisodia, his go-to man. Now, he may have to be more circumspect, and his pan-India extension ambitions may have to wait. As for his party prospects in Delhi, the common man has his own opinion and preferences; he/she may not be influenced by media or politicians.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

national

of the day quote

There are chances for DMK top leader and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin to become the Prime Minister if Opposition parties come together and win the general election next year

FAROOQ ABDULLAH | J&K NATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

Sikkim has risen beyond tourism, and stepped into the world of enterprise development with some of its organic products making their mark in the global market

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

In the last one month, not a single child marriage has taken place in Assam. This is a big achievement. Everyone has welcomed our steps against this social menace

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

SHORT TAKES

Priyanka to attend Bihar version of BJJ

Patna: Congress national general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is likely to attend and address a rally on the last day of the party's Bihar version of Bharat Jodo Yatra in Gaya. The yatra began in the state January 5 from Mandar mountain in Banka district. Three legs of the yatra have concluded and the last leg will start after Holi. During a meeting at party's headquarters Sadakat Ashram, Congress state president Akhilesh Prasad Singh said: "Top leadership has given a clear indication that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will address a rally in Gaya."

Stage set for vote count

Pune: The Election Commission has made full preparations for the counting of votes in the February 26 by-elections held in Kasbapeth and Chinchwad Assembly constituencies in Maharashtra's Pune Thursday, officials said.

Schools reopen in Kashmir

Srinagar: Schools in Kashmir reopened Wednesday after remaining closed for three months on account of winter vacations. There was a sudden change in weather conditions in the Valley following a spell of rainfall but the downpour failed to dampen the enthusiasm among the students, many of whom were feeling bored confined at home for such a long span of time.

Sukesh again writes to L-G

New Delhi: Addressing his letter to Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, incarcerated alleged conman, Sukesh Chandrashekar has released yet another letter claiming illegal leak and release of CCTV footage of his jail cell by the jail officials. Chandrashekar, who is lodged in the national capital's Mandoli jail, has said in his letter that leaking of his cell footage is a security breach and that the said leak "was done by Assistant Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent".

Stalin turns 70

Chennai: DMK President and Chief Minister M K Stalin turned 70 Wednesday and his party and supporters are celebrating his birthday across Tamil Nadu with fervour and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a host of leaders wished him on the occasion. President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar wrote to Stalin, greeting him on his birthday.



The public is asking - how to make Holi dishes now, for how long will these orders of loot continue? Every person is facing the brunt of back-breaking inflation implemented by (Narendra) Modi government

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

GUJ FISHERMEN IN PAK JAILS

As many as 560 fishermen from Gujarat are languishing in jails in Pakistan, the state government told the Legislative Assembly



G20 MEET Jaishankar holds talks with Lavrov

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Wednesday held wide-ranging talks with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov focusing on the Ukraine conflict, bilateral ties and issues relating to the G20 foreign ministers' meeting.

The Russian Foreign Minister landed in the national capital Tuesday night to attend a two-day meeting of the G20 foreign ministers that is taking place amid Russia's escalating confrontation with the Western powers over the Ukraine conflict. The Russian foreign ministry late last night issued a statement, saying Moscow considers the G20 as a prestigious forum for the world's leading economies where "balanced" and "consensus" decisions should be made in the interests of all. "We support India's G20 presidency in its commitment to promote a unifying agenda that will restore confidence in multilateral diplomacy and prevent the fragmentation of the global economy," a Russian readout said.

The ministry also accused the US and its allies of pursuing a "destructive policy" that it claimed put the world on the "brink of a disaster." "The destructive policy of the US and its allies has already put the world on the brink of a disaster, provoked a rollback in socio-economic development and seriously aggravated the situation of the poorest countries," it said. It alleged that the entire world is suffering from the "illegal sanctions, the artificial breakup of cross-border supply chains, the imposition of notorious price ceilings and, in effect, from attempts to steal natural resources." The US-led West has imposed punitive economic sanctions against Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.



A wide ranging discussion with FM Sergey Lavrov of Russia on #G20FMM sidelines. Exchanged views on our bilateral cooperation and G20 issues

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

A Russian readout said the two ministers resolved to enhance coordination on the international stage and in multilateral forums including at the United Nations, G20, SCO and BRICS

The Russian foreign ministry said Moscow shares the relevance of India's stated priorities such as ensuring inclusive and sustainable economic growth, accelerating progress towards the achievement of sustainable development goals, reforming multilateral institutions and digital modernisation. "We support India's effort to improve working mechanisms and create

specialised processes to respond to natural disasters and launch start-ups. We are ready to make a significant contribution to making progress in all these areas." "We aim to work together with our Indian colleagues to achieve the desired result, showing the greatest possible flexibility. At the same time, we will firmly defend Russia's fundamental interests and an international world order based on the central role of the UN and international law," the Russian foreign ministry said. It said Russia will strongly promote "recognition of the new global realities" that assert a multipolar system of relations between states. "During the regular foreign ministers' meeting we intend to firmly and openly talk about the reasons and instigators of the current serious problems in world politics and the global economy," the ministry added.

MP govt presents ₹3.14L cr Budget

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, March 1: The Madhya Pradesh government Wednesday presented a ₹3.14 lakh crore Budget for 2023-24 with a provision of ₹8,000 crore for the 'Mukhyamantri Ladli Behna Yojana', a new scheme to be rolled out for the welfare of women in the state where the Assembly polls are due this year-end.

A new scheme named 'Mukhyamantri Balika Scooty Yojana' to provide e-scooters to the girls securing first class in Class XII examination is also announced in the budget. No new taxes were announced in the budget that was presented by Finance Minister Jagdish Devda in the Assembly. Devda announced a provision of ₹8,000 crore for the Mukhyamantri Ladli Behna Yojana, a flagship scheme of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.



IN SEARCH OF FOOD: A One-horned rhino grazes at Pobitora wildlife sanctuary in Morigaon district, in Assam

PTI PHOTO

99 per cent of women unaware of changes in abortion laws: Study

The survey by the NGO Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India (FRHS India) claimed 32% of respondents were unaware of abortion as a legal right and that 95.5 per cent of Indian women were uninformed of the existence of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: A recent study on the level of awareness of medical termination of pregnancy has claimed that one of every three women it interviewed did not consider abortion as a health right or were unsure of it.

FRHS India, which provides clinical family planning services in the country, recently released the findings of its study on the level of awareness of the MTP Act and practices related to safe abortion. The study was conducted by the FRHS in Delhi, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

"The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act was modified 1.5 years ago but abortion-seekers are still unaware of the changes brought about in the Act. We found that even service providers (doctors) in Rajasthan were unclear about the shift in the gestational age from 20 to 24 weeks,"



Debanjana Choudhuri, primary researcher and director of programmes and partnerships at FRHS India, said.

Even after five decades, approximately 95.5 per cent of Indian women are uninformed of the existence of the MTP Act, which gives access to safe abortion services, Choudhuri claimed.

The study said it is "worrying" that 99 per cent of women in India did not know the laws have changed. "Also, the MTP Act 1971

Kejri picks Atishi, Saurabh Bhardwaj for Delhi Cabinet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has recommended the names of AAP MLAs Atishi and Saurabh Bhardwaj to the Lieutenant Governor for their appointment to the Cabinet, sources claimed Wednesday.

The development comes after the resignation of AAP ministers Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, the key faces of the city government, who were instrumental in steering the national capital through the coronavirus crisis.

Bhardwaj, who is also the party's national spokesperson, is currently serving the Delhi Jal Board as its vice chairman. The legislator from Greater Kailash was also a minister during the first stint of the AAP government. Atishi, who represents the Kalkaji constituency, has been a key member of Sisodia's education team. She had also contested the 2019 Lok Sabha polls from the East Delhi constituency and lost to BJP's Gautam Gambhir.

Till Atishi and Bhardwaj are inducted into the cabinet, ministers Raaj Kumar Anand and Kailash Gahlot will take care of the portfolios that have fallen vacant following Sisodia's resignation. While Gahlot has been given the additional charge of finance, PWD along with some departments, Anand, who is also the social welfare minister, will take care of education, health and other departments. AAP's second-in-command, Sisodia was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation Sunday in connection with alleged



BJP intensifies attack against AAP

The BJP Wednesday staged protests at various places here, demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The saffron party also took its protest online, running a series of tweets with the hashtag "#Thekedar_Kejriwal_Istifa_Do" in Hindi. Holding placards and banners, BJP workers split up into groups and hit pockets of the city, raising slogans against Kejriwal and his party. Many banners bore slogans such as "Sharab ghotale ke sargana Kejriwal -- Istifa do, Istifa do".

irregularities in the formulation and implementation of the now-scraped Delhi excise policy for 2021-22. Jain was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in May last year in a money laundering case. Sisodia and Jain resigned from the Cabinet Tuesday. Official sources said Gahlot is likely to present the Delhi Budget next month. Gahlot is already in charge of six departments, including revenue and transport, while Raj Kumar Anand has four portfolios.

Nadda kickstarts BJP's 'Vijay Sankalp Yatre' in poll-bound K'taka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chamarajanagara (K'taka), March 1: BJP national president J P Nadda Wednesday kickstarted the first part of 'Vijay Sankalp Yatre' here reaching out to tribal communities, as he expressed confidence about the party coming back to power in Karnataka.

The yatre from four different directions across the poll-bound State, in specially designed vehicles or "Rathas", will be launched by the party's Central leaders in the next couple of days.

Nadda, who visited the Male Mahadeshwara Hills, kick-started the yatre, after offering prayers at the Male Mahadeshwara temple here.

He was accompanied by Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, BJP veteran B S Yediyurappa, and party's state president Nalin Kumar Kateel among other leaders.

Later addressing people from the Soliga tribal community, Nadda said, "With the Vijaya Sankalpa Yatre beginning from an auspicious place and with the grace of god, I'm confident about BJP getting the blessings of the people in the upcoming Assembly polls."

He said, the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is marching ahead with strength and he has changed the political dimension of the country from "casteism, vote bank and dynasty politics", to taking everyone together with a motto 'sabka-saath-sabka-vikas-sabka-vishwas-sabka-prayas' (Together, for everyone's growth, with everyone's trust).

Highlighting that the country is today the fifth largest economy overtaking the British, Nadda spoke about the nation's progress in pharma, mobile and automobile, among other sectors.

Death sentence for 7 IS terrorists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: A special NIA court here sentenced to death seven ISIS-linked terrorists, while awarding life imprisonment to an associate of theirs in a 2017 case related to various terror activities, including a bomb blast inside a train in Uttar Pradesh, an official said Wednesday.

In Gujarat, another NIA special court awarded 10 years rigorous imprisonment to two brothers who were found involved in radicalising and recruiting people to carry out terror acts in the country in the name of global terror group Islamic State or ISIS, the official said.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) termed the judgments as 'another milestone' in its tradition of evidence-based investigation and said 'both cases relate to the online radicalisation of the accused in the name of ISIS, their motivation to commit violent 'jihad' and cause terror attacks in the country'.

CCS okays procurement of 70 basic trainer aircraft

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday approved the procurement of 70 HTT-40 basic trainer aircraft costing ₹6,828 crore for the Indian Air Force.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the aircraft will be supplied over a period of six years.

"The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) chaired by Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi has approved procurement of 70 HTT-40 Basic Trainer Aircraft at the cost of ₹6,828.36 crores," Singh said on Twitter. The defence ministry said the HTT-40, produced by state-run aerospace major Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, is a turboprop aircraft designed to have good low-speed handling qualities and provide better training effectiveness.

Singh said the procurement decision will open new opportunities for hundreds of MSMEs (Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) and create thousands of jobs. "It is a significant step towards strengthening India's self-reliance in defence," he said.

The HTT-40 contains approximately 56 per cent indigenous content which will progressively in-



crease to over 60 per cent through the indigenisation of major components and subsystems, according to the ministry.

"The HAL will engage Indian private industry, including MSMEs, in its supply chain. The procurement has the potential to provide direct employment to approx. 1,500 personnel and indirect employment for up to 3,000 people spread over more than 100 MSMEs," it said in a statement.

It said the acquisition of the HTT-40 provides a fillip to the Indian aerospace defence ecosystem and boosts efforts towards 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India).

This fully aerobatic tandem seat turbo trainer has an air-conditioned cockpit and modern avionics. "The aircraft will meet the shortage of basic trainer aircraft of IAF for the training of newly inducted pilots. The procurement will include associated equipment and training aids including simulators," the ministry said.



Atiq Ahmed moves SC, claims threat to life

In his plea, Ahmed, who is presently lodged at the central jail in Ahmedabad, has referred to the statement made by Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath on the floor of the Assembly to 'completely ruin and destroy' him



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Jailed former Samajwadi Party MP and gangster Atiq Ahmed Wednesday moved the Supreme Court for protection, claiming that he and his family have been falsely 'roped in' as accused in the Umesh Pal murder case in Prayagraj and he may be killed in a fake encounter by the Uttar Pradesh Police.

He said the Uttar Pradesh Police in all likelihood will seek his trans-

apprehends and believes that the petitioner may be killed in a fake encounter on one pretext or the other by UP police particularly in view of the statement made by the Chief Minister of state of UP on the floor of the house," the plea alleged.

UP authorities bulldoze house of Ahmed's key aide

Prayagraj: Authorities here Wednesday demolished the house of an associate of jailed former MP and gangster Atiq Ahmed, who has been booked in the sensational Umesh Pal murder case, for allegedly carrying out illegal construction. Prayagraj Development Authority secretary Ajit Singh said the house belonging to Zafar Ahmed has been bulldozed and a sword and two firearms recovered from there have been handed over to the police.

AP govt to build around 3,000 temples to protect Hindu faith

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati, March 1: Seeking to ensure every village in Andhra Pradesh has a temple, the government has said the construction of shrines has been taken up in a big way in the state.



To protect and propagate the Hindu faith on a massive scale, construction of Hindu temples in the localities of weaker sections has been initiated

KOTTU SATYANARAYANA | DEPUTY CM

On the directions of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, this initiative has been heralded to protect and propagate the Hindu faith, Deputy CM Kottu Satyanarayana said. "To protect and propagate the Hindu faith on a massive scale, construction of Hindu temples in the localities of weaker sections has been initiated," Satyanarayana, who is also the Endowments Minister, said in a release Tuesday.

of the Endowments Department while the work of every 25 temples has been entrusted to an assistant engineer. Out of the Rs 270 crore CGF

funds allocated to revive some temples and also for the conduct of rituals in temples, Rs 238 crore funds have been released. Similarly, out of Rs 28 crore earmarked in this fiscal for the financing of rituals (doopa deepa naivedyam) at the rate of Rs 5,000 per temple, Rs 15 crore have been exhausted. "Under the doopa deepa scheme, only 1,561 temples were enrolled by 2019, which now spread to 5,000," Satyanarayana added.

Deal ragging cases in medical colleges with iron hand: Min

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati, March 1: In light of a medical student dying by suicide in Telangana recently, unable to bear alleged harassment at the hands of seniors, the Andhra Pradesh government has directed officials to tackle ragging incidents in medical colleges with an iron hand.



Aimed at eliminating harassment, state Health Minister Vidadala Rajini said all medical colleges in the state should be alert to this menace, in a review meeting attended by all the principals of government and private medical colleges. "Harassment in any form should not be exerted on medics anywhere. Anti-ragging committees must function full-fledgedly and actively in colleges," Rajini said in an official statement Tuesday.

"Teaching staff must behave in a congenial manner towards students. Some senior professors are exerting undue pressure on post graduate students due to their own parallel clinic businesses," she observed, and highlighted that these kinds of side businesses must end. Besides offering quality education, Rajini emphasised the importance of security, calling for stringent measures to safely bring medics in the society. Moreover, she instructed all colleges to set up counselling sessions to students, including arranging yoga and meditation to beat pressure. Likewise, the minister noted that colleges should fix complaint boxes as well as install a public address system

to quickly send across any message, along with a surveillance system. "Every female student should use the Disha app. Accommodation has to be separate for seniors and juniors with different dining schedules, ensuring they don't have the same meal time." She ordered officials to make sure that no medical college in the southern state registered a ragging complaint. Recently, D. Preethi, a 26-year-old medical student from a Warangal medical college had ended her life, unable to bear alleged harassment from seniors. Besides private medical colleges, AP runs 18 government medical colleges, which also include a couple of dental colleges.

Jagan dares TDP, Jana Sena to contest all seats

Asserting that the slew of welfare measures being implemented by the government will ensure a clean sweep of 175 seats in the next elections, the AP CM said that the Opposition parties are scared of becoming irrelevant

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amaravati, March 1: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy Tuesday asked the opposition TDP and Jana Sena if they have the guts to contest all 175 Assembly seats in the next elections.



He alleged that the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Jana Sena have become envious of the credibility and political goodwill of his YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), adding that these parties will continue to suffer as jealousy has no cure. The Chief Minister was addressing a public meeting at Tenali after releasing Rs 1,090.76 crore under YSR Rythu Bharosa-PM Kisan scheme. Asserting that the slew of welfare measures being implemented by the government will ensure a clean sweep of 175 seats in the next elections, he said that the opposition parties are scared of becoming irrelevant. The Chief Minister asked the people to vote for the YSRCP in the next elections if they feel they have benefitted from its welfare measures.

Jagan Mohan Reddy urged the people to see the qualitative difference between the TDP rule "which had pursued a policy of plunder, stash and devour with the support of friendly media and foster son Pawan Kalyan" and the present YSRCP government which

has been implementing plethora of welfare and developmental programmes for the economic prosperity of the people. He stated that the state is witnessing a class war between the poor backed by the government and the capitalists backed by the op-

position and cautioned people to be wary of the conspiracies of the envious TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu-led gang of four and "his foster son" Pawan Kalyan. Reiterating that the people are the backbone of the YSRCP, he said the government has implemented 98.5 per cent of its election promises and exuded confidence that it would only bring victory to the party in all 175 seats. He asked people not to be carried away by "the misleading and false propaganda of the unethical TDP and Jana Sena which are not even confident of contesting all the seats." He claimed that the YSRCP government with a generous heart did good things for the welfare of people unlike the TDP rule that cheated every section of the society. Jagan Mohan Reddy said that the state enjoyed good rains during the last three and half years due to God's blessings. During TDP rule, the state suffered from drought as it was headed by Chandrababu Naidu "who is an embodiment of injustice, cheating and lies," he added.

SP ran 'one district, one mafia' scheme: Yogi

ADITYANATH SAID IN THE STATE ASSEMBLY THAT THE PREVIOUS SAMAJWADI PARTY GOVERNMENT HANDED OVER THE STATE TO THE MAFIA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 1: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Wednesday targeted Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav over his photo with an accused in the Umesh Pal murder case which went viral on social media.



Adityanath said in the state assembly that the previous Samajwadi Party government handed over the state to the mafia, and ran the 'one district, one mafia' scheme. "We launched the 'one district, one product' scheme which created lakhs of employment opportunities and made the poor self-reliant," he said. The chief minister said that there are two ways to solve any problem- either you run away or you participate to resolve it. He said that since 2017, the state's government is working towards the basic mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Saath Vikas'.

doubled. The government allocated Rs 6.90 lakh crore for the development," he pointed out. Adityanath also said India does not need socialism, which is the 'biggest hypocrisy' of leaders who want to make their people powerful, and instead it will be run through Ram Rajya. Socialism is a mirage which makes the rich poor and turns the poor into slaves, Adityanath said while replying to the debate on the Uttar Pradesh Budget 2023-24 in the state assembly. His remarks came a day after Samajwadi Party (SP) president and Leader of Opposition Akhilesh Yadav said in the House that Ram Rajya is not possible without socialism. Adityanath said socialism has not brought development anywhere. "This country will be run only through Ram Rajya. This Budget is going to be the foundation stone of Ram Rajya. A grand temple of Lord Ram is going to be built this year. Socialism has not brought prosperity anywhere in the world," the chief minister said. "It has been said repeatedly that it (socialism) is a mirage, it makes the rich poor, turns the poor into slaves, and the intellectuals into fools. Socialism is the biggest hypocrisy of the leaders who want to make their people powerful," he said.

we proved this myth wrong," he said. The Chief Minister said that the government should not run away from the problems but accept the challenge.

"The Finance Minister presented a self-reliant budget with the concept of all-inclusive overall development. In the last six years, the size of the state's budget has more than

FEAR OF LEOPARD ATTACKS IN SCHOOLS SANS BOUNDARIES

According to officials, 150 leopards live amidst the cane fields. With cane harvesting having begun, leopard sightings have also increased



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bijoor, March 1: Nearly 75 government primary and upper primary schools in Bijoor either have no boundary walls or have dilapidated boundary walls, and since a majority of these schools are located near sugarcane fields, 3500 children are under the constant fear of leopard intrusion in the attack-prone region.

MAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT

SINCE A MAJORITY OF SCHOOLS IN BIJOUR ARE LOCATED NEAR SUGARCANE FIELDS, 3500 CHILDREN ARE UNDER THE CONSTANT FEAR OF LEOPARD INTRUSION IN THE ATTACK-PRONE REGION
THREE LEOPARD ATTACKS HAVE BEEN REPORTED IN THE LAST 10 DAYS, AND A 14-YEAR-OLD GIRL WAS KILLED
MANY SCHOOLS ARE LOCATED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF VILLAGES AND THE ROUTES TO REACH THEM ARE UNSAFE

Three leopard attacks have been reported in the last 10 days, and a 14-year-old girl was killed. The sugarcane fields are safe haven for leopard. According to officials, at least 150 leopards live amidst the cane fields. With cane harvesting having begun, leopard sightings have also increased in the area. "Leopards have been attacking villagers after sugarcane harvesting. Three leopard attacks have occurred in Nagina area in the last 10 days. A 14-year-old was killed by a leopard and two days ago, a 60-year-old woman was attacked in Fatehpur village when she was

mowing grass in a sugarcane field," said a local resident. Villagers are now scared to send their children to school as there is no boundary wall around it. Many schools are located on the outskirts of villages and the routes to reach them are unsafe. Teachers

are also scared to take such routes. Basic Shiksha Adhikari Jai Karan Yadav said, "We have prepared proposal to construct boundaries around primary and upper primary schools for the safety of the children. The walls are to be built under MNREGA."

of the day quote

A very happy birthday to you, @Nishakumar Ji. Wish you continued success in your endeavours and good health in the years to come. Hope this special days brings you joy, peace, and fulfillment

PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CHIEF MINISTER

The Uttar Pradesh government is making concerted efforts to increase the state's contribution to India's GDP from the current 8 per cent to 15-16 per cent to pave the way for rapid development of the country

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CHIEF MINISTER

Thanks for the historic decision of the honourable Supreme Court to save the existence of democracy in Punjab...Now the voice of 3 crore Punjab's 'Vidhan Sabha session' will go on without any hindrance

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Ruckus in Bihar Assembly

Patna: A day after Vaishali police arrested the father of a Galwan martyr, BJP MLAs strongly protested and created ruckus in the Assembly Wednesday, the third day of the budget session. The legislators showed aggression in the House and broke chairs on the reporting table following which Speaker Awadhesh Narayan Singh warned them and called for the marshalls to intervene who took away the banners and posters from the hands of BJP MLAs.

Govt employees in K'taka withdraw strike

Bangalore: Government employees in Karnataka Wednesday withdrew their indefinite strike after the State government announced a 17 per cent hike in basic salary as interim relief and constituted a committee on the pension scheme. The employees had demanded interim relief of 40 per cent increase in basic salary and revision of salaries as per the 7th Pay Commission. The order will be applicable to the employees of the local bodies under the State government and the government-aided educational institutions.

Building collapses after fire breaks out

New Delhi: Around 100 fire-fighters had a narrow escape Wednesday as a three-storey godown that had caught fire collapsed in north Delhi while they were dousing the blaze, officials said. No injuries have been reported yet, the Delhi Fire Service officials added. The department said it received a call about a fire at a factory on Roshanara Road near the Pulbangash metro station, but as its teams reached the spot, they saw it was a godown. Around 100 fire-fighters are deployed at the spot, the department said.

Security tightened

Agartala: Security has been beefed up in Tripura ahead of the announcement of the results of February 16 Assembly elections Thursday, an official said Wednesday. Central and state security forces have conducted flag marches as well as area domination patrolling, an official said. Meanwhile, district administration officials have convened hundreds of peace meetings in all the 60 assembly constituencies in Tripura to prevent any incidents of violence after the announcement of results.



I want to share with you my pain as well. Dr Ambedkar had a key role to play in drafting our constitution, it was debated for three years in the constituent assembly, there was dialogue, debate, discussion and deliberation. They had tough tasks before them, there were several contentious issues, there were divergent views and there were difficulties in having a common opinion

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | VICE PRESIDENT

TOUGH RULE

The BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) Wednesday warned people against harming or felling trees during the ensuing Holi festival as violators could face steep penalties and a jail term up to one year



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

LeT shadow group, TRF, in crosshairs of security agencies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Security forces have pumped up their efforts to dismantle the network of LeT's shadow terror group The Resistance Front (TRF) which had issued a poster glorifying the terrorists who had killed a Kashmiri Pandit Sanjay Kumar in Pulwama, officials said Wednesday.

The agencies are choking its fund flow and acting against its members to tear up the network in Jammu and Kashmir, they said. Although Kashmir Freedom

Fighters had claimed responsibility for the attack, the security agencies have found TRF posters glorifying two terrorists, who were neutralised by security forces. The agencies believe that the terrorists were of the TRF hiding behind KFF mask, they said. All intelligence resources, be it human intelligence and technical intelligence, which scans chatter across the border and among militants, have been mobilized to track operatives and financiers of TRF, they said.

The two terrorists had holed themselves up in Jamia mosque

TERRORIST KILLING IN PULWAMA



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

in Padgampora village after the killing of Kumar. Based on intelligence inputs the security

forces had cordoned off an area around 1.15 am Tuesday. During the encounter, a soldier working

Two terrorists of the group -- Aqib Mustaq Bhat and Ajaz Ahmed Bhat -- who were accused of gunning down Kumar were killed by a team of 55 Rashtriya Rifles in an encounter Tuesday

Kumar, the latest victim in the targeted killing of Kashmiri Pandits, was among the few of his community who had not migrated during the onset of terror violence in the 1990s

loss of blood and the soldier could not survive, the officer said.

Recapping what had happened, he said one of the terrorists, identified as Aqib Mustaq Bhat, was killed on the mosque premises.

The other, identified as Ajaz Ahmed Bhat, a resident of Trall near Pulwama, jumped out, possibly from a window, and took refuge in a house close to the mosque.

His location was tracked through technical surveillance and security forces trapped him inside the house before shooting him dead, the officer said.

Drone shot along border had 'footprints' in China, Pak: BSF

A total of 22 drones or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) coming across from Pakistan were shot down by the BSF last year. All these downings took place along the International Border (IB) in Punjab



A drone shot down by Border Security Force (BSF) personnel while coming from Pakistan into the Indian territory in Amritsar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: A drone that was shot down by the Border Security Force along the India-Pakistan international border in Punjab last year had taken flight and had 'footprints' in China and Pakistan, a BSF spokesperson said Wednesday quoting a forensic analysis report.

The quadcopter was downed December 25, 2022 near the Rajatal border post in Punjab's Amritsar district.

A forensic analysis of the drone found that it flew in Fengxian district in Shanghai, China on 11.06.2022 and later it was flown from 24.09.2022 to 25.12.2022 for 28 times "within" Khanewal district

Doctors' strike hit over one lakh patients in J'khand'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ranchi, March 1: As per estimates, about one lakh people could not be treated in Jharkhand Wednesday as around 14,000 government and private doctors went on a strike demanding security.

Although emergency services have been kept operational, OPD and routine treatment came to a standstill in the state on Wednesday. The doctors staged dharnas at the hospitals and medical colleges in support of their demands.

The one-day strike was called by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and the Jharkhand Health Services Association (JHSA) to protest against the recent incidents of assault, abuse and intimidation of doctors in Garhwa, Ranchi, Bokaro, Jamtara, Dhanbad and Lohardaga districts of the state.

The IMA said that it will resort to an indefinite strike if immediate action is not taken on the implementation of the Medical Protection Act and other demands.

More than 2,000 people are treated daily in the OPD of RIMS Ranchi, which is the biggest hospital in the state.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

THE DRONE SIGHTINGS ALONG THE 2,289 KM LONG INDIA-PAK INTERNATIONAL BORDER RUNNING ALONG JAMMU, PUNJAB, RAJASTHAN AND GUJARAT HAVE INCREASED FROM 77 SIGHTINGS IN 2020 TO 104 IN 2021 AND MORE THAN 311 SIGHTINGS DURING LAST YEAR

ALMOST 75 PER CENT OF THESE SIGHTINGS HAVE BEEN MADE IN PUNJAB WHERE DRONES HAVE BEEN MAJORLY USED BY THE OTHER SIDE TO PUSH IN AND DROP DRUGS AND ARMS

of Punjab in Pakistan, the spokesperson said.

An FIR on the illegal activity of the drone and its shooting on the

Twitter faces global outage

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi/San Francisco, March 1: Micro-blogging platform Twitter Wednesday faced a major outage globally, with users reporting that the site's timeline is not loading on either the web or mobile apps.

According to the outage monitor website Down Detector, over 56 per cent of people had reported problems while using the application, 37 per cent while using the website, and 7 per cent with server connection. Users from var-



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

ious countries, including the US, the UK, Japan, and India, began reporting issues with the site.

For most users, Twitter showed "What's happening?" while using the application. Last month, the microblogging site also faced a global outage.

According to the outage monitor website, over 85 per cent of people had reported problems while using the application, 8 per cent while using the website, and 7 per cent with server connection. However, the company fixed the "trouble" that many iOS users experienced earlier.

Chandigarh to promote low-alcoholic drinks

TO PROMOTE LOW-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS, LICENCE FEES AND DUTIES HAVE NOT BEEN INCREASED ON BEER, WINE, READY TO DRINK, AMONG OTHERS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, March 1: The Chandigarh administration Wednesday approved a new Excise Policy for fiscal 2023-24, aiming to bring uniformity with neighbouring



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

tri-cities -- Panchkula and Mohali -- and to promote low-alcoholic drinks.

Also the liquor will be slightly cheaper as the policy reduced the cow cess on it. But a new tax, clean air cess, will now be levied.

The policy for 2023-24 aims at balancing the aspirations of consumers, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, and the government. Major development for the retail vends, clubs, restaurants, hotels, and bars is the extension in time for operating

THE POLICY FOR 2023-24 AIMS AT BALANCING THE ASPIRATIONS OF CONSUMERS, MANUFACTURERS, WHOLESALERS, RETAILERS, AND THE GOVERNMENT

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT FOR THE RETAIL VENDS, CLUBS, RESTAURANTS, HOTELS, AND BARS IS THE EXTENSION IN TIME FOR OPERATING

NOW THE LIQUOR VENDS WILL BE OPERATIONAL FROM 9 A.M. TO MIDNIGHT, WHILE BARS TILL 3 A.M

been increased on beer, wine, ready to drink, among others.

"Cow cess has been reduced from existing ₹5 to Re 1 per bottle of 750 ml of country liquor; while ₹5 to Re 1 per bottle of 650ml of beer and ₹10 to ₹2 per bottle of 750 ml or 700ml of whisky," said the administration. The new rates will be subject to notification issued by local government department.

However, clean air cess will be levied as and when notified by the Department of Science and Technology.

To curb illegal sale of liquor, the track and trace system will be introduced. Penalty for non-maintenance of minimum rates by the retail vends has been kept stringent with closure of the vend for three days for each detected violation.



LET'S PLAY HOLI: Women dance while playing Holi with 'Gulal' at the Gangshyam Ji temple as part of celebrations of the festival of colours in Jodhpur, Rajasthan

Indian Army gets new Vice Chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Lt Gen M V Suchindra Kumar Wednesday took charge as the Vice Chief of Army Staff, officials said.

The general officer has taken over the appointment from Lt Gen B S Raju who has taken over the



PTI PHOTO

reins of Jaipur-based Sapt Shakti Command, they said.

"Lieutenant General M V Suchindra Kumar has assumed the appointment of the Vice Chief of Army Staff March 1, 2023," the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

Prior to taking over as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff, Lt Gen Kumar was "tenanting the appointment of Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy) at Army HQ." He has experience in intelligence, operations, force structuring, operational logistics and tech infusion in his recent appointments," it said.

An alumnus of Sainik School, Bijapur and the National Defence Academy, the general officer was commissioned into 1 Assam Regiment in June 1985. He has commanded 59 Rashtriya Rifles Battalion (Assam), an infantry brigade and an infantry division on the Line of Control (LoC), and the highly active White Knight Corps in the Northern Command, the statement said.

WhatsApp says it banned 29L Indian accounts in January

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 1: Meta-owned WhatsApp banned more than 29 lakh accounts in India in the month of January, a figure that is drastically lower than 36.77 lakh accounts it blocked in the country in December last year, in compliance with the new IT Rules 2021.

Between January 1 and January 31, "2,918,000 WhatsApp accounts were banned. 1,038,000 of these accounts were proactively banned, before any reports from users," the company said in its monthly compliance report.

The most popular messaging platform, which has nearly 500 million users in the country, received 1,461 complaint reports in January in the country, and the records "actioned" were 195.

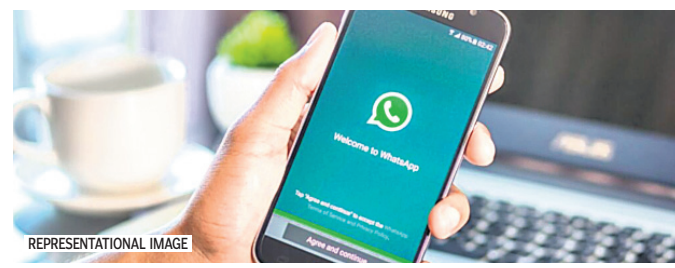
"This report contains details of the user complaints received and

the corresponding action taken by WhatsApp, as well as WhatsApp's own preventive actions to combat abuse on our platform," said a company spokesperson.

Meanwhile, in a bid to empower millions of Indian social media users, Minister of State for Electronics and IT, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, on Tuesday launched the Grievance Appellate Committee (GAC) that will look into their concerns regarding content and other issues.

The newly-formed panel, a move to strengthen the country's digital laws to tame the Big Tech companies, will look into appeals by users against decisions of social media platforms.

The IT Ministry last month notified to establish three Grievance Appellate Committees (GACs) as required under the recently amended IT Rules, 2021.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

Chandigarh to promote low-alcoholic drinks

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international

of the day quote

There are indications that China is contemplating lethal aid to Russia in its war against Ukraine

The trilateral cooperation among the Republic of Korea, the United States and Japan has become more important than ever to overcome the serious nuclear threats posed by North Korea and global polycrisis

China and India are ancient civilisations and both have more than one billion people. We are neighbours and are both emerging economies. A sound China-India relationship meets the fundamental interests of both countries and peoples

MAO NING | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON, CHINA

SHORT TAKES

Nigeria's new Prez

Abuja: Nigeria's ruling party candidate, Bola Tinubu, was declared president-elect of Africa's most populous nation in the early hours of Wednesday after a weekend election that the main opposition parties have disputed. Tinubu, a former governor of Lagos state, will take over leadership of a country grappling with Islamist insurgencies in the northeast, armed attacks, killings and kidnappings, conflict between livestock herders and farmers, cash, fuel and power shortages, and perennial corruption that opponents say Buhari's party has failed to stamp out, despite promises to do so.

Polls in Pakistan

Lahore: Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party Wednesday suspended its "Jail Bharo Tehreek" (court arrest movement) after the Supreme Court ordered the election commission to hold polls in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces within 90 days of the dissolution of the assemblies as stipulated by the Constitution. The Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies were dissolved January 14 and 18 respectively by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as part of its bid to force early general elections in the country. A five-member bench headed by chief justice Umar Ata Bandial issued the decision Wednesday that paved the way for elections in the two provinces, currently run by interim governments.



I don't think disallowing same-sex couples to marry is unjust discrimination by the state

FUMIO KISHIDA | PM, JAPAN

ROYALS LOSE THEIR HOME

Prince Harry and his wife Meghan are being evicted from their home on the British royal family's Windsor estate, leaving them without a UK base, reports said Wednesday. Frogmore Cottage, which they refurbished at a reported cost of £2.4 million (\$2.9 million), had been a wedding present from the late Queen Elizabeth II in 2018



Migrants paying \$8,500 for 'voyage of death'

MIGRANTS FROM STRUGGLING NATIONS ARE EMBARKING ON A JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE OR DEATH AND PAYING HEFTY MONEY TO SMUGGLERS FOR A COMFORTABLE LIFE



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Crotone, March 1: Rescue teams pulled more bodies from the sea Tuesday, bringing the death toll from Italy's latest migration tragedy to 65, as prosecutors identified sus-

pected smugglers who allegedly charged 8,000 euros (nearly \$8,500) for each person making the "voyage of death" from Turkey to Italy. Authorities delayed a planned viewing of the coffins to allow more time for identification of the

bodies, as desperate relatives and friends arrived in the Calabrian city of Crotone in hope of finding their loved ones, some of whom hailed from Afghanistan.

At least 65 people, including 14 minors, died when their overcrowded wooden boat slammed into shoals 100 meters (yards) off the shore of Cutro and broke apart early Sunday in rough seas. Eighty people survived, but many more are feared dead since survivors indicated the boat had carried about 170 people when it set off last week from Izmir, Turkey.

Aid groups at the scene have said many of the passengers hailed from Afghanistan, including entire families, as well as from Pakistan, Syria and Iraq. Rescue teams pulled two bodies from the sea on Tuesday, bringing the toll to 65, police said.

Premier Giorgia Meloni sent a letter to European leaders demanding quick action on the continent's longstanding migration problem, insisting that migrants must be stopped from

risking their lives on dangerous sea crossings.

"The point is, the more people who set off, the more people risk dying," she told RAI state television late Monday.

Meloni's right-wing government, which swept elections last year in part on promises to crack down on migration, has concentrated on complicating efforts by humanitarian boats to make multiple rescues in the central Mediterranean by assigning them ports of disembarkation along Italy's northern coasts. That means the vessels need more time to return to sea after bringing migrants aboard and taking them safely to shore.

But aid groups' rescue ships don't normally operate in the area of Sunday's shipwreck, which occurred off the Calabrian coast in the Ionian Sea. Rather, the aid groups generally operate in the central Mediterranean, rescuing migrants who set off from Libya or Tunisia — not from Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean.

US, China tussle over Covid origins

FBI chief Wray says Covid pandemic 'most likely' originated from Chinese lab; Beijing rejects 'politicisation' of science



AGENCIES

Washington, March 1: FBI Director Christopher Wray has said that the bureau believes that the deadly Covid-19 pandemic was most likely caused by a "potential lab incident" at a Chinese government-controlled facility in Wuhan.

It is the first public confirmation of the FBI's classified judgement of how the pandemic virus emerged from the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019.

"The FBI has for quite some time now assessed that the origins of the pandemic are most likely a potential lab incident," Wray told Fox News in an interview aired Tuesday.

Wray's comments come just days after news of the Department of Energy's "low-confidence" assessment that Covid-19 most likely originated from a laboratory leak in China.

Some studies suggest the virus made the leap from animals to humans in Wuhan, possibly at the city's seafood and wildlife market. The market is located near a leading virus laboratory, the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

"I will just make the observation that the Chinese government, it seems to me, has been doing its best to try to thwart and obfuscate the work here, the work that we're doing, the work that our US Government and close foreign partners are doing. And that's unfortunate for everybody," he said. Wray said the FBI has specialists who focus on "the dangers of bio-

China has been doing its best to try to thwart and obfuscate" efforts to identify the source of the global pandemic

CHRISTOPHER WRAY | DIRECTOR, FBI

The US will not succeed in discrediting China by reshaping the lab leak theory, but will only hurt the US's own reputation

MAO NING | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON, CHINA

logical threats, which include things like novel viruses like COVID, and the concerns that they [are] in the wrong hands [of] some bad guys, a hostile nation state, a terrorist, a criminal." Reacting sharply to Wray's remarks, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said China strongly opposes "political manipulation" of the origins-tracing issue in any form.

"Putting the intelligence community in charge for a matter of science is a clear sign that the issue has been politicised. Given the US intelligence community's track record of making up stories, there is little, if any, credibility in their conclusions," she said in Beijing in response to a question. According to Johns Hopkins University's Covid tracker, the pandemic has killed more than 6.8 million people worldwide since it broke out in late 2019.

'10 NIGHTMARISH SECONDS' Greece's deadliest rail crash claims 36

Greece's ageing railway system is in need of modernising, with many trains travelling on single tracks and signalling and automatic control systems still to be installed in many areas



REUTERS

Athens, March 1: A passenger train and a cargo train collided head-on in Greece Tuesday night, killing at least 36 people and injuring 85 as the country's deadliest rail crash in decades threw entire carriages off the tracks.

Sixty-six of those injured were hospitalised, six of whom are in intensive care, a fire official said.

The crash occurred as the passenger train emerged from a tunnel. Derailed carriages, badly damaged with broken windows and thick plumes of smoke, could be seen on the site, where rescuers were looking for more survivors.

One passenger carriage stood on its side at almost ninety degrees from the rest of the wrecked train, with other derailed carriages tilting precariously.

Stergios Minenias, a 28-year-old passenger who jumped to safety

from the wreckage, said the crash was "nightmarish" with a loud bang followed by fire.

"We were turning over in the wagon until we fell on our sides... there was panic," he said. "The fire was immediate, as we were turning over we were being burned, fire was right and left."

About 250 passengers out of a total of 350 were evacuated safely to Thessaloniki on buses.

"Our priority now is treating the injured, searching and finding missing people in the debris and offering psychological support to the relatives of the victims by psychologists who are heading to the Larissa city," government spokesman Giannis Oikonomou said.

Greece's transport minister Kostas Karamanlis has resigned after the train crash said he felt it was his

"duty" to step down "as a basic indication of respect for the memory of the people who died so unfairly."

One passenger told state broadcaster ERT that he escaped after breaking the train window with his suitcase. "It was like an earthquake," Angelos Tsiamouras, another passenger, told ERT.

The two trains had been on the same track when they crashed into each other: There is an ongoing investigation by a prosecutor and police into what caused the accident, a Hellenic Train official told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

Police temporarily detained the station master in Larissa and had summoned witnesses for questioning, ERT said.

Hellenic Train in a statement expressed "its deep sorrow for the tragic accident."

Overnight, rescue workers were seen carrying torches in carriages looking for trapped passengers. "The evacuation of passengers is under way in very difficult conditions

given the severity of the collision of the two trains," fire brigade spokesperson Vassilis Varthakogiannis said. "We are living through a tragedy. We are pulling out people alive, injured...there are dead."

In 1972, 19 people were killed when two trains collided head on outside Larissa.

GREEK TRANSPORT MINISTER RESIGNS OVER TRAIN CRASH 250 PASSENGERS OUT OF 350 WERE EVACUATED SAFELY

Russia may capture first major prize

REUTERS

Near Chasiv Yar, March 1: Russian forces carried out relentless attacks on Bakhmut Wednesday, trying to encircle the small eastern Ukrainian city and claim their first major prize for more than half a year after some of the bloodiest fighting of the war.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Moscow of throwing waves of men into battle in Bakhmut with no regard for their lives.

The leader of Russia's Wagner mercenary group said the Ukrainians were putting up "furious resistance" trying to hold the city at all costs.

Russia also said it had repelled a massive drone attack on Crimea, the peninsula its forces seized and claimed to annex in 2014. That came a day after Moscow accused Kyiv of launching a series of drone strikes on targets in Russia itself.



Participants carrying torches pose during a re-enactment of the March First Independence Movement against Japanese colonial rule in Cheonan, South Korea

Soils of war: The toxic legacy for Europe's breadbasket

FARMS IN UKRAINE BEAR THE SCARS OF RUSSIAN SHELLING AND UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE RIDDLES THE FIELDS BUT IT'S THE LESS VISIBLE DAMAGE TO UKRAINE'S FAMOUSLY FERTILE SOIL AFTER A YEAR OF WAR THAT COULD BE THE HARDEST TO REPAIR

REUTERS

Bilozerka, March 1: When Ukraine recaptured Kherson in November, Andrii Povod returned to find his grain farm in ruins. Two tractors were missing, most of the wheat was gone and all 11 buildings used to store crops and machinery had been bombed and burned.

Scientists looking at soil samples taken from the recaptured Kharkiv region in northeastern Ukraine found that high concentrations of toxins such as mercury and arsenic from munitions and fuel are polluting the ground.

Using the samples and satellite imagery, scientists at Ukraine's Institute for Soil Science and Agrochemistry Research estimated that the war has degraded at least 10.5 million hectares of agricultural land across Ukraine so far, ac-

ording to the research shared with Reuters.

That's a quarter of the agricultural land, including territory still occupied by Russian forces, in a country described as the breadbasket of Europe.

Two dozen experts who spoke with Reuters, including soil scientists, farmers, grain companies and analysts, said it would take decades to fix the damage to Europe's breadbasket - including contamination, mines and destroyed infrastructure - and that global food supplies could suffer for years to come.

Shelling has also upset the delicate ecosystems of microorganisms that turn soil materials into crop nutrients such as nitrogen while tanks have compressed the earth, making it harder for roots to flourish, the scientists say.

LOSS OF FERTILITY

Before the war, Ukraine was the world's fourth-largest corn exporter and fifth-biggest wheat seller, and a key supplier to poor countries in Africa and the Middle East that depend on grain imports.

After Russia's invasion a year ago, global grain prices climbed as the Black Sea ports that usually ship Ukraine's harvest closed, exacerbating inflation rates around the world.

Ukraine's most fertile soil - called chernozem - has suffered the most, the institute found. Chernozem is richer than other soils in nutrients such as humus, phosphorus and nitrogen and extends deep into the ground, as much as 1.5 metres.

Increased toxicity and reduced diversity of microorganisms, for example, have already reduced the en-



ergy corn seeds can generate to sprout by an estimated 26%, resulting in lower yields, research noted.

ECHOES OF WORLD WAR ONE

Some areas are so mined and physically transformed by craters and trenches that, like some World War One battlefields, they may never return to farm production, some experts say.

A working group of soil scientists created by the Ukrainian government estimates it would cost \$15 billion to remove all mines and restore Ukraine's soil to its former health.

If studies of damage to land during World War One are anything to go by, some areas will never recover.

Naomi Rintoul-Hynes, senior

lecturer in soil science and environmental management at Canterbury Christ Church University, studied soil contamination from World War One and fears the conflict in Ukraine is doing similar, irreversible damage.

"It is of utmost importance that we understand how bad the situation is as it stands," she said.

Lead, for example, has a half-life of 700 years or more, meaning it may take that long for its concentration in the soil to decrease by half. Such toxins can accumulate so much in plants growing there that human health may become affected, Rintoul-Hynes said.

To be sure, World War One lasted four years, and the war in Ukraine only one year so far, but lead remains a key component of many modern munitions, Rintoul-Hynes said.

Germany introduces feminist foreign policy

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Berlin, March 1: Germany's foreign and development ministers Wednesday presented new feminist foreign policy guidelines that are supposed to ensure that all people "have the same right to representation and access to resources."

The government policy focuses on considering and supporting the needs of women and girls in foreign affairs decisions, with a goal of erasing discrimination and thereby promoting more stable societies, the ministers said.

"We are not calling for a revolution here, but we are doing something that is self-evident," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock told reporters in Berlin.

"Feminist foreign policy runs through all areas of our foreign policy actions from humanitarian aid to stabilization measures, peace missions and also foreign culture and education policy," Baerbock added.

of the day quote

There is a need to shift to a profit model through enhancing research and development capabilities in the pharmaceutical sector

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | CHEMICALS & FERTILIZERS MINISTER

I'm glad to say that in the first six months of 5G rollout, they (telcos) have surpassed all the targets that we have given them for the next three years

VL KANTHA RAO | ADDITIONAL SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF TELECOM

The carbon border adjustment mechanism being implemented by the European Union will have an adverse impact on India's exports of metals such as iron, steel and aluminium products to the EU

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | CO-FOUNDER, GTRI

SHORT TAKES

CIL net rises 14% during Apr-Feb

New Delhi: State-owned CIL produced 619.7 million tonne (MT) in the April-February period of the current fiscal, registering a year-on-year growth of 14.3 per cent. The maharatna firm had produced 542 MT of coal in the year-ago period. "This is a 100 per cent achievement against progressive target. With a quantum gain of 77.3 MT CIL is well on its way to breach the production target of 700 MT of FY'23," Coal India Ltd (CIL) said. All the subsidiaries of the coal behemoth have logged growth over previous year.

Electricity usage grows over 9%

New Delhi: India's power consumption logged a year-on-year growth of over nine per cent to 117.84 billion units in February this year, according to government data. The robust growth of power consumption indicates sustained momentum of economic activities in February. In February 2022, power consumption stood at 108.03 billion units (BU), higher than the 103.25 BU in the same month of 2021.

TPREL gets ₹2K-cr from GreenForest

New Delhi: Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd (TPREL) has received an investment of ₹2,000 crore from GreenForest New Energies Bidco with allotment of 20 crore preference shares to the latter. "TPREL...has received the second and final round of investment of ₹2,000 crore from GreenForest and has successfully allotted 20,00,00,000 Compulsorily Convertible Preference Shares (CCPS) at face value of ₹100 each at par aggregating to ₹2,000 crore on a preferential basis to GreenForest," a statement said.

TikTok ban by EU irks china

Beijing: China says a ban on the use of TikTok by official European Union institutions will harm business confidence in Europe. In the latest salvo in the battle over the Chinese-owned video sharing app, the European Parliament, the European Commission and the EU Council have banned TikTok from being installed on official devices that follows similar actions taken by the US federal government, Congress and more than half of the 50 US states. Canada has also banned it from government devices. TikTok is wildly popular among teens, but there are concerns China could use its legal and regulatory powers to obtain private user data or to try to push misinformation.



By the end of the year we will place a large order for aircraft. I'm not going to disclose the number but the order will be in three digits and it will be significant

VINAY DUBE | CEO, AKASA AIR

'INDIA: CHEAPEST 5G MARKET'

Billionaire philanthropist and Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates said India has "great" digital network and high levels of smartphone usage with "very good" connectivity and added this will be the cheapest 5G market



Axis buys Citi's consumer biz

Axis Bank completes acquisition of Citi's India consumer business in ₹11,603-cr deal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Axis Bank Wednesday said it has completed the acquisition of Citibank's retail business in India for a final cash consideration of ₹11,603 crore.

The sale excludes Citi's institutional client businesses in India.

The third-largest private sector bank said the acquisition, announced first in March last year, will not necessitate any new capital requirements and stressed that the attrition numbers on customers are much better than expected.

A total of 2.4 million Citi customers in the country have consented to bank with Axis Bank after the deal as against 3 million at the time of announcing the deal, managing director and chief executive Amitabh Chaudhry told reporters in Mumbai. He said 96 per cent or 3,200 of the Citi employees have joined the bank now.

The core capital buffer will go down by 1.70 per cent from the 15.55 per cent reported in December, Chaudhry said, committing to fund and grow the business.

The entire integration will happen over the next 18 months, Chaudhry said, adding that there will be a hit of ₹1,500 crore to be taken as implementation costs which will be amortised as the



The bank account details, cheque books, product benefits and privileges, debit card details will be the same for the Citi customers who are joining as Axis Bank customers

AMITABH CHAUDHRY | CEO, AXIS BANK

costs are incurred.

Axis Bank is the fourth-largest issuer of credit cards with a total base of 8.6 million cards and the deal will add about 2.5 million credit cardholders, making it one of the top three cards businesses in the country.

Last year, Axis Bank agreed to purchase Citibank's India Consumer Business from Citibank NA (acting through its branch in India) and the NBFC Consumer Business from Citicorp Finance (India) Limited (CFIL), as going concerns, without values being as-

signed to individual assets and liabilities to either business.

This was subject to fulfilment of specific conditions and obtaining requisite approvals at a total purchase consideration up to ₹12,325 crore.

Accordingly, the businesses of CBNA and CFIL stand transferred to Axis Bank and the bank becomes the owner of Citibank's India Consumer Business and NBFC Consumer Business effective from March 1, 2023 subject to and in accordance with the requirements and terms of the agreed contractual documentation and

settlement of consideration, Axis Bank said.

Axis, which has a retail book of nearly ₹4 lakh crore, has acquired about 3 million unique customers of Citibank India, seven offices, 21 branches and 499 ATMs across 18 cities.

Citi's retail book is nearly ₹68,000 crore, of which retail loans account for ₹28,000 crore. With 1.2 million bank accounts, the total India business contributes 1.5 per cent in profit to the lender's global book.

Apart from the institutional banking business, it will continue to focus on off-shoring or global business support rendered from centres in Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, Chennai and Gurugram.

In April 2021, American banking major Citigroup announced its plan to exit from the consumer banking business in India as part of its global strategy.

The business comprises credit cards, retail banking, home loans and wealth management. The bank has 35 branches in the country and employs about 4,000 people in the consumer banking business.

Citigroup entered India in 1902 and started the consumer banking business in 1985.

Mkts bounce back after 8 days of fall

Markets started the March month on a positive note and gained nearly a per cent, taking a breather after the recent fall

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 1: Stock market benchmarks ended nearly 1 per cent higher Wednesday, halting their eight days of decline, amid gains in Asian and European equity exchanges.

The BSE Sensex advanced 448.96 points or 0.76 per cent to settle at 59,411.08 after a positive beginning. During the day, it jumped 513.33 points or 0.87 per cent to 59,475.45. The NSE Nifty climbed 146.95 points or 0.85 per cent to end at 17,450.90.

In the past eight days, the BSE benchmark had tumbled 2,357.39 points or 3.84 per cent, and the Nifty declined 731.9 points or 4.22 per cent.

From the Sensex pack, State Bank of India, Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, Maruti Suzuki, Tata Steel and Tata Motors were the major gainers.

Power Grid and HDFC Bank were the laggards from the pack.

In the broader equity market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 1.38 per cent and midcap index advanced 1.35 per cent.

All the sectoral indices ended higher, with metal rallying 2.61 per cent, commodities jumping

Investors richer by ₹3.20 lakh cr

Investors' wealth climbed ₹3.20 lakh crore as markets staged a smart comeback Wednesday after falling in the last eight trading sessions. The bounce back in the equity market added ₹3,20,574.19 crore taking the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms to ₹260 lakh crore (₹2,60,93,075.59 crore) at the end of trade.

2.30 per cent, IT (1.36 per cent), teck (1.28 per cent), industrials (1.25 per cent), bankex (1.15 per cent) and capital goods (1.11 per cent).

The rupee appreciated by 9 paise to close at 82.49 against the US dollar Wednesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures declined 0.41 per cent to \$83.11 per barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital market Wednesday as they off-loaded shares worth ₹424.88 crore, according to exchange data.

The growth momentum in India's manufacturing sector was maintained in February with new orders and output increasing at similar rates to January, according to a monthly survey.

In Asian markets, Japan, China and Hong Kong ended in the positive territory. Equity exchanges in Europe were trading in the green. The US markets had ended lower Tuesday.

Manufacturing PMI shows steady growth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: The growth momentum in India's manufacturing sector was maintained in February, with new orders and output increasing at similar rates to January, according to a monthly survey.

The seasonally adjusted S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was at 55.3 in February, little-changed from 55.4 in January.

The February PMI data pointed to an improvement in overall operating conditions for the 20th straight month. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 indicates contraction.

"India's manufacturing industry sustained robust growth of output and new orders halfway through the final fiscal quarter, albeit with a notable slowdown in the rate of international sales expansion," the survey released Wednesday said.

Companies signalled only mild pressure on their own operating capacities, with outstanding business increasing marginally in February and accordingly job numbers expanded only fractionally.

As per the survey, 98 per cent of panellists reported no change in employment. Job creation failed to gain meaningful traction as firms reportedly had sufficient staff to cope with current requirements, said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

The domestic market was the main source of new business growth, as new orders from abroad increased only fractionally. The rise in international sales was the weakest in the current 11-month period of expansion.

GST collection rises 12% in Feb

The monthly GST revenue has remained at more than ₹1.4 lakh crore for 12 months in a row, including February

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections rose 12 per cent to more than ₹1.49 lakh crore in February as domestic economic activities and consumer spending on high-end goods gained momentum.

However, the collections are lower than January mop up of ₹1.58 lakh crore, which was also the sec-



ond highest monthly revenue figure since the rollout of GST July 1, 2017. "₹1,49,577 crore gross GST revenue collected in February 2023; 12 per cent higher than GST revenue in same month last year," the finance ministry said in a statement Wednesday.

Generally, February being a 28-

day month, witnesses a relatively lower collection of GST revenue, the ministry said. During the month, revenues from domestic transaction (including import of services) were 15 per cent higher while revenues from import of goods was 6 per cent higher compared to the same month last year.

As per the ministry data, out of the gross GST revenue, Central GST was ₹27,662 crore, State GST was ₹34,915 crore, Integrated GST was ₹75,069 crore (including ₹35,689 crore collected on import of goods) and Cess was ₹11,931 crore (including ₹792 crore collected on import of goods). The cess collection of ₹11,931 crore was the highest since implementation of GST.

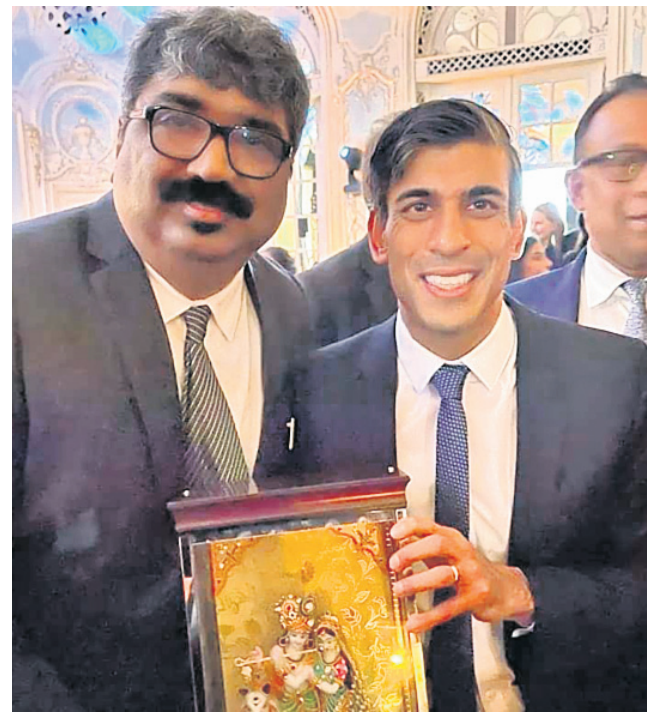
Taparia launches steel files



BUZ BUZZ

Bhubaneswar: Taparia Tools introduced steel files in their hand tools category. Files are hand tool used for filing metals, wood & plastic in order to remove excess material from a work piece. The steel files

are manufactured from high carbon - high chromium material & through hardened with different variety of cuts. Also, it comes in various shapes & sizes on their application. According to HN Taparia, CMD of Taparia Tools, "All Taparia Hand Tools are ergonomically engineered for maximum efficiency, safety, and comfort and are constructed tough for sustained usage with little operator fatigue. They are inspected to ensure that they comply with the strictest international standards."



Rajan Gugnani, businessman from Odisha was seen attending a winter party at London with UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

IDBI opens new branch at Gotama

Nuapada: IDBI Bank has opened its 1921th branch at Gotama, Near Khariar Road in Nuapada district in Odisha. This would be the 143th branch of Bhubaneswar zone and 24th branch in Sambalpur region. With opening of this branch IDBI Bank marked its presence in Nuapada district, Odisha. The new branch of IDBI Bank and the ATM was inaugurated by Sonia Goldi Agrawal (Chairperson, NAC, Khariar Road) in presence of Kuntal Biswas, CGM & Zonal Head - Bhubaneswar Zone. Dipen Das, Regional Head, Sambalpur Region, Regional Office staffs and many prominent dignitaries of the vicinity were also present during inauguration ceremony.



Automakers cheer as sales witness robust growth

WITH DISPATCHES OF OVER 3.35 LAKH UNITS, AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY REPORTED HIGHEST EVER OVERALL WHOLESALAS IN THE MONTH OF FEB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Driven by strong demand, the overall passenger vehicle dispatches crossed 3.35 lakh units in February as automakers, including Maruti Suzuki India, Hyundai, Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra, reported ro-

bust sales during the month.

The dispatches of more than 3.35 lakh units last month marked an 11 per cent over February 2022. It was also the highest ever overall wholesales in the month of February.

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India Wednesday said its domestic wholesales rose 11 per cent to 1,55,114 units in February as compared with 1,40,035 units in the same month last year. The sales of mini segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, grew to 21,875 units as against 19,691 units in February 2022.

According to the automaker, the sales of compact cars, including Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift, Tour S and WagonR, rose to 79,898



units in February as compared with 77,795 units in the year-ago month. Utility vehicles, consisting of Brezza, Ertiga, S-Cross and XL6, clocked sales of 33,550 units

last month as compared with 25,360 units earlier.

In the April-February period this fiscal, the overall industry sales have risen to 35.5 lakh as

compared with 27.47 lakh units in the corresponding period last financial year. Hyundai Motor India saw its domestic wholesales increase 7 per cent year-on-year to 47,001 units in February.

Tata Motors said its passenger vehicles sales in the domestic market last month rose to 43,140 units as against 40,181 units in the corresponding period last year.

Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) said its passenger vehicle dispatches last month rose 10 per cent to 30,358 units as compared with 27,663 units in February last year.

M&M Automotive Division President Veejay Nakra said the company continues to sell more than 30,000 SUVs per month.

Kia India reported a 36 per cent

year-on-year increase in domestic wholesales at 24,600 units in February. Toyota Kirloskar Motor said its domestic wholesales increased 75 per cent year-on-year to 15,338 units in February 2023.

In the two-wheeler space, Bajaj Auto said its total domestic sales increased 36 per cent to 1,53,291 units last month as compared with 1,12,747 units in the year-ago period.

The country's largest two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp reported a 10 per cent year-on-year increase in total wholesales at 3,94,460 units in February.

Industry experts believe that the overall performance continues to stay encouraging in the domestic market and is supposed to rise further.

Completely outspun

Pitch offered more turn than expected: Rathour

Australia show India the way on rank turner, take firm control of third Test after day one reaching 156/4 at stumps after dismissing the hosts for a paltry 109

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, March 1: Indian batters' longstanding struggles against spin were thoroughly exposed before Australia applied themselves on a rank turner to take control of the third Test on a frenetic opening day of the match here Wednesday.

Left-arm spinner Matthew Kuhnemann (5/16) picked up his maiden five-wicket haul as Australia skittled India out for a paltry 109 shortly after lunch on day one. Virat Kohli top-scored for India with 22 off 52 balls.

Trailing 0-2 in the series, Australia came out with a strong resolve and purpose to end the day at 156/4, taking a 47-run lead. Ravindra Jadeja (4/63) took all four wickets for India including that of stand-in captain Steve Smith (26 off 38) before close of play.

Usman Khawaja (60 off 147) was the standout performer for Australia as he tackled the skill-full Jadeja and R Ashwin with a straight bat and soft hands.

Marnus Labuschagne (31 off 91 balls), who was bowled off a no ball early in his innings, rode on his luck to share a 96-run stand with Khawaja, the highest partnership of the series for the visitors.

Though the usually accurate Indian spinners were not relentless with their lines and lengths, Khawaja and Labuschagne rectified the 'sweeping' mistakes they made in Delhi by playing straight and trusting their defense.

When India were batting, the pitch seemed unplayable but Khawaja and Co. showed the way to the home team. Khawaja's gritty knock also had a couple of drives on the off-side. He was also not shy of playing the reverse sweep but mostly played straight.

The southpaw hardly put a foot wrong in his crafty knock but when he did, he had to pay for it. In the 43rd over of the innings, Khawaja went for the sweep from around the off-stump off Jadeja and ended up giving a catch at deep mid-wicket.

Like Nagpur and Delhi, the game is set for another three-day finish and a 100-run lead on this surface will be worth gold. India were also



MEMORABLE SPELL: Matthew Kuhnemann celebrates with teammates after dismissing an Indian batter, Wednesday

Ashwin tops Test bowlers' standing

DUBAI: Veteran Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin Wednesday jumped to the top of the latest ICC Men's Test Bowling Rankings, replacing England pacer James Anderson. Ashwin gained two places after taking six wickets in India's emphatic victory over Australia in the second Test in New Delhi. Anderson dropped to second place after England's stunning loss to New Zealand in the Wellington Test. The 36-year-old Ashwin first claimed the top honour among Test bowlers in 2015, and has returned to the top spot on several occasions since then. Ashwin is the third No.1 Test bowler in as many weeks, after Anderson replaced Australia captain Pat Cummins at the summit last time around. The trio continues to make up the top three bowlers in the latest rankings. Anderson is now five rating points behind Ashwin, who remains on 864 points. Ravindra Jadeja's 10 wickets in the second Test against Australia also sees him move up the bowling rankings into eighth spot. Jadeja and Ashwin occupy the top two positions in Test All-Rounder Rankings.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, March 1: The Indian team didn't factor in excessive turn on offer as it was a bad day in office despite playing spin being one of its strengths, batting coach Vikram Rathour claimed Wednesday.

The ball turning square in the first hour of play, attracted a lot of attention with many criticising the nature of the surface. However, Rathour maintained that playing on turners at home remains the team's strength.

"It is a challenging wicket for sure. More turn than what we expected. May be because of the moisture, the ball turned sharply in the morning. We could have made more runs for sure but I don't think anyone played poor or rash cricket. We just had an off day as a batting unit," Rathour said in a media interaction.

When asked about the risk of playing on turners, Rathour said they could be at the receiving end at times but remains the team's strength.

"Of course you can get out as a batting unit at times but we do prefer to play on turning tracks. That is our strength, that is where we are really good as a unit. To be fair this is a one off wicket."

"I don't think the earlier two wickets were bad wickets. It may be drier than we expected and we saw that. It did a lot more on first day of the Test match than what we expected."

"To be fair to curators. They hardly got time to prepare the wicket. They had a Ranji season here and it is pretty late it that was decide the game will be shifted from Dharamsala. They did not get enough time," said the former India opener.

Rathour felt that wicket might

have eased as the day progressed. "It felt like that (that wicket eased out). I won't be able to comment on that. The guys playing the middle can tell you that better. It felt like it had gone slower later in the day. It wasn't turning as sharply as it was in the morning."

Matthew Kuhnemann, on the other hand, will have to wait till the end of the series to get some valuable "tips" from Ravindra Jadeja though just watching the champion India spinner operate in the middle has been an education for the rookie Australian left-arm spinner. A stint at a spin clinic in Chennai six months ago has also made him a better bowler.

"I'm a massive fan of Jadeja and Ashwin, so I've watched how they have bowled in the last few years. It's more so the mental side, dealing with the crowd (in India) and how quick things happen," he said. "Me and Todd (Murphy) were in the MRF tour in Chennai probably six months ago and that left me in good stead to go well in these games."

Kuhnemann observed Jadeja closely at the Feroz Shah Kotla and picked up the fine nuances of spin bowling. "The way he uses his crease and probably the biggest thing I picked up in Delhi is that he brings his length back a little bit when the ball gets a little bit older."

"That's probably the main thing I took out of the second Test and brought into this Test, probably my length. Don't want to get full especially on a wicket that stays low, being consistent on that 5-6 meter length," said the Queenslander. "Has he got the chance to pick Jadeja's brains yet?" "I said to him, have you got any tips for me after the last Test? He said 'yes, at the end of the series,'" he said with a wide smile.

guilty of bowling four no-balls.

Earlier, having lost seven of the batters by the end of the opening session, India could add only 25 more runs to their total with Kuhnemann ending with career-best figures in first-class cricket. If it wasn't for Umesh Yadav's 17 off 13 balls, India would have struggled to get past the 100-run mark.

The only wicket that came India's way in the afternoon session was of Travis Head (9), who missed a straight ball from Jadeja to be adjudged lbw.

It was a sign of desperation that India exhausted two of their three views in the first 10 overs. Labuschagne got a second life when India did not review an lbw call off Ashwin.

The great Matthew Hayden on air called the black soil surface at the Holkar Stadium a day-three pitch and it sure behaved like one. Three India batters including skipper Rohit Sharma (12), Jadeja (4) and



LONE SAMURAI: Ravindra Jadeja bagged all the four Australian wickets on day 1 in Indore

Shreyas Iyer (0) perished while trying to attack. Kohli looked assured in the middle before being trapped lbw by Todd Murphy towards the end of the session.

Winning the toss for the first time in the series, India expectedly decided to bat first. Shubman Gill replaced an out-of-form KL Rahul in the playing eleven while Umesh was brought in for the rested Mohammad Shami. Having regained match fitness, both Mitchell Starc and Cameron Green made Australia's playing eleven.

Starc's first over to Rohit was among the highlights of the morning session. Before the spinners ran through the Indian batting, Starc got the ball to swing giving the India skipper a tough time.

Rohit got a faint outside edge on the very first ball he faced but Australia did not take a review. Three balls later, Starc got the ball to swing back in and it flicked Rohit's pads. Ball tracking showed

Harmanpreet to lead Mumbai Indians in WPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 1: India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur was Wednesday officially announced as the captain of the Mumbai Indians (MI) team ahead of the inaugural edition of the Women's Premier League (WPL) starting here Saturday.

Harmanpreet, who recently became the first female player ever to complete 150 T20s during the ICC T20 World Cup 2023 in South Africa, was bought for Rs 1.8 crore by Mumbai Indians at the auction last month. WPL will be played this month in Mumbai across two venues - DY Patil Stadium and Brabourne Stadium.

"We are thrilled to have Harmanpreet as the captain of



Mumbai Indians' first-ever women's cricket team," said team's owner Nita Ambani in a media release Wednesday.

"As the national captain, she has led the Indian Women's team to some of their most exciting wins. With Charlotte and Jhulan's support, she (Harmanpreet) will inspire our MI women's team to play their best cricket, display sense of pride, and bring even more glory to women in sports."

Mumbai Indians will be coached by former England captain Charlotte Edwards and the legendary Indian fast bowler Jhulan Goswami will be the team's bowling coach and mentor. Former India player Devieka Palshikar will be the batting coach, while England's Lydia Greenway will be the fielding coach.

Harmanpreet led India to the semifinals of the recently-concluded T20 World Cup, where the

team crashed out after a heart-breaking loss to eventual winners Australia but to before some heroes from the India captain.

Despite suffering from a bout of sickness due to which she visited a hospital on the eve of the semifinal, Harmanpreet kept India in the contest with a fluent 34-ball 52 laced with a six and six boundaries. She was dismissed at a crucial point during the chase as India crumbled despite being in a comfortable situation.

Mumbai Indians, who also have the likes of Nat Sciver-Brunt, Amelia Kerr, Pooja Vastrakar and Yastika Bhatia, will kick off their WPL campaign against the Beth Mooney-led Gujarat Giants at the DY Patil Stadium on the opening day of the competition.

Foden leads City into FA Cup quarters, Leicester stunned



IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY: Phil Foden wheels away in celebration after scoring against Bristol City, Tuesday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, March 1: Phil Foden was in danger of becoming one of the forgotten players at Manchester City this season. Maybe not anymore.

The England winger is over his injury problems and back in favor with City manager Pep Guardiola — and is repaying the faith with goals as the English champions head into the final stretch of the season on the hunt for more trophies.

Foden scored in each half in City's 3-0 win at second-tier Bristol City in the FA Cup Tuesday, helping the team secure a place in the quarterfinals.

Kevin De Bruyne netted the other goal at Ashton Gate as City stayed on course in a competition it last won in 2019. Foden lost his place as a regular starter at City just before the World Cup and after returning from the Qatar tournament has been overshadowed by fellow wingers Jack Grealish and Riyad Mahrez.

Now Guardiola has an embarrassment of riches in the wide positions with Foden over some foot

injuries and shining again. He scored against Bournemouth on Saturday and was probably City's best player against Bristol City on a night star striker Erling Haaland was rested.

Foden converted a cross from Mahrez in the seventh minute to give City the lead and then provided the side-footed finish — via a deflection from a covering home defender — to make it 2-0 in the 74th. De Bruyne curled in City's best goal of the game in the 81st from outside the area. City have reached at least the semifinals in five of the last six seasons.

LEICESTER STUNNED

There will be at least one non-Premier League team in the last eight of the FA Cup. Blackburn, which plays in the second-tier Championship, provided the shock of the evening by winning 2-1 at Leicester, the 2021 champion.

Tyrhys Dolan capitalised on a sloppy pass out from the back by Daniel Amartey to open the scoring for Blackburn before Sammie Szmodics dribbled through the soft

center of Leicester's defense before poking in a finish shortly after halftime.

Kelechi Iheanacho scored his customary FA Cup goal — it's now 18 in his last 24 appearances in the competition, more than any other player in that time — but Leicester couldn't grab an equalizer.

Leicester can now focus all its attention on staying in the Premier League. The team is only three points above the relegation zone.

FULHAM'S SENSATION

Manor Solomon scored for a fourth straight game to help Fulham beat Leeds 2-0 and continue its excellent season, in which the London club is also impressing in sixth place in the Premier League. Fulham reached the last eight for the first time in 13 years.

Solomon scored after playing a one-two with Aleksandar Mitrovic and curling into the far corner. Joao Palhinha's opening goal was even better; the Portugal midfielder intercepting a pass out from the back by Tyler Adams and bending in a shot off the post from 30 meters.

FRANCE FOOTBALL LEGEND FONTAINE PASSES AWAY



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, March 1: Just Fontaine, the French soccer great who scored a record 13 goals at the 1958 World Cup, has died. He was 89. Fontaine's former club Reims announced his death Wednesday.

Fontaine took six games to achieve his feat at the 1958 World Cup in Sweden, when he was a last-minute inclusion on the French squad.

The Moroccan-born Fontaine, a little-known forward, tormented opponents with his speed and finishing touch — and even with someone else's boots. He had to borrow a pair of cleats after damaging his own boots in practice.

Fontaine scored four goals in the third-place game against West Germany, but could have had five

Juventus win Turin derby



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, March 1: Juventus could still qualify for European competition despite a 15-point penalty for false accounting. The Bianconeri came back twice from a goal down to beat Torino 4-2 in the Turin derby Tuesday and moved up to seventh place, six points behind Atalanta and Serie A's Conference League spot and only 10 points behind the Champions League places.

Torino went ahead 92 seconds in with a close-range goal from Yann Karamoh. Juan Cuadrado equalised for Juventus with a deflected shot in the 16th. Then Antonio Sanabria restored Torino's advantage with

another close-range effort before Danilo made it 2-2 in first-half stoppage time with a header. Karol Linetty nearly put Torino ahead with a long shot that hit the crossbar midway through the second half. In the 68th, Paul Pogba came on for his season debut following a long injury layoff. The France midfielder rejoined Juventus in July but injured his knee days later.

Former Torino defender Gleison Bremer gave Juventus the lead for the first time in the 71st ahead with a header from the center of the area. Then Adrien Rabiot added another for Juventus by redirecting in a free-kick.